

Joanna Gierowska-Kałużur

The Civil Administration of Eastern Territories (1919-1920)

The Reasons for the Failure of Piłsudski's Federation Idea



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Between 1919 and 1920, the eastern territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were temporarily administered by the Civic Management of Eastern Territories, established by Józef Piłsudski. The residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were to determine their future governance. Piłsudski placed the Civic Management outside the structures of the Polish government, while his opponents from the Polish nationalist wing wanted to suborn it to the government in Warsaw. Based on hitherto unknown archival documents, the author describes the reasons for the failure of Piłsudski's federation idea, both on the Polish side, as well as errors by Belarusian leaders and the policy of the Lithuanian state.

The Author

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Verfert. in St. Petersburg und P. Hoffmann

Maßstab 1:2000000



The Civil Administration of Eastern Territories (1919-1920)

POLISH STUDIES
TRANSDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Krzysztof Zajas / Jarosław Fazan

VOLUME 40



PETER LANG

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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

The Publication is funded by Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland as a part of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities for the years 2017-2022 (project no. 21H 16 0074 84). This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Ministry cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



**NATIONAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITIES**

ISSN 2191-3293

ISBN 978-3-631-86622-1 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-87868-2 (E-PDF)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-87872-9 (EPUB)

DOI 10.3726/b19743

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Peter Lang – Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien



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This publication has been peer reviewed.

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INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to discuss one of the major aspects (in my view) of the Eastern policies pursued by Poland as a re-emerging state after the First World War, confronted with the federation-oriented policy of Józef Piłsudski, the then-Chief of State, and the differing viewpoints of his opponents. This book explores the approaches adopted in relation to the actions taken by Poland in the Eastern territories not only by Germany, which had been on the losing side in WWI, but also by the victorious Entente powers. The collapse of Russia made them face a range of interwoven problems that their political elites had not previously contemplated, and thus lacked the necessary tools, let alone the essential knowledge, to effectively shape the new political reality. The interests of Russia, the notable absentee, and its increasingly active new rulers at the Kremlin, also played a crucial role. In this context, the actions of the newest entities on the world map and subjects of the events in question, i.e. Lithuania, Byelorussia, and Ukraine, was of lesser significance, although not negligible, either.

In the first place, it is necessary to define the term ‘The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories’ [*Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich* (hereinafter referred to as the ‘ZCZW’)],¹ as it is both ambiguous and capacious. The ‘ZCZW’ stood for an administrative unit established by the Polish Supreme Commander, Józef Piłsudski, in the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania liberated (*not* ‘seized’ or ‘occupied’) by the Polish army. This office was brought into being at a particular moment: upon the restoration of independence, but before the boundaries of the reborn country were recognised internationally, in the hope of achieving a precise objective. The ZCZW can also serve as an example of the failure of a political and social concept that proved too modern for its time. Indeed, it reflects the internal Polish conflicts and the persistent dispute between the Chief of State and the Polish National Committee [*Komitet Narodowy Polski* (KNP)], which endured and was employed or harnessed in all political aspects

1 In the English translations of Polish historians’ works appears a translatorial difficulty in the use of the term ‘territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania,’ which is nevertheless extremely important for works from 1918–1920. Some use in their narratives the term (*nasze*) *Kresy*, which means ‘(our Eastern) Borderlands,’ while others, and I as well, prefer the term *Ziemie Wschodnie*, meaning ‘Eastern Territories,’ which is closer to Piłsudski’s federational political idea that I discuss in this work.

of the Polish state and society in the years 1919–1920, including in the area of the Eastern Borderlands.

The ZCZW constitutes a symbol of the tragedy that affected the lands of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its protagonists were the Chief of State, a large mass of officials, and social/political activists torn by conflicting feelings, as well as numerous other inhabitants of the territories under the jurisdiction of the Administration, whose establishment was first announced in the Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

One factor of vital importance to understanding the reasons behind the failure of Józef Piłsudski's Eastern Policy carried out in 1919 is to show how the ZCZW was structured and how it functioned, in the context of what was happening at that time, globally as well as locally. The structure of this book follows the structure of the drama that unfolded in the Parisian salons, in the corridors of the Sejm in Warsaw, and in the counties of the Eastern Territories, as the dispute over the shape of the country spilled from the political salons all the way down to the local communes.

All of the actors in these events faced inescapable choices. Their knowledge was limited, both for objective and subjective reasons. The Polish elites feared the new socio-political agenda and the masses who simply did not comprehend it; an agenda that was meant to provide refuge to all inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania – not just the Poles – in the face of the tempest approaching from the East.

It seems that, in spite of all their complexity, the events which took place between 19th February 1919 (when the office of Civil Commissioner was established at the Military Administration of the Eastern Territories) and the late summer of 1920 (the dissolution of the ZCZW on 9th September) were largely influenced by one concrete mechanism. The former occupiers of these lands were very aware of this mechanism, and exploited it in line with their *divide et impera* strategy.

The concept that brought the ZCZW to life ended in fiasco for various reasons, both independent from and dependent on the Poles themselves. The aim of the present study is to provide factual evidence, largely unknown to date, and thus establish a causal link allowing a determination, to the extent possible, of how and in what ways these factors contributed to the ultimate failure of the project. The study is, moreover, a first attempt at identifying and describing the said mechanism on the basis of numerous specific examples from all the levels of the ZCZW's structure.

Now I must make a methodological remark at this point. One consequential obstacle encountered by both the participants and witnesses of those events, and

future scholars – including the author of this book – has been the fluidity of the terms used during that period. The same word could mean something different to different people. In 1923, Józef Piłsudski stated publicly that the term ‘federation’ proved too smart for the ‘weighty and apish granny’, which personified public opinion.² This ascertainment leads to the conclusion that none of the terms such as ‘union’, ‘plebiscite’, ‘election’, ‘Poles’, ‘Jews’, ‘Byelorussians’, or even ‘army’/‘the military’, ‘Bolsheviks’, or ‘concentration camp’ ought not to be used without first being accurately defined.

As an experienced, long-standing archive documentalist at the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, I have decided to employ a research method adapted to the physical condition and nature of the archival sources I came across in my research. The Old Prints and Manuscripts Section at the Capital-City-of-Warsaw Public Library contains a fond named ‘*Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich*’, comprising approximately 24,000 folios. A meticulous reader of the sources contained in this fond will surely notice that the various materials in it have never constituted an orderly whole, and were hastily sorted out and discarded at some point. Incomplete materials from various periods, districts, (not all) departments, sections, inspectorates, *starosties*, counties, etc. have been arbitrarily interspersed. Most of these documents are copies or duplicates (including carbon copies), some are poorly legible drafts typewritten or handwritten on both sides – usually in Polish, but also in Byelorussian, Lithuanian, German, and French. The archives have twice undergone a hasty evacuation, in 1920 and then again in 1944; hence the chaotic layout of the documents, with minor exceptions. The work procedures of the officials and clerks might have left an imprint, too. The ZCZW’s offices functioned in an unrestrained manner; even the bookkeeping was done using different systems. Prolific typing errors by the registrars, missing dates and places of issue, and the common use of outdated receipt stamps were also frequent.

After the Second World War, the fond was divided into a total of 118 handwritten volumes of varying size.³ The aforesaid Warsaw Public Library collection also contains the personal documents of Jerzy Osmołowski, the

2 J. Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe*, Vol. VI, Warszawa 1937, pp. 127, 129, 132, 133, 135; also, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, ‘Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego wygłoszony 24 sierpnia 1923 roku w Wilnie’, *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. V, 1999, fasc. 4 (20), pp. 767–791.

3 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, Zespół akt ‘Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich’ w zbiorach Biblioteki Publicznej m.st. Warszawy, w: Biblioteka na Koszykowej 1907–1997. Zbiór prac poświęconych Bibliotece Publicznej m.st. Warszawy – Bibliotece Głównej, Warszawa 1999, pp. 111–133,

Commissioner-General, which are referred to throughout this book.⁴ Following a three-year query, I was able to draw up a tentative inventory of the ZCZW fond, comprising extensive extracts and photocopies. This research provided a huge amount of material, which resulted in pointing the way for further research.

The material constituting the ZCZW fond at the Warsaw Public Library aroused virtually no interest for many years. Interestingly, Aleksy Deruga, author of the seminal work on Poland's Eastern policy in the years 1918–1919, never came across these records.⁵ The memoirs of Jerzy Osmołowski, Commissioner-General of the ZCZW, donated to the National Library after 1954⁶ were written years after the facts described therein, and in a radically different political situation, by a man eager for recognition on the one hand, and visibly bitter on the other. I have therefore concluded that this particular account – contrary to the diary of Michał Kossakowski,⁷ Commissioner-General's representative in Warsaw – does not actually hold the value attributed to it by many historians, and I resorted instead to reconstructing the period's events mostly on the basis of the official documents produced in 1919–1920. However, despite the above reservations, these memoirs proved to be of significant assistance in writing this study. The Special Collection at the National Library in Warsaw contains, moreover, the archive of Stefan Szwedowski, a nationalist activist.

The queries made at those places have enabled me to attempt a personal evaluation of the circumstances surrounding the events in question. I did my supplementary research at three archives in Warsaw. Apart from the Kossakowski diary, the Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences contains the documentation of Marcei Handelsman and a (barely legible) diary by Ludwik Kolankowski, the first Civil Commissioner. At the Central Archives of Modern Records [AAN], in

4 Biblioteka Publiczna m.st. Warszawy [Capital-City-of-Warsaw Public Library]. Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section]. Papiery osobiste J. Osmołowskiego [Personal documents of J. Osmołowski], No. 1553 & 233; including, among others, original copy of J. Piłsudski's letter to J. Osmołowski, published as item No. 18 of the 37 letters by *Niepodległość* (London), Vol. 7, 1962.

5 A. Deruga, *Polityka wschodnia Polski wobec ziem Litwy, Białorusi i Ukrainy (1918–1919)*, Warsaw 1969.

6 Biblioteka Narodowa [the National Library (hereinafter, BN)], microfilm 30087–30090; 50228–50231: J. Osmołowski, *Pamiętniki 1914–1921* [Memoirs, 1914–21].

7 See M. S. Korwin-Kossakowski, *Diariusz*, vol.1, Part 1 (21st May–31st August 1915) and vol.1, Part 2 (1st September 1915–4th February, 1916), ed. by M. Mądzik, with an introduction and co-edited by K. Latawiec, M. Korzeniowski, and D. Tarasiuk, Lublin 2010; *Diariusz* Vol. 2 (29th April–31st December 1917) and Vol. 3 (1st January–31st December 1918), ed. by D. Tarasiuk, M. Korzeniowski, and K. Latawiec, Lublin 2016.

addition to the minutes/records of the Council of Ministers, I made use of the Borderland Guard Society fond and the 'Collection of Duplicates', as well as the fond of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lastly, at the Central Military Archives, I studied the Laudański Dossier.

During my several visits to Vilnius, I conducted queries in the manuscript collection of the Vilnius University Library (*Vilniaus universiteto mokslinė biblioteka*), where I studied in detail the dossier of Marian Zdziechowski. The abundant correspondence gathered therein, even the letters from the 1930s, allowed me to see the beginnings of the formation of Polish statehood after the Great War in a different light. Although I do not cite these letters in my work, they helped me considerably to obtain an effective insight into the events of the period in question.

The collection of manuscripts at the Lithuanian National Library (*Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka*) contains the documentation of the estates owned by the Kossakowski family, among which 'compromising' materials were concealed. The Lithuanian Archives of Modern Records (*Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*) offer a clearly structured collection of materials left behind during the 1920 evacuation, entitled 'Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories'. Its most interesting portion includes proofs of the political preferences of Poles; namely, the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as of 1919, and their correspondence with the Polish National Committee in Paris. The manuscripts at the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (*Lietuvos mokslų akademijos biblioteka*) are a treasury of knowledge for researchers of all periods. Among the many collections that I have found there, Marian Świechowski's dossier deserves particular mention for the extent and significance of its materials concerning Polish-Lithuanian relations. Its controversial contents, arousing much emotion, have already been published.⁸

Lithuania's Archives of Historical Records (*Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas*) contains, among others, the collection of the Society of the Friends of Science in Vilnius (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie*), which includes the incredibly valuable Vilnius Land's Collection of Documents. It should be borne in mind that access to the vast majority of these materials was practically impossible before 1991, for many more than just Polish nationals. Therefore, not only was I the first Polish researcher to reach these records, but some folios in the files were numbered for the first time only because I had ordered for them. The 'stock' compiled during these queries was subsequently complemented

8 Gierowska-Kałużur, 'Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego ...', pp. 767–791.

by photocopies of five important documents concerning Lithuanian matters from the Józef Piłsudski Institute in New York, donated by Dorota Cisowska-Hydzyk, MA, an attendee of Professor Andrzej Ajnenkiel's doctoral seminar, who researched the Polish National Committee. My gratitude is also due to Mr Andrzej Czarniakiewicz from Grodno, who provided me with photocopies of valuable documents from the Belarusian archives.

As it emerges from the collected material, the effects of the special policy pursued proactively by the Germans after their capitulation played a role in 1919 not to be underestimated in the development of the situation in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory. The author was unable to conduct detailed queries in the German archives; this gap, however, is repaired to some extent by the source-based paper delivered by German historian Wolfgang Petter at the conference '1920. On the 80th Anniversary of Poland's Victory over the Red Army.'⁹

Volume-wise, the outcome of the archival queries has surpassed my wildest expectations, although further research could undoubtedly reveal more hitherto-undiscovered materials. Printed documents are a valuable addition to the source material, notably: *Akta i dokumenty dotyczące sprawy granic na konferencji pokojowej w Paryżu* [Files and documents related to the issue of borders at the Peace Conference in Paris], Part I: *Program terytorialny delegacji polskiej* [Territorial agenda of the Polish Delegation] (Paris: *Société générale d'imprimerie et d'édition*, 1920). As far of the canonical Polish source publications are concerned, I have included the following: (i) Kazimierz W. Kumaniecki, *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej* [Reconstruction of Polish statehood] (Warsaw: J. Czernecki, 1924); (ii) Remigiusz Bierzanek and Józef Kukulka (eds.), *Sprawy Polski na Konferencji Pokojowej w Paryżu w 1919 r. Dokumenty i materiały* [The affairs concerning Poland at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. Documents and materials], vols. 1–3 (Warsaw: *Państwowe Wydawnicwo Naukowe*, 1965–8); (iii) Halina Janowska and Tadeusz Jędruszczak (eds.), *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej* [The emergence of the Second Republic of Poland] (Warsaw: *Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza*, 1981); Tadeusz Jędruszczak and Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa (eds.), *Dokumenty z dziejów polskiej polityki zagranicznej 1918–1939* [Documents from the history of Polish foreign policy 1918–1939], Vol. I: 1918–32, (Warsaw: *Instytut Wydawniczy PAX*, 1989); Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska *et al.* (eds.), *Dokumenty i materiały do historii*

9 W. Petter, 'Niemcy i Reichswehra w wojnie polsko-sowieckiej (1919–1920)', in A. Ajnenkiel (red.), *Rok 1920. Z perspektywy osiemdziesięciu lat*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 243–256.

stosunków polsko-radzieckich [Documents and materials related to the history of Polish-Soviet relations], vols. I–IV (Warsaw: *Książka i Wiedza*, 1961–5); Witold Stankiewicz and Andrzej Piber (compiled by), *Archiwum polityczne Ignacego Paderewskiego* [The political archive of Ignacy Paderewski], Vol. II: 1919–21 (Wrocław: *Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich*, 1974) (I have also taken note of the material prepared for the second edition). I have moreover included information from the anthology Vytautas Petras Plečkaitis and Jan Widacki (compiled and commented by), *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai 1917–1994: dokumentų rinkinys* [Lithuanian-Polish Relations 1917–94. A collection of documents], (Vilnius: *Valstybės Žinios*, 1998), and from the publication *Arkhivy Byelaruskay Narodnay Respubliki* [Archives of the Belarusian People’s Republic.], Vol. I, issue 1 (Vilnius–New York–Minsk–Prague: *Byelorusskii Institut Navuki i Mastatstva Tavarystva Belaruskaga Pis’myenstva*, 1998).

The historiographical literature on the subject is listed in the bibliography at the end of the book. The pre-war historical works, which discussed those of the reasons behind the failure of the Eastern programme that remained within the range of influence of the Polish authorities, were affected by the understandable reluctance to undermine the morale of the state at a time when the tears of widows and orphans of the recent war had not yet dried. This topic was not explored during Piłsudski’s lifetime, either by his followers or, strikingly enough, by the Marshal’s numerous antagonists. No witnesses were contacted and few accounts survive, whereas the existing ones tend to omit the subject.¹⁰

For several decades after the Second World War, there were no appropriate conditions to discuss any issues related to the Polish-Soviet War. In the last decade, one important study by Janusz Szczepański saw the light of day,¹¹ but it

10 In his memoirs, written by W. Wiśniewski, Tomasz Zan omits the episode in his life related to the uprising in Kaunas. He has penned the account entitled *W sprawie litewskiej* [On the Lithuanian cause] of 12th December 1919 (cited herein), whose copy is kept at the *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos biblioteka* (hereinafter, LMAB), in Marian Świechowski’s records, Fond 168–22, lap. 80–81 (verso). However, texts written by authors from Vilnius Land who were eye-witnesses to the described events are available, including the articles: Zygmunt Jundziłł, ‘Z dziejów polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie historycznej’, *Niepodległość* (London), Vol. VI, 1953; Kazimierz Okulicz, ‘Podział ziem Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (1915–1923–1940)’, *Alma Mater Vilniensis* (London), Vol. 3, 1953, and his, ‘Ostatni akt dramatu Józefa Piłsudskiego’, *Zeszyty historyczne* (Paris) 1966, fasc. 9; moreover, the study by Władysław Wielhorski, *Polska i Litwa. Stosunki wzajemne w biegu dziejów*, London 1947.

11 J. Szczepański, *Spółczesność Polski w walce z najazdem bolszewickim 1920 roku*, Warsaw–Pułtusk, 2000, pp. 41–70, pp. 119–68.

offered no new findings in the field concerned in the present book. The abundance of archival source material that has so far remained outside scholarly interest or discourse, as well as the adopted method of reconstruction of the mechanism that dismantled the ZCZW, has prompted me to limit the amount of personal comments on the literature to the necessary minimum.

However, several titles should be mentioned at this point. Quite a number of authors have explored Józef Piłsudski – the man/figure and his political activity, as well as his interactions with the National Democratic camp.¹² The works by Jan Jurkiewicz,¹³ Aleksy Deruga,¹⁴ Adolf Juzwenko,¹⁵ and Józef Lewandowski¹⁶ all carry an extremely high value owing to the material they contain. The period in question is also covered in a study by Leon Grosfeld,¹⁷ to whose discussions with Tadeusz Jędruszczak (with the participation of Colonel Kazimierz Rosen-Zawadzki) I listened attentively at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of History in the early 1980s. One cannot deal with the history of the

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- 12 J. Molenda, *Piłsudzczyca i narodowi demokraci 1908–1918*, Warsaw 1980; K. Grünberg, *Polskie koncepcje federalistyczne 1864–1918*, Warszawa 1971; A. Garlicki, *Józef Piłsudski 1867–1935*, Warsaw 1988; W. Suleja, *Józef Piłsudski*, Wrocław 1995; M. K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Piłsudski: A European Federalist, 1918–1922*, Stanford, California 1969; J. Faryś, *Piłsudski i piłsudzczyca, Z dziejów koncepcji polityczno-ustrojowej (1918–1939)*, Szczecin 1991; J. Kukułka, 'Niektóre aspekty międzynarodowe polityki Piłsudskiego wobec ziem litewsko-białoruskich (w I połowie 1919 roku)', *Studia z Najnowszych Dziejów Powszechnych*, Vol. 2, 1962, pp. 35–64; T. Komarnicki, *Piłsudski a polityka wielkich mocarstw zachodnich*, London 1952; A. Cieniela, 'Stosunki polsko-sowieckie–federalizm–polityka polska 1914–1921', *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris) 1970, fasc. 18, 215–20; W. Gostyńska, 'Polityka polska wobec Litwy i Białorusi (X 1918–1 1919)', in *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, 1.1, Warsaw 1965. Andrzej Ajnenkiel also proposed synthetic discussions of Piłsudski's Eastern policies as the Chief of State/Commander-in-Chief in his studies on parliamentarianism.
- 13 J. Jurkiewicz, *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi w latach 1905–1922*, Poznań 1983; reviewed in J. Bardach, 'Krajowcy, federaliści, inkorporacjoniści', in his, *O dawnej i niedawnej Litwie*, Poznań 1988.
- 14 Deruga, *Polityka wschodnia* ...
- 15 A. Juzwenko, *Polska a "biała" Rosja (od listopada 1918 do kwietnia 1920 r.)*, Wrocław 1973; his, 'Próby ustalenia polityki Polski wobec Rosji na przełomie 1918 i 1919 roku', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 64, 1973, fasc. 2.
- 16 J. Lewandowski, *Federalizm. Litwa i Białoruś w polityce obozu belwederskiego (XI 1918–IV 1920)*, Warsaw 1962.
- 17 L. Grosfeld, *Polityka państw centralnych wobec sprawy polskiej w latach 1914–1918*, Warsaw 1962; and his, *Polska a stosunki niemiecko-rosyjskie 1918–1939*, Warsaw 1988.

region concerned without being acquainted with the valuable studies of Piotr Łossowski¹⁸ or Andrzej Skrzypek.¹⁹ The contents of the Warsaw Public Library's ZCZW fond has also been of interest to Krystyna Gomółka²⁰ and Aleksandra Bergman,²¹ both of whom were exploring the Byelorussian question. Roman Wapiński²² devotes attention and numerous publications to the history of the Polish national(ist) camp's Eastern policy in the period 1917–1921, which constituted a political alternative to the concepts of the Chief of State. Among the works published in recent years, several deserve a mention. The internal policy constitutes the subject of the document collections Communiqués of the Supreme

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- 18 Piotr Łossowski has the following studies published to his credit, among other things: *Stosunki polsko-litewskie w latach 1918–1920*, Warsaw 1966; *Kraje bałtyckie na drodze od demokracji parlamentarnej do dyktatury 1918–1934*, Warsaw 1972; *Litwa a sprawy polskie*, Warsaw 1982, 1985; *Między wojną a pokojem. Niemieckie zamysły wojenne na wschodzie w obliczu traktatu wersalskiego*, Warsaw 1976; *Po tej i po tamtej stronie Niemna. Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1883–1939*, Warsaw 1985; *Zerwane pęta. Usunięcie okupantów z ziem polskich w listopadzie 1918 roku*, Warsaw 1986; *Polska w Europie i świecie 1918–1939*, Warsaw 1990; *Stosunki polsko-estońskie 1918–1939*, Warsaw 1992; 'Próba przewrotu polskiego w Kownie w sierpniu 1919 roku', in *Najnowsze Dzieje Polski. Materiały i Studia z okresu 1914–1939*, Vol. 8, 1964, 51–74; 'Działalność delegacji polskiej na konferencji pokojowej w Paryżu', in M. Tanty (ed.), *Narodziny Polski niepodległej. Wizje–realia–opinie. Studia i szkice*, Warsaw 1988, pp. 114–135; *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warsaw 1996; 'Kształtowanie się państwa polskiego i walka o granice (listopad 1918–czerwiec 1921)', in *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, Vol. IV: 1918–1939, Warsaw 1995; and many more.
- 19 A. Skrzypek, *Związek Bałtycki. Litwa, Łotwa, Estonia i Finlandia w polityce Polski i ZSRR w latach 1919–1925*, Warsaw 1972.
- 20 Krystyna Gomółka has published: 'Józef Piłsudski wobec kwestii białoruskiej', *Res Historica* 1999, fasc. 8 ('Józef Piłsudski i piłsudczycy', ed. by Z. Zaporowski), 13–28; 'Józef Piłsudski wobec kwestii białoruskiej a wschodnia granica Polski w latach 1918–1922; in Tanty (ed.), *Narodziny Polski niepodległej ...; Między Polską a Rosją. Białoruś w koncepcjach polskich ugrupowań politycznych 1918–1922*, Warsaw 1994; 'Rozmowy polsko-białoruskie (marzec 1920 r.)', *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1988, No. 1; 'Sprawa białoruska w koncepcjach Narodowej Demokracji w latach 1918–1922; in W. Wrzesiński (ed.), *Polska myśl polityczna XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. 8: *Polska–Polacy–mniejszości narodowe*, Wrocław 1992.
- 21 A. Bergman, *Rzecz o Bronisławie Taraszkiewiczzu*, Warsaw 1977; eadem, *Sprawy białoruskie w II Rzeczpospolitej*, Warsaw 1984.
- 22 R. Wapiński, 'Endecka koncepcja polityki wschodniej w latach 1917–1921', *Studia z dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej*, Vol. V, 1969, 39–68; his, *Endecka koncepcja polityki wschodniej w latach 1917–1921*, Gdansk 1967; his, 'Endecja wobec kwestii ukraińskiej i białoruskiej', in *Słowianie w dziejach Europy*, Poznań 1974, pp. 301–308.

Command of the Polish Army, Section III [*Komunikaty Oddziału III Naczelnego Dowództwa Wojska Polskiego*] and Reports and Communiqués of the Supreme Military Authorities on the internal situation in Poland [*Raporty i komunikaty naczelných władz wojskowych o sytuacji wewnętrznej Polski*].²³ External politics, shaped by the circumstances of the defeat, i.e. beyond the influence of the Poles, is discussed in Andrzej Nowak's analysis of the Eastern policies,²⁴ as well as in a dissertation by Piotr Okulewicz,²⁵ written under the tutelage of Przemysław Hauser.²⁶ Regardless of the political convictions of certain authors, these studies unquestionably permit the establishment of numerous important facts.

Politics in the first years following the restoration of Poland's independence consisted mainly in exploiting a new political factor, i.e. exerting public pressure on the bodies of the democratic state, or even seemingly provoking a public response (if not outrage), in order to achieve one's own political goals. By a lucky coincidence, one of the members of the Section of the Twentieth-Century Political History of Poland at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of History, where this book was conceived, was Andrzej Zakrzewski, a historian who never severed contacts with his colleagues despite his engagement in 'practising history', i.e. in politics; in fact, he has contributed to historical events. My exchanges with him have shed a new light on such sources as the minutes/records of the Council of Ministers, making me understand the necessity of relying upon several records, even if seemingly less important, in view of confirming a given argument – rather than on just one single record or message whose authors or compilers might have aimed to achieve a predetermined effect, and which later has been interpreted in the same way for a number of years.

23 M. Jabłonowski and A. Koseski (selected and ed. by), *O Niepodległą i granice. Komunikaty Oddziału III Naczelnego Dowództwa Wojska Polskiego 1919–1921*, Warsaw–Pułtusk 1999; M. Jabłonowski, P. Stawecki and T. Wawrzyński (selected and ed. by), *O Niepodległą i granice. Raporty i komunikaty naczelných władz wojskowych o sytuacji wewnętrznej Polski 1919–1920*, Warsaw–Pułtusk 1999/2000.

24 A. Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje. Studium polityki wschodniej Józefa Piłsudskiego (do kwietnia 1920 roku)*, Kraków 2001; his, *Jak rozbić rosyjskie imperium? Idee polskiej polityki wschodniej (1733–1921)*, Warsaw 1995.

25 P. Okulewicz, *Koncepcja 'międzymorza' w myśli i praktyce politycznej obozu Józefa Piłsudskiego w latach 1918–1926*, Poznań 2001.

26 P. Hauser, *Niemcy wobec sprawy polskiej (październik 1918–czerwiec 1919)*, Poznań 1994; his, 'Poglądy Józefa Piłsudskiego na terytorialny kształt Rzeczypospolitej i próba ich realizacji w latach 1918–1921', in A. Czubiński (ed.), *Józef Piłsudski i jego legenda*, Warsaw 1988.

A historian must also consider the fact that the omission of some important information in a document may not result from its author's obliviousness, but rather from the desire to withhold some knowledge for personal reasons, in the hope of achieving an expected reaction from the recipient. Politics is also an art of manipulation and, in my opinion, only relying on details brings us closer to the historical truth. And, as Józef Mackiewicz once said, only the truth is interesting. A comprehensive synthesis of all assembled facts is the only way to bring the reader closer to the true picture of the situation in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, allowing in parallel to recreate, even if only partly, the highly significant atmosphere prevailing in the Polish administration as well as within the ZCZW itself.

The complexity of the problems tackled in this book on the one hand, and the abundance of the extremely interesting material obtained through queries on the other, caused considerable difficulty in deciding on the structure of the study. Many issues essential to discussing the policies of the Entente, the strategy adopted by Germany, or the actions of the Government in Warsaw, are covered only to the extent necessary for the purposes of this dissertation.²⁷

History values chronological order, but applying a chronological structure here has proved impractical. The only acceptable arrangement was to discuss individual problems separately, taking into account their interdependence, all the more so that many of the published findings extend beyond the chronological scope of the subject. Another difficulty was caused by the distinctiveness of social and economic issues related to the District of Volhynia as detached from the ZCZW in January 1920. Due to the overlapping and intertwining of issues and their dependence on the same external factors, repetitions and referencing to the other relevant parts of this study is unavoidable. However, the final layout appears to be optimal, given the content of the collected materials.

Chapter I provides the necessary, albeit naturally very brief, overview of the political situation worldwide and in Poland, as well as the political and social situation in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory in the spring of 1919.

Chapter II describes the process of establishing the ZCZW, its core agenda, its structure and the later attempts at its reorganisation. Due to very frequent

27 These issues are dealt with in: A. M. Cienciąła and T. Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno. Keys to Polish Foreign Policy 1919–1925*, Kansas 1984; T. Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914–1933*, London, Melbourne and Toronto, 1957. Also, see J. Korbel, *Poland between East and West: Soviet and German Diplomacy toward Poland, 1919–1933*, New York 1963.

rearrangements at lower levels, I have refrained from meticulously reporting all the changes that took place in the organisation of the various departments and sections.

Chapter III attempts to portray the ZCZW staff as a group. Owing to the lack of personal files, it was impossible to draw up a classical collective portrait; hence, the second part of the chapter provides a detailed overview of the Administration's key figures.

Chapter IV analyses the attitude of the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces towards the ZCZW. The latter was originally established as a subordinate unit of the Supreme Command, but afterwards de facto grew formally independent. One valuable supplement to the picture of their mutual relations is the short history of the ZCZW's Conscription-and-Enlistment Department, dissolved – at the request of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army and the Borderland Guard – soon after the final decoupling of the Administration from the Supreme Command.

Chapter V discusses the evolution of the attitude of the Legislative Sejm of the Republic of Poland towards the Eastern policy of the Chief of State. The ZCZW was established in consequence and as part of the latter.

Chapter VI addresses the reception in Polish society of the claims of the Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the attitude of politically active personalities to the plebiscite announced in the Proclamation.

Chapter VII seeks, based on staff reports and statistics of the ZCZW's Education Section, to establish the facts concerning of the ZCZW's widely-criticised school policy. My intention was to portray the struggle between the loyal executors of the programme announced in the Vilnius Proclamation and the supporters of national concepts for the authority over the education and school system in the Borderlands. The freedom in choosing the language of instruction introduced by the first director in charge of education in that area could allow the school statistics to be interpreted as a *sui generis* plebiscite in the Eastern Territories. This motivation probably became the reason for the fierce political battle over education in the area, which also impacted the form and content of the preserved sources.

Chapter VIII describes the process of compiling the ZCZW's agenda concerning Lithuania and Byelorussia. As the files of the ZCZW's Department of Ethnic Affairs were largely lost to fire during the evacuation in 1920, the section is essentially based on an analysis of materials mostly originating from the archival documentation of Marian Świechowski, Acting Head of the Ethnic Affairs Department. The letters of Bronisław Krzyżanowski, found by Dorota

Cisowska-Hydzyk and presently kept at the Józef Piłsudski Institute in New York City, form a valuable supplement.

Chapter IX analyses the situation in the counties of the District of Volhynia under the ZCZW's jurisdiction until January 1920. Due to its social composition differing from that in other districts, largely implied by the economic structure, this particular area can serve as an exemplar of the processes that also occurred in the other districts, but were much more difficult to grasp.

The book concludes with an extensive annex covering the political and social situation in the Vilnius, Brześć Litewski, and Minsk Districts in 1919, i.e. at the time when the Volhynian District, discussed in detail in Chapter IX, was also subject to the ZCZW. Essentially, it was then that the opportunity to implement the Chief of State's Eastern policy was squandered. In order to provide the reader with an opportunity to become familiar with the atmosphere of the sources discussed here and to draw independent conclusions, I have decided to adopt an unconventional form of presenting the supporting materials in a quasi-original form of extracts of the most interesting information preserved. The uniqueness and significance of the recovered archival material reassured me as to the relevance of this procedure: reports of agents of the ZCZW's Conscription-and-Enlistment Department, the unit dissolved in December 1919, as a result of, among others, the backstage activities of the Borderland Guard. However, a comprehensive comparison of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department's reports against those produced by the Borderland Guard, its 'rival' entity (the latter reports having the advantage of containing information from the three districts under the ZCZW's administration until the summer of 1920) would exceed the framework of my intended study on, specifically, the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories.

This book was conceived under the supervision of Prof. Andrzej Ajnenkiel (1931–2015), to whom I am deeply grateful for giving my adopted research method the benefit of the doubt. The drafted chapters were discussed, one by one, at sessions of the Section of the Twentieth-Century Political History of Poland at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of History. At this point, I should like to express my gratitude to Professor Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa (1930–2013), Professor Halina Janowska (1943–2018) and the other members of the Section, Dorota Cisowska-Hydzyk in particular, for their support and extremely valuable remarks. My sincere thanks also go to the Directors of the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, for facilitating my research at the Vilnius archives.

Several excellent teachers once taught me how to find sources and how to interpret them. In addition to the abovementioned, I have to add three names: Professor Andrzej Garlicki (1935–2013), the tutor of my Master's thesis submitted at the University of Warsaw; Professor Władysław Chojnacki

(1920–1991), my first superior at the Bibliography Section of the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences; and the abovementioned Professor Tadeusz Jędruszczak, who believed in my abilities more than I did myself. Unfortunately, not all of them are here today to judge what I have learned from them. I would like to thank the reviewers of this monograph, Professor Piotr Łossowski and Michał Klimecki, PhD, professor at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, for their remarks and recommendations.

The query that I undertook at the Warsaw Public Library's Old Prints and Manuscripts Section would not have been possible without the effort of Agata Chadaj, who initiated a preliminary rearrangement of the ZCZW files. I owe particular gratitude to Marta Parnowska, Head of the said Section, who is sincerely devoted to the collection entrusted to her, for her support in further work on retrieving the original layout of the documents. I have also experienced a rarely encountered kindness at the Lithuanian archives, for which I am sincerely grateful.

My appreciation also extends to my friend, Ania Pławska-Kiwiel, who has not only helped me to subdue my computer but has always been there for me to make sure that, apart from fascinating documents from the times of yore, I would still see the charming beauty of the surrounding world.

Furthermore, I am greatly indebted to Professor Józef Andrzej Gierowski (1922–2006), my parental uncle, for kindly devoting his time to study the draft version of this monograph and to discussing Polish politics in the East throughout history with me. However, the most faithful supporters of my efforts in dealing with archival materials were my son, Krzysztof Kałaur, and my parents, Hanna Gierowska (1934–2020) and Zbigniew Gierowski (1927–2013). Without their support, I would never have found the strength to bring this project to its conclusion.

I would like to dedicate this book to the son of Sapper Second Lieutenant Waclaw Gierowski, member of the Polish Military Organisation in Kiev (May 1917–June 1918), who joined the disarming of German troops in Warsaw in November 1918, was Aide at the headquarters of General Tadeusz Rozwadowski (May to August 1920). To the best historian among doctors. The person who has always been my foundation in life. My Father.

CHAPTER I: THE GLOBAL, POLISH, AND LITHUANIAN SITUATION AFTER POLAND REGAINED INDEPENDENCE

Background

The late 1910s saw the emergence of several countries inexistent in the nineteenth century, all confined between a few superpowers. The dominance of the strong over the weak took on more subtle and complex forms, which not everyone noticed at the time. The Great War (1914–18) brought about the collapse of the existing political balance of power, a remarkable indiscipline in economic and social life, and the erosion of traditional values. These circumstances were nonetheless promising for Poles, who had never ceased dreaming about their country regaining its former independence. Many concepts of the reconstruction of the statehood were developed during the war. One of them involved using the Austrian Partition territory as the groundwork for preparing an anti-Russian uprising. There was also an orientation towards the Central Powers, otherwise known as ‘activism.’¹

Of the opposite opinion were the National Democrats. Roman Dmowski, the leader of the ‘national camp’, believed that Poland’s interests were more compatible with those of Tsarist Russia rather than Germany. The tactic of the National Democrats relied on inactivity and waiting for events to unfold, hence their designation as ‘passivists’. The irredentists, the passivists, and the activists alike were closely watched by the neighbouring powers, who aimed to rebuild or consolidate their influence. Disputes between the camps were beneficial to both Russia (regardless of its government or system) and Germany. Both countries would therefore attempt to inflame these conflicts,² as well as to enhance

1 Among its adherers were Galician conservatives and so-called Polish democrats, the Polish Socialist Party – Revolutionary Faction [PPS–FR], the Polish Social Democratic Party [PPSD], the Polish Peasant Party ‘Piast’ [PSL ‘Piast’], the National Peasants’ Union and the National Workers’ Union. For more on this subject, see W. Suleja, ‘Polska irredenta w walce o Rzeczpospolitą’, in W. Wrzesiński (ed.), *Do niepodległości 1918, 1944/45, 1989. Wizje drogi spełnienia*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 81–98.

2 For more, see J. Holzer and J. Molenda, *Polska w pierwszej wojnie światowej*, Warsaw 1967.

any others identified among the inhabitants of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – and their efforts would prove quite fateful.

A majority of Poles considered it obvious that Poland should regain its independence in its pre-Partition borders. The aspirations of the other constituent of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations, Lithuania, were commonly disregarded not just in Poland, and its military strength was believed to be as low as 5,000 poorly trained soldiers. Although Germany's involvement in the institution of Lithuanian statehood was no secret, no one really thought that Germany's explicit military objectives would be attained by its means. With regard to the new circumstances, Germany consistently followed the line adopted in 1915.³

At the price of concessions in the south, Germany defended its sphere of influence in the strategic part of the Baltic provinces of Russia. By adopting slogans similar to those of Thomas Woodrow Wilson, the Germans managed to anticipate the agenda proposed by Józef Piłsudski in 1919. At the same time, all while preserving their former influence, the Germans managed to solve a future internal problem by keeping the remainder of their army that had encountered Bolshevik soldiers' councils far from home. It is a matter of conjecture as to who is the real author of Wilson's concept. Some literature attributes this to Ignacy Paderewski.⁴ However, it was a group of Lithuanian activists who addressed the President of the United States, Wilson, on behalf of Lithuania and other nations oppressed by Russia, as early as in summer 1916, in Lausanne. The small group of the future organisers of the Lithuanian Congress in Vilnius, supported by the Germans, was the first to use the phrase 'for the countries of Central and Eastern

3 It was originally formulated by Friedrich Naumann, leader of the German Progressive Party, in his 1915 brochure *Mitteleuropa*, which considered the Central European area, and rightly so, to be one vast economic region, and the issue at stake was who would control it. In his 1917 study, *Unser Kriegsziel im Osten und die russische Revolution*, Paul Rohrbach noted: "Whether Russia will be a republic or a monarchy, holds no importance. The critical thing is, where the Poles will belong: to Russia, or to Central Europe; and, how many people will leave Russia for Central Europe." The programme of the annexation of the Eastern lands was established by the military and civil authorities in Bad-Kreunach in April 1917. Lithuania, Courland, and a large portion of Poland and Estonia were expected to be annexed by Germany. The Polish question was therefore a key factor in the German–Russian rivalry.

4 The first courtesy visit to the White House took place on 7th February 1916. This was followed by an extensive talk on 6th November. On 11th January 1917, the White House received the 'Memorial [memorandum] on the importance of restoring Poland in the form of the United States of Poland'. R. Wapiński, *Ignacy Paderewski*, Wrocław 1999), pp. 76–79.

Europe'. It was not until six months later that Wilson received Paderewski's Memorial (of 11th January 1917) on the importance of restoring the Polish state.

In his speech, Paderewski asserted that in Europe, in addition to the 23 million people that were definitely Polish, there were 35 million people speaking and 15 million understanding the Polish language. "Should Poland become completely free within its former borders, we would have a nation of 54 million, as homogeneous as France." He did acknowledge the significant diversity in the nation, yet he believed that it did not exclude living in perfect harmony. "A reasonable constitution and fair legislation", he wrote, "should ensure maximum reasonable freedom for individuals and communities alike." In Paderewski's opinion, moreover, the restored Poland would take the form of a United States of Poland, which would include:

- the Kingdom of Poland,
- the Kingdom of Lithuania,
- the Kingdom of Polesia,
- the Kingdom of Galicia-Podolia,
- the Kingdom of Volhynia.

The territorial reach of these kingdoms, as envisioned in this argument, saw the Kingdom of Galicia-Podolia replaced by the Kingdom of 'Halicia' [Halych], whilst the Kingdom of Volhynia disappeared. The former would cover Eastern Galicia and the fragment of Volhynia located between the rivers Bug and Zbruch. Its northern part, adjacent to the Pripyat river, would be included in the Kingdom of Polesia. Paderewski left the question of the Ruthenians (the lands of Podolia and Volhynia) pending, which could have sparked disappointment among the Ukrainians, considering that solving this issue along the lines of national ambitions, given the size and situation of this community, would imply a disintegration of the Russian Empire. Eventually, the territory of the United States of Poland, whose president would assume the title of 'king of Poland, Lithuania, Polesia, and Halicia', was to include most of the lands of the former Commonwealth, as well as the Duchy of Cieszyn, the Opole Silesia, the Lower Silesian Counties of Syców and Namysłów, as well as East Prussia.

The demand to include the entirety of East Prussia was raised in a separate 'memorial' (memorandum), also dated 11th January 1917.⁵ President Wilson's proclamation of 22nd January 1917 on the conditions of peace contained a

5 The analysis of *Mysli o Polsce i Polonii* ['Thoughts on Poland and Polish diaspora'] by I. J. Paderewski is quoted after R. Wapiński, op. cit., pp. 76–79.

statement, which met Polish expectations, of unanimous international recognition of the necessity for a united, independent, and autonomous Poland.

Pope Benedict XV's note of 1st August 1917 addressed to the leaders of the warring states marked a new phase of political action.⁶ Among the undeservedly suffering nations and territories, including Armenia and the Balkan states, the united Poles were no longer mentioned, as opposed to the territories belonging to the former Kingdom of Poland "with noble historical traditions", which did not concern the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Holy See's priority must have been to support the expansion of Catholicism in the East, rather than the particular interests of countries or states, even those disadvantaged by fate, which is hardly surprising. However, it seems that Polish politicians did not pay attention to this nuance. It was also considered natural in Vilnius that the Pope donated, in parallel, 20,000 marks to Lithuanians from his own budget via the German authorities. The money was intended for the bishop of Samogitia and, specifically, for the Samogitian seminar in Kaunas (in Polish, Kowno).⁷ In the third year of the war, the head of the Catholic Church postulated not only (as in 1915) the abandonment of destructive operations,⁸ but also a redesigning of political and territorial issues in the spirit of righteousness and justice.

The German politicians, rather than Polish Catholics, apparently proved to be more attentive readers of papal appeals. They began to implement the spirit of righteousness and justice surprisingly quickly, in a way that they deemed profitable for themselves, and that would continue to interfere with the interests of countries that they had been harming so far. Their priority was to eliminate the Poles, who were the strongest potential factor aspiring to the area over which the Russian-German struggle had been going on for years. The Russians, of course, did not object to this German policy objective .

Russia, both before the February Revolution and after the October Revolution, was interested in expanding its possessions. The form of combat against its competitors for influence was only to be more sublime. The decree on the local population's right to self-determination was an excellent instrument which

6 M. M. Drozdowski (selected by and ed.), *Metropolia Warszawska a narodziny II Rzeczypospolitej. Antologia tekstów historycznych i literackich. W 80-tą rocznicę odzyskania niepodległości*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 38–40.

7 Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (hereinafter, LVIA), microfilm, Fond 1135 /4/36/ 2, lap. 161: Aleksander Szklennik, 'Recollections of the occurrences in Vilnius and in my country' [a diary covering the period 1915–18].

8 Cf. the Pope's note to the warring states of 30th July 1915, in *Metropolia Warszawska ...*, 40, fn. 1.

effectively undermined the restitution of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. German and Russian politicians adopted similar tactics. On 8th January 1918, Vladimir Lenin requested the signing of a separatist peace with Germany.

The plan preventing the restitution of the Poland-Lithuania of yore was implemented in two phases. On 9th February 1918, peace treaties were signed in the fortress of Brest-on-the-Bug/Brest Brest-Litovsk [in Polish, Brześć/Brześć Litewski (1922–39)] between Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian People's Republic on the other. It was established that the border between Ukraine and the Kingdom of Poland would run through the localities of Biłgoraj, Szczepieszyn, Krasnystaw, Puchaczów, Radzyń, Międzyrzecz, and Mielnik.⁹ "The plan was to strip the Kingdom of the Counties of Tomaszów Lubelski and Hrubieszów, in their entirety, a major part of Zamość County with the town itself, almost the entire Chełm County, a half of the County of Biłgoraj and a part of Krasnystaw County; subsequently, all of Włodawa and Biała Podlaska Counties, as well almost all of Radzyń Podlaski and Konstantynów Counties."¹⁰ These provisions triggered vigorous protests in Poland.¹¹

The treaty between Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey concluded in Brest on 3rd March 1918 established, among other things, a new border, which threatened the vital interests of Poland as it cut through the Governorate of Vilna [in Polish, Wilno; in Lithuanian, Vilnius]. Its course satisfied both Russia and Germany, but it thwarted Polish influence by demoting the Poles to the role of a tolerated minority. It was considered a disaster by the 'Fellow Countrymen' [*krajowcy*] movement and the nationalists alike; the configuration of the detached area made the merger with Poland unrealistic.

'Special policy' pursued by Germany in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory in Lithuania

There was no rational reason for the Germans to bother about the interests of foreign citizens. Their voluntary handover of power in Warsaw in November

9 W. Mędrzecki, *Niemiecka interwencja militarna na Ukrainie w 1918 roku*, Warsaw 2000.

10 J. Pajewski, *Odbudowa państwa polskiego 1914–1918*, p. 232.

11 J. Molenda, 'Antyokupacyjne wystąpienia chłopów w Królestwie Polskim w związku z układem brzeskim z 9 lutego 1918 roku i rola w nich Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego', *Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego*, Vol. 5, 1963; J. Cabaj, 'Postawy ludności Chełmszczyzny i Podlasia wobec kwestii przynależności państwowej swych ziem (1912, 1918–1919)', *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1992, fasc. 2.

1918 was not a consequence of political morality, but rather a rational submission to a combination of events beyond their grasp. As a result of events outside Germany's control, it became clear to the perspicuous German politicians that the Polish state would be reinstated and run out of their control. The Germans, presumably, realised that they would not be able to keep all of their conquests in the east, and that the Poles would not allow themselves to be reduced to the role of cannon fodder. The German politicians therefore divided the territory of the former Commonwealth occupied by them into two separate parts, eastern and western.¹²

German policy in the western part of the former Poland-Lithuania

The western part of the former Commonwealth, i.e. the former Kingdom of Poland between Lithuania under German army's occupation and Germany, was managed, in formal terms, until 25th August 1917 by the Provisional Council of State established in December 1916, and then by the Regency Council.¹³ This territory was almost homogeneous ethnically and religiously. On 11th November 1918, the Germans relinquished authority over this area without a fight, thus avoiding tarnishing their image, which they needed to keep burnished to carry out their programme in the eastern part.

German policy in the eastern part of the former Poland-Lithuania

As is known, the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were ethnically and religiously heterogeneous. The strategy adopted by the Germans required them to maintain tighter control over the eastern part, which was not, of course, to be synonymous with losing control over the western part, i.e. the former Congress Kingdom. Whoever dominated the western part of the former Commonwealth could act as a driving force in its eastern part, favourably

12 Such a political division corresponds to the military division into Grenzschutz East and Grenzschutz West; see W. Petter, 'Niemcy i Reichswehra w wojnie polsko-sowieckiej (1919–1920)', in A. Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Rok 1920. Z perspektywy osiemdziesięciolecia*, Warsaw 2001.

13 For a broader discussion, see W. Suleja, *Próba budowy zrębów polskiej państwowości w okresie istnienia Tymczasowej Rady Stanu*, Wrocław 1981; Z. Winnicki, *Rada Regencyjna Królestwa Polskiego i jej organy (1917–1918)*, Wrocław 1991.

situated in the political map of Wilson's Europe. This approach¹⁴ could enable the Germans to take advantage of Lithuanian demands, presented in as early as 1905 in a memorial to Russian Prime Minister Sergei Witte.¹⁵

The Poles inhabiting the areas of the so-called borderlands (Kresy), for whom surviving in their homeland, despite the more than a century-long restrictive policy towards everything Polish, was already a great achievement, were not prepared to cope with a new challenge that they did not fully understand. As they considered themselves Polish citizens, it did not occur to them that they could be treated differently than the residents of the former Congress Kingdom. They were reinforced in their conviction by the position assumed by the Provisional Council of State. On 20th February 1917, Crown Marshal Wacław Niemojowski addressed the following statement to the Polish Committee in Vilnius: "Aware of the tasks that Polish society is bound to fulfil towards Lithuania, the Provisional Council of State was particularly pleased to accept the address of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, as proof that the long years of oppression and captivity have not managed to break the ties with the great and glorious past connected Lithuania with the Crown."¹⁶ Three months later, the politicians of the resurrected Polish state demanded independence for the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as well. At the same time, society's exponents declared that Poland would strive steadfastly to resume its relations with the independent Lithuania, in the belief that the voluntary reunification of the peoples inhabiting Lithuania – that is, of

14 On 16th June 1919, preparations began for a military coup opposing the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. The aim of the revolt was to announce the creation of an independent German eastern state and attack Poland. The action was to be led by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, and Hans von Seeckt would act as the Chief of the General Staff. W. Petter, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

15 As this memorandum states: "The Lithuanians, knowing that the territory they have inhabited since historical times includes the so-called Lithuanian Governorates of the North-Western Region [in Russian, *Severo-Zapadnyi Krai*]: Vilnius, Kaunas, and Grodno, and further on, a part of Courland, and the part of the Suwałki Governorate incorporated into Poland since the Congress of Vienna, consider these to be ethnographically Lithuanian, the people living in these Governorates: Poles, Jews, Russians, and others as later arrivals, and the Byelorussians as Slavicised Lithuanians. Quoted after P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warszawa 1996, 15.

16 LMAB, Fond 168–40, lap. 6: 'Letterhead of the Kingdom of Poland's Provisional Council of State', memo N 1103/1466 S., round seal.

Lithuanians, Poles, and Byelorussians – would provide adequate conditions for national, cultural, and economic development to all layers of society.¹⁷

When reading these declarations, the Vilnian Poles paid attention to the word ‘union.’ It very much seems that they believed that since Polish politicians, who were dependent on the Germans, talked about an independent Lithuania, the Germans would be reactivating the Polish-Lithuanian union. This was a mistaken assumption. The activists from Warsaw took advantage of the favourable coincidence, probably not entirely consciously. The politically active Poles from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania under German occupation were unable to assess the circumstances around them on their own. They misread the declarations from Warsaw. What complicated the situation was that, similarly to other inhabitants of the lands of the former Grand Duchy, the members of the Polish Committee in Vilnius admired the German officials whom they knew personally, greatly appreciating their personal culture and worldliness. They saw these Germans as experienced people, teachers of the new era. The Germans, in turn, contrary to their anti-Polish political line, repeatedly expressed their esteem for the Poles as the only element capable of ruling over the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹⁸ This, in turn, reaffirmed the Vilnian Poles in their position, as they were unable to grasp the new political trends in the world and in Lithuania, which were being exploited by the Germans.

By ruining Russia’s military power and disorganising the country internally, Bolshevism liberated the previously suppressed the ethnic and social disparities in the territories occupied by this partitioner of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Central Powers took advantage of this situation by supporting (in accordance with the ideas expressed in Benedict XV’s note) the creation of entities independent from Russia: Ukraine, Finland, the Baltic

17 ‘Deklaracja polska w sprawie Litwy’, in H. Janowska and T. Jędruszczak (eds.), *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów 1866–1925*, Warsaw 1981, pp. 338–340.

18 In a confidential report dated 3rd Jan. 1917, von Beckerath, a senior official of the German occupation authorities, stated: “Our census from 1916 proved that the significance of Poles in Lithuania is incomparably more powerful than expected, and not less that Poles are the only element of the country with outstanding political and creative qualifications. If it is possible to rule without them in times of war, then in times of peace it would seem not only difficult but even dangerous to rule against them.” Quoted after P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*, p. 12.

provinces, and Lithuania. Both after 18th September 1917 and 25th February 1918, German politics consistently pursued a line of expansion in the East.¹⁹

With the participation of Poles on the National Council [Polish, Rada Krajowa], which remained under German control – as was the case with the Provisional Council of State – the Germans would pursue their strategic goal of strengthening their position in the eastern part of the occupied territory of the former Commonwealth. The participation of Lithuanian Poles in the Lithuanian National Council subordinate to the Germans would also deprive the Regency Council in Warsaw of all arguments on the international forum in favour of the restitution of the Commonwealth with its former borders, and would thus legitimise the presence of the Germans on the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the autumn of 1917, the Lithuanians met with such a unanimous refusal from the Poles²⁰ to accept their proposal to join the Council²¹ that even Tadeusz Wróblewski, a significant personage in Vilnius commonly known for his kindness towards Lithuanians, withdrew, under the pressure of Polish public opinion, despite his initial promise.²²

The Germans tried to persuade the Polish activists to join the Lithuanian Council, by dint of which they effectively discredited this idea in the eyes of the Poles. In the autumn of 1917, “trusted citizen Mr. K[Kognowicki]”, highly respected in Polish milieus, was summoned before Oberleutnant Kügler, head of the Political Department of Prince Isenburg’s Administration in Vilnius. As

19 On 25th February 1918, Minsk was captured by the Germans, who ignored the Byelorussian People’s Secretariat but did not dissolve it. In terms of German interests, this proved to be a very beneficial decision.

20 The ultimate conclusion whether the Lithuanians were driven by a sense of weakness or by the influence of yet-unknown factors, is a matter of inquiry into Russian and, primarily, German archives. It is a fact that they were the first to incite the Poles to join their German-supported National Council [in Polish, Rada Krajowa], which was not an easy decision for them.

21 According to a manuscript note, written, in my opinion, by Ludwik Abramowicz and dated 14th Jan. 1918, the Lithuanians were seeking compromise with the Poles. Jonas Vileišis has (‘just recently’) invited the representatives of the Polish Right (Kognowicki, Kończa, [illegible]), the Left (Piłsudski, Kryński, Jundziłł), and non-partisans (T. Wróblewski, [Abramowicz], Łakomski) for private talks; he was, however, authorised to do so by the Council. The Lithuanians presented the Poles with their concept of the future Lithuanian borders, which offered little promise in Polish–Lithuanian negotiations.

22 LMAB, Fond 79 59 III. 8, divider 5, lap. 1–4: ‘Letter by Tadeusz Wróblewski to Ludwik Abramowicz, 25th May 1918’.

he was attempting to persuade his interlocutor that Poles should take part in the Lithuanian Council, Kügler did not conceal the significance of Lithuania to the Germans, from both a strategic and provisioning perspective. The fundamental objectives of German policies in that period are clear today; yet, they were not fully understandable to 'Mr. K' and his contemporaries, especially that Kügler had only revealed a part of the truth then. He admitted that Germany needed Lithuania as a counterbalance to the emerging Polish state – should the latter desire to become independent from Germany – and announced that Germany would not allow a Polish-Lithuanian union. By supporting the Lithuanian proposals, the Germans would convince the Lithuanians of the lack of sincerity in Polish intentions towards them, while showing the Poles who was actually in charge in Lithuania. By doing so, they perpetuated among the Polish community of the Borderlands the negative stereotype of Lithuanians as German puppets. It was seen as obvious that the Vilnian Poles would reject the German proposal in order to demonstrate their patriotic attitude.

In view of the Polish refusal, on 10th December 1917 the National Council issued a statement proclaiming the restoration of an independent Lithuanian state, based on a perpetual and lasting alliance with Germany; following a nationwide debate, the Taryba complied with the social expectations and eventually proclaimed independence on 16th February 1918. Nine months before Poland regained its independence, Lithuania was already free, in formal terms. Between 10th December 1917 and 16th February 1918, the Poles failed to reach an agreement with their Lithuanian counterparts. In a statement by the United Political Parties of Lithuania, issued on 2nd January 1918 on behalf of the Polish population and addressed to German Chancellor Georg von Hertling, in reference to the Memorial of 24th May 1917, the Poles stressed their desire that the entirety of the occupied areas of historical Lithuania be merged into one country federated with Poland, whilst maintaining the autonomy of its components. The letter itself was appropriate, but its addressee had been chosen in error. This initiative was rightly criticised by Tadeusz Wróblewski.²³

The primary demand of the Polish party should have been an independent Lithuania alongside an independent Poland. For people of the ilk of Wróblewski, the ideal solution was a federation of countries stretching from Rewel [present-day Tallinn] to Odessa, which would include Poland, thus giving it access to two seas. In his proclamation of 4th May 1918, the emperor recognised the proclamation of the Taryba, but under the condition of its 'Courlandisation', i.e. limitation

23 Ibid.

of genuine independence by not defining the form of government of the new state. The exponents of the Vilnian *krajowcy* ('Fellow Countrymen') movement failed to take advantage of this opportunity. By boycotting the invitation to participate in the National Council, which remained under a clearly emphasised German protectorate, the Poles from Vilnius did not make the situation easier for the Germans. They refused to join the Council, considering protection of the interests of the entire Commonwealth as their primary duty. A record of the evolution of events at that time, written by Aleksander Szklennik, a cooperative activist well-known in Vilnius and beyond, who proactively developed consumer associations during the German occupation, contains the following:

6th September 1917: The Seimas, or Lithuanian convention, is to take place on 17th September; an invitation was sent to several citizens from the Governorate of Kowno [Kaunas], although their exact number is unknown. ...

18th September 1917: The Poles have submitted a request to the authorities for a Polish political rally for next Sunday. The initiative was brought up by the ND [=National Democrats], all the Poles will take part. ...

20th September 1917: The request submitted by the Poles, asking for permission to convene a political rally for 23rd Sunday this month, has received a negative answer without an explanation. Thus, the following rallies were held in Vilnius, with the permission of the authorities: Jewish (Zionists), international, and Lithuanian; but *not* the Polish ...

23rd September 1917: One of the participants of the Lithuanian conference, a Pole, reassured me (as I also heard from other sources) that a rumour was disseminated among the participants that when the German authorities decided to establish the National Council, they approached the Poles with the proposal of establishing it, but the Poles resolutely abstained from taking part in it. This is a blatant lie, as the Germans have never made such an offer to the Poles.

28th September 1917: All Polish political parties resolved not to accept participation in the Lithuanian National Council, and to file a protest in this matter. ...

5th October 1917: Oberleutnant Kügler, who is bargaining with the Lithuanians on behalf of Prince Isenburg, proposed that Mr. Stanisław Kognowicki join the Lithuanian Council in the capacity of a Polish delegate. Mr. K. refused himself [*sic*] to accept this honour; an interesting conversation ensued in this context, especially that Officer Kügler emphasised that he was speaking in an official capacity. And so, having heard that the Poles had unanimously decided not to take part in the newly-formed Lithuanian Council, Officer K. said that "we will find a Pole who will agree to join, but this will make it all the worse for you." "What could get worse?", asked Mr. K., "you will presumably persecute our schools even more severely, and perhaps close them all?" "No, not the schools. But the higher clergy and large landowners will suffer", was the answer. The representative of the authorities was fairly outspoken and had the nerve, saying, "Who

even reckons with the Lithuanians? These are children.” “Germany”, he continued, “is determined to keep Lithuania in order to protect it from Russia and Poland, so we must arrange the country according to our needs.”²⁴

During his conversation with ‘Mr. K’, mentioned both in Szklennik’s diary and in Marian Świechowski’s dossier,²⁵ Oberleutnant Klügler was aware that, should the Poles refuse the German proposal in the name of their own particular interest, their reaction could also be used to benefit German policies. The perversity of the proposal might have consisted in triggering a Polish declaration that would ultimately discredit Poles in the perception of Lithuanians. Perhaps, there emerged a chance for the Poles to communicate with the Lithuanians beyond Germany’s control? Is the letter by Tadeusz Wróblewski a testimony of the hope which the Germans skilfully destroyed with Polish hands?

Germany employed several other measures intended to prevent the Lithuanian-Polish agreement. In 1918, the following incidents occurred:

1. In March 1918, unsettling rumours were spread in Vilnius alleging that the Germans entering Minsk were handing out leaflets with effigies of Józef Piłsudski and Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, claiming that they were followed by the Polish Legions led by Piłsudski.²⁶ Due to these rumours, a year later some people in Vilnius treated Piłsudski almost as a German agent.
2. In May 1918, Gilse, head of the German Military Board, informed Antanas Smetona that the political situation was conducive to changes in the provisions of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with regard to borders, as Vilnius [Vilnius] might be handed over to the Russians in exchange for their withdrawal from Finland (‘Lifland’) and Estonia in favour of Germany.²⁷ This was yet another clear indication that Poles were not meant to participate in this game.
3. On 6th May 1918, German authorities arrested two Polish women in Nemajūnai [Niemoniuny] (Kreis [*sic*] of Alytus [Olita]), one of whom was a

24 LVIA, Fond 1135/4/37, lap. 22, 54 (verso), 57, 72, 76 & 84–85 verso (as in fn. 7).

25 ‘Remarks of the Polish Committee in Vilnius on the determining factors of the Polish State’, manuscript (author unknown), apparently written in autumn 1917 (“it is completely out of the question that the Lithuanian state unit currently being formed, provided that Polish politicians show sympathy and support for its creation, enter any closer relationship with Poland at some point in the future”). LMAB, Fond 168–52, lap. 14–19, 25, 30; LVIA, Fond 1135/4/37, lap. 22, 54 (verso), 57, 72, 76 & 84–85 verso; ‘Extracts of A. Szklennik’s notes made in 1917 (fasc. 8) (as in fn. 7 & 24),

26 Ibid.

27 LMAB, Fond 79 59 III. 8, p. 5, lap. 1–4 (as in fn. 22).

teacher at a Polish community school in the village of Szyleny, for distributing the underground Polish periodical *Unja*.²⁸

4. The German authorities granted a concession to the Lithuanian Council's Re-emigration Commission, but refused it to the Poles. With the consent of Kaunas Bishop Karevičius, Seinai [Sejny] Bishop Karosas, and Diocese-of-Vilnius Administrator Michalkiewicz, two Sunday fundraising collections were arranged in churches for the benefit of the Lithuanian Relief Committee for War Victims; none was held for the Polish peer committee whatsoever.²⁹
5. The question of filling the Lithuanian throne became the topic of a heated discussion in the Vilnian press. The ruler was originally to be Friedrich Christian, Prince of Saxony (whose ascent would be tantamount to a union between Saxony and Lithuania), and then, the Bavarian Duke of Urach. On 18th August 1918, a telegram from Berlin arrived in Vilnius, bringing news of the settlement of the 'Polish issue' at the general headquarters. The Germans immediately and deliberately proclaimed to the whole world that Archduke Charles Stephen of Austria was to ascend the Polish throne. The recognition of this decision by the government in Warsaw was allegedly evidenced by the presence in Berlin of two of its representatives, Prince Janusz Radziwiłł and Count Adam Ronikier. It is likely that this plan was revealed prematurely in order to prevent its implementation.
6. In June 1918, a memorandum of the Government of Saxony addressed to the German Government attracted the attention of Poles, both in Warsaw and Vilnius, a copy of which – served by Prince Maciej Radziwiłł, the newly appointed delegate of the Polish Government in Berlin – included a detailed plan for the Germanisation of Lithuanian territory. The text tellingly referred to the Lithuanian population as 'unwashed masses' (*Befehlerung*), which was undoubtedly greeted with joy in the 'Polish' Vilnius. According to Radziwiłł's findings, the fate of the Polish corridor, including Vilnius, remained an open issue, which is why he suggested intensifying demonstrations of Polish identity in the Vilnius region. His recommendation was put into practice, which benefited the Germans twofold: by increasing the Lithuanians' fear of Poles, and by prompting the Poles, elated with their patriotic demonstrations, to disregard the importance of the meeting of the Russian-German Commission in June 1918 in Berlin, which, according to the German press – which reached

28 LVIA, Fond 1135 Ap. 24 B.23, lap. 1: 'Communiqué No. 4 of 29th May 1918'; carbon copy typescript; the copy features the Umiastowski Book Collection bookplate.

29 Ibid.

Vilnius on a regular basis – would, among others, settle the spheres of influence in the White Ruthenia land.

7. The Germans pursued political activity in Vilnius even after their capitulation. In his letter of 27th November, transmitted to Tadeusz Wróblewski by Jan Tyszkiewicz, Alfred Tyszkiewicz informed Kaunas that “he had just returned from Berlin with very important news that we must seriously consider ... these are decisions to take as soon as possible, in order to accept [for] a meeting with several gentlemen favourable to us and trustworthy (in terms of language), to whom we could detail and entrust our further action in the country ... I have already contacted Radziwiłł and Kozakowski by telephone.”³⁰

The outbreak of the revolution marked the beginning of Germany’s general military retreat from ethnographic Lithuania. However, it should be made clear that despite the military defeat, this area remained a matter of interest for German politics. The issue was synthetically discussed by Wolfgang Petter at a conference held by the Polish Academy of Sciences’ Institute of History in the year 2000. He effectively proved that the Germans were attempting to influence ethnic relations in this area for a very long time. The last straw was the Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) Uprising of 1918–19, which prompted the Germans to perceive the Polish state (and not just the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) as a threat, as it had become a serious obstacle to the implementation of their plans in the East.³¹

The political views of the Lithuanian intelligentsia, scarce as it was, had already been conveniently exploited by the German authorities. German politicians followed the idea of a so-called ‘special policy’ in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. They managed to group all influential Germanophiles holding important positions. The military losses and eventual defeat in the war forced the Germans to reckon with the moods in the country where they had lost superiority in physical power; they had to modify their tactics. Their objective was to gain substantial influence over the shape of politics and the economy

30 The meeting did not take place on the planned date, as Tyszkiewicz was summoned by the superior occupying authorities whilst “Smetona had nothing against it”; as a result, the meeting to conclude the matter with Edward Ropp and the unnamed “Gentlemen from the Taryba” was officially postponed. I have not been able to determine with certainty whether the ‘Kozakowski’ mentioned in the letter was identical to the S. Kozakowski, employed at the ZCZW Brach in Warsaw as deputy to M. Kossakowski.

31 W. Petter, *op. cit.*

in the region. They exploited and skilfully fuelled anti-Polish sentiments among Lithuanians. The changes that followed their military defeat were minor. Ludwig Zimmerle ceased to act as head of the Civilian Administration of the Ober-Ost and formally became 'a general assistant to the German Government in Kaunas', i.e. a kind of intendant or governor. By acting on his authority to grant subsidies, he skilfully teased and outmanoeuvred the Lithuanians. Despite formal defeat, the Germans managed to achieve unexpectedly large profits in Lithuania for German national interests after the war. The Lithuanians' attempts to get rid of the repressive protectorate also failed; unfortunately for them, they disregarded the possibility of relying in that matter on Poland.

One should trust the account of a witness from the period, Tomasz Zan, who defined German politics in Kaunas in December 1919 as follows:

The apparent withdrawal of the Germans should not be overestimated. During the four years of their rule, they have managed to establish a much stronger influence than one could imagine ... the acquisition by the Germans, via various legal and illegal ways, of entire legions of official and secret adherents, believers and henchmen, creates a climate in Kaunas so unfavourable that no overt political action intended to create any conciliatory combination could today break through this Chinese wall of networks and intrigues entangled by the Germans.³²

They believed that they were accomplishing Germany's goals not of their own free will but as a consequence of the bondage that secured them a morally comfortable situation. They noticed an opportunity not only to rebuild their own state, but also to settle their longstanding grudges against Poles, and the four-century-long relationship with the Crown was ambiguously assessed among the Lithuanian political elites at the time. The Polish *raison d'état* ('Polish' in the meaning of the once-Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) constituted a threat not only to Germany. The Lithuanian independentists, who had dominated the nation's new political elite, felt equally menaced. It is a matter of debate as to what extent the danger had been exaggerated by the Germans, who wished to divide the lands of the former Poland-Lithuania, but they certainly exploited the issue. The Soviets did the same thing later. All three countries shared a common goal: to weaken the Polish state, which aspired to restore its former dominance over the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. As for Lithuania, however, reaching this aim was a suicidal endeavour.

32 LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 80–80 (verso): 'Tomasz Zan, On the Lithuanian affair, Vilnius, 12th Dec. 1919.'

On 11th November 1918, the Regency Council entrusted supreme military authority to Józef Piłsudski, who had returned from Magdeburg the day before. On the same day, the Taryba appointed a new government (headed by Augustinas Voldemaras), which, however, was unable to exercise power on its own. In the conditions prevailing in 1919, the Lithuanians strove to secure as much benefit as possible for their state; their approach proved fruitful. Counting on a possible British protectorate,³³ they sought to obtain the so-called Prussian Lithuania with Klaipėda (Memel) and Tilsit from the Germans. For Germany, such a concession was out of the question. Success in negotiations with the Germans depended on one condition: renouncing the union with Poland – a price that the Lithuanian policymakers decided to pay without hesitation, and despite internal opposition. In 1919, the Lithuanians wished for a federation with countries equal in size as well as economic and social potential, i.e. with the Baltic States. They believed that they shared a common fate, instead of being driven apart by the reminiscence of a partnership that they considered unequal. As a result, they ruled out Poland's participation in such a federation, especially that the Polish state without Lithuania did not meet the criterion of a 'Baltic State' in 1919. Such stance contravened Piłsudski's eastern concept, designed indeed with Lithuania in mind.

In Byelorussia

The Byelorussian lands that had found themselves inside the military occupation zone were treated differently by the German authorities.³⁴ They were to play the role of bargaining chip in future peace negotiations with Russia, which claimed its right to this area. The German Government had abandoned broader political plans and the idea of creating a separate Byelorussian state, or a confederation of Lithuania and Byelorussia. But they never abandoned the strategy of deceptive manoeuvres, which incidentally disoriented a group of Poles gathered

33 This idea was promoted by the Polonophobic *Golos Rossii* [Voice of Russia] published in Berlin.

34 This may have been a consequence of the alleged German-Russian agreement of August 1918. On 4th September 1918, Szklennik reported on a secret protocol to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of August 1918, which gave Russia a free hand in internal affairs and announced the handover of Byelorussia. At the same time, the opinion that Poland would become a second Russia, should Lithuania not unite with Germany, was spread (based on Ignas Jurkunas-Scheynius's answer to a questionnaire of the Institut intermédiaire in the Hague).

around Roman Skirmunt, a landowner who sought to establish a German-supported Byelorussian state. The German Government obviously did not suppress Byelorussian activity, which soon enabled it to gain effective control over the situation in the subject area. The Byelorussians – for whom their Polish neighbours, despite the often-demonstrated reluctance, remained a model of behaviour – later also succumbed to internal divisions, which unfortunately impacted the fate of all inhabitants of these lands.

The renascent Polish state became yet another pawn in German–Russian rivalry over the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Germany had a vital interest in prolonging the conflict, which affected all parties involved. The unrest in Byelorussia was first and foremost a guarantee of a lack of effective Russian political activity in Lithuania. The German tactic towards the Poles, Lithuanians, and the Byelorussian elite resulted in the intensification of Byelorussian and Lithuanian aspirations and the solidification of their sense of entitlement. Indeed, it was not only the Polish elites who were not appropriately positioned to assess the situation in the area on their own.

The Germans were tolerant of the Byelorussian movement, aware that it remained under their influence, and thus made the Byelorussians believe that they deserved everything in these lands. This attitude soon affected relations between the Polonophile groups in the Byelorussian elites and the ZCZW. With regard to Byelorussia's Poles, the Germans took a different approach. Grodno was enclosed within a ring-shaped demarcation line that prevented communication with the Polish authorities. It appears that one of the German objectives was to reinforce the lack of agreement between the Poles of Grodno Land and the authorities in Vilnius and Warsaw. By pursuing their chief policy for this area, the Germans generated 'intentional chaos'. By manipulating statistics, they hampered the establishment of even a provisional administrative authority in Polish-dominated counties. Supporting the aspirations of the Russians and Byelorussians, the Germans entrusted the mission of organising the local administration to the Soviet-backed Lithuanian minister for Byelorussian affairs, Yazep Varonka. They did everything they could to weaken the Polish community, which constituted the only ethnic group in the territory that could influence the Byelorussian movement in a way beneficial to it, thus colliding with German interests. As a result, they unintentionally worked for Russia's success.

The effects of German policies were easy to predict. The counties where, according to the German census, 75 % of the population considered themselves Polish and whose sons fought in the ranks of the Polish army under the

command of Generals Waław Iwaszkiewicz³⁵ and Antoni Listowski,³⁶ had no official administration recognised by the occupying authorities. The only resort was a network of parochial committees headquartered in the Rural Executive Department of the Polish Democratic Committee in Grodno. Tension was growing among the disoriented Polish community in Grodno. The sense of threat triggered increased activity, which the Germans then exploited to their own political advantage.

Yavhen Ladnov, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Waław Lastovski, appointed on 13th December 1919, and Colonel/Minister of Military Affairs in the consolidation government of Anton Lutskyevich³⁷ – and, according to himself, Lutskyevich's temporary deputy at the Agency of the Byelorussian State Committee in Paris since 25th February 1920 – penned an interesting analysis of the political situation in that period. On 29th May 1921, he wrote: "Nobody suspects the Germans of their devilish plans to arm everyone against Poland, to provoke an internal war of Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Galicians, and Lithuanians against Poland, and to drown independence in a sea of fraternal blood."³⁸ The Poles themselves did not suspect the Germans at all – to their severest detriment.

Warsaw's view of the Entente's politics

This book does not aspire to assess the policies of the Entente; there is extensive literature on this subject, some of which I have referred to in the bibliography. To support my argument, I would only like to highlight how these policies were assessed by intelligent Polish observers in 1919. The internal situation in Poland

35 Waław Iwaszkiewicz-Rudoszański was Commander of the Operational Group in the Lwów area (March to September 1919) and then of the Galician-Volhynian Front; Lieutenant General from 1st June 1919. Biographical note in T. Kryska-Karski and S. Żurkowski, *Generałowie Polski Niepodległej*, London 1976, p. 3.

36 Antoni Listowski was a Lieutenant General with the Russian infantry, commander of the officer reserves (December 1918 to February 1919), commander of the Operational Group (February to April 1919), commander of the Polesia Group and 9th Infantry Division (April to July 1919), commander of the Volhynian Front (July 1919 to March 1920), commander of the 2nd Army (March to May 1920), and commander of the Ukrainian Front (May to June 1920). Biographical note in Kryska-Karski and Żurkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

37 *Vpered*, 4th February 1920.

38 Central Archives of Modern Records [Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereinafter, AAN): Borderland Guard Society [Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej (hereinafter, TSK), 99, c. 31–36.

and the overall situation in Europe were unstable, and the evolution of events was virtually unpredictable. According to Polish analysts, the Entente's policies pursued in Eastern Europe were ineffective. One has to agree with the opinion of Cavalry Captain Olgierd Górká that the reasons for this failure also lay in the fact that America was regarded in Europe as a remote idealist, whose idea of regulating international relations by means of resolutions was deemed unfeasible.

Needless to say, mutual conflicts between allies not only weakened the prestige of the institution, but also gave Germany, for which the war was not yet lost in 1918 – despite signing the humiliating act of surrender – an extremely wide field of manoeuvre. The Entente lacked a single, consistently respected line of conduct, and the ability to enforce it. The weakness and clumsiness of the Entente's military ventures in Eastern Europe were caused by the inability to militarily enforce its decisions, thus reducing it to dead letters. Even though a manifesto that outlawed both the Bolsheviks and Germans was signed in Odessa, this did not prevent Entente representatives from immediately inviting those 'outlaws' to the Prinkipo Conference. The Entente's response to the Ukrainians not only ignoring its order to conclude a truce, but also to their having gone as far as opening fire on the train carrying its representatives, was that it invited Ukrainian delegates, who had previously been denied participation, to the Paris Conference.

The Germans, who ignored Ferdinand Foch's order to allow Polish troops to reach Vilnius, suffered no consequences for giving this Polish city away to the Bolsheviks. "The Tribunal at Quai d'Orsay has no gendarmes in Eastern Europe", noted Cavalry Captain Olgierd Górká on 31st March 1919.³⁹ The provisions were to be executed by Poland and Romania. Once again, Poland was treated as a reserve of fresh soldiers who had not come into contact with soldiers' councils and had not yet experienced long-term trench warfare. Poland also provided officer cadres from the armies of the three partitioning powers. Therefore, the sacrifice of blood was to be made not by the citizens of the Entente powers, but by "ranks of fresh recruits that had not yet participated in the war."⁴⁰ But these Polish 'fresh recruits' had already participated in the war – as citizens of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany. Cavalry Captain Górká considered it imperative to divide Russia, Ukraine, Hungary and Austria into four occupation zones – three northern ones plus the Baltic countries. Central Russia, with its western territories: Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian ones, was considered the

39 AAN, MSZ 3234, c. 151–156: 'O. Górká, Pro memoria, 31st March 1919.

40 Ibid.

most important zone. Southern Russia was a separate region, with its operating centre in Odessa. Therefore, even the Poles viewed the situation in the eastern territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a process of the Germans seizing Russian territories.

The situation in Warsaw

The military defence of the Borderlands was recognised in 1918 as a priority task by the Lithuanian Commission, operating since 1917 in affiliation with the Provisional Council of State and, subsequently, the Regency Council in Warsaw. Among its members were Konstanty Gordziałkowski, Edmund Iwaszkiewicz, Antoni Jundziłł, Mirosław Obieziński, Władysław Zawadzki, and Prince Eustachy Sapieha (the last of whom was also a member of the Provisional Council of State's Executive Committee). The Commission was composed of all the Polish parties and representatives of the Lands of Grodno and Nowogródek as well as western Byelorussia. Guarantees backed by real estate in the Borderlands were collected at the initiative of the Borderlands Commission in order to provide the means for the creation of an armed force capable of driving the Bolsheviks out of Lithuania and Byelorussia. The guarantors formed the 'Union for the Defence of the Borderlands' [*Związek Obrony Kresów*]. The executive body of this Union and of the Lithuanian Commission was the Committee for the Defence of the Eastern Borderlands [*Komitet Obrony Kresów Wschodnich* (KOK)]. Incidentally, Jan Obst, Melchior Wańkiewicz and Stanisław Mackiewicz were employed with one of the KOK branches.⁴¹ Simultaneously with KOK, members of the Committee for Eastern Affairs, established on 12th November 1918 under the chairmanship of Professor Marcei Handelsman, were also active. This Committee consisted of representatives of the People's Party of the Kingdom of Poland, the Union of Democratic Parties, the Democratic Association, the National Independence Party, and non-partisans; also involved were representatives of the Polish Socialist Party [PPS] and national conservatives.⁴²

At the beginning December, Leon Wasilewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Jędrzej Moraczewski's Cabinet, held consultations with representatives of the Lithuanian Commission and the Committee for Eastern Affairs. Controversy arose over the subordination of the Department for Lithuanian, White Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Baltic Affairs, to be established in accordance with

41 Namely, the Soldier Care Department's Sub-department of Administration and Press.

42 The latter with the proviso that the Committee's resolutions would not be binding on their party, although they fully endorsed the Committee's political line.

Marceli Handelsman's project, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Lithuanian Commission opposed the Committee for Eastern Affairs, arguing that the Department's work should be supervised by the Ministry of Internal Affairs rather than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This controversy was not a trivial one, as the subordination of the newly-established department to the Ministry of the Interior would have been tantamount to implementing a policy of incorporation, while the submission to the Foreign Ministry would have implied a federationist approach with respect to the nations of the once-Commonwealth.

In order to win the public over to its project, the Committee for Eastern Affairs organised, on 8th December 1918 and in the sixth week of Polish-Ukrainian fights in Lwów, a rally at the Museum of Industry and Agriculture's hall under the motto 'Independent Lithuania: alone, or in union with Poland?' The participants adopted a resolution to create a Lithuanian state from the lands 'detached from Russia', where all ethnicities/nationalities would enjoy equal status. In the name of the interests of the Polish state, they wished to dispatch a delegation to Vilnius to conduct negotiations with political activists of various ethnicities inhabiting historical Lithuania. The adoption of this resolution was thwarted by the brothers Władysław and Waclaw Studnicki, who were known for their pro-German sympathies.⁴³

On 10th December 1918, German deputy Harry Kessler made a commitment to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was Józef Piłsudski's closest associate, to intervene in person before the German command in Kaunas with regard to allowing the Polish troops to reach Vilnius, and was almost immediately removed from the game as a consequence of pressure from public opinion in Warsaw, which manifested its national sympathies. On 18th December 1918, Piłsudski appeased the worries of the concerned Lithuanian delegation by assuring them of being "an ally of the Lithuanians, wishing to help them." They should, however, have restricted their claims to ethnographic Lithuania, as historical Lithuania contained unconditionally Polish areas within its borders. The Poles did not hold any sentiments typical of an invader or partitioner with respect to ethnographic Lithuania; finding an agreement with Poland, perhaps in the form of a merger of the two countries, remained in Lithuania's interest.

Unaffected by the fiasco, the Committee for Eastern Affairs put forward two theses on 8th December 1918. Firstly, the dis-annexation of the lands that had belonged to the former Poland-Lithuania, and secondly, the formation of a single

43 The Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk (hereinafter, APAN)]: 'Documents and records of M. Handelsman.'

state out of the Byelorussian-Lithuanian lands, in order to bring about its union with Poland in the future. However, the moods prevailing at that time forced the Committee members to adopt a stance on the matter of incorporation. According to them, the integration of these lands into Poland was to be implemented only in the event that the main goal, i.e. the resurrection of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian state, failed to be achieved.⁴⁴ This line of reasoning became the foundation of the ZCZW's policies regarding the territories of Lithuania and Byelorussia. Unfortunately, it overlooked the fact that one of the countries meant to be revived had already been revived by the Germans. Piłsudski could not come to the rescue of Vilnius at the beginning of January 1919 due to the need to support the struggling Lwów, and also because the Germans would not allow Polish troops to pass through Ober-Ost territory. As a result, Vilnius fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

In February 1919, the Legislative Sejm began its sittings. An 'Appeal of the National Council of Poland in Lithuania to the Legislative Sejm for the enactment of deputies from the lands of Vilnius and Kaunas' has survived.⁴⁵ The delegates of the Polish community from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania sought above all to satisfy the aspirations of their electorate. As their attempts to include a representation of the Borderlands in the Legislative Sejm had failed, the National Council of Poland in Lithuania addressed the Minister of Internal Affairs, although the responsibility for the issues related to the lands of the former Grand Duchy lay with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister of Internal Affairs did not forward the petitioners to the proper addressee, thus adopting a waiting position. This was yet another trace of the internal Polish rift among the Warsaw-based ministries.

Despite the formation of the Civilian Administration under the Supreme Command of the Polish Army,⁴⁶ a fierce dispute persisted over who had jurisdiction over the problem of the former Grand Duchy's lands. The dispute involved the highest stake being the political agenda that would effectively be implemented. The Vilnian National Council for the Land of Vilnius, the Supreme People's Council of Grodno for the Lands of Grodno and Nowogródek, as well as the Polish National Council of Byelorussia and Livonia for the Lands of Minsk, Mogilev, Vitebsk, and Livonia, repeatedly appealed and requested the Sejm and

44 Ibid.

45 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (hereinafter, LCVA), Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 273, lap. 1–8: 'Appeal and list of Sejm candidates from the lands of Vilnius and Kaunas.'

46 See Chapter II.

the Constitutional Commission not to ignore their opinions as representatives of the local Polish communities. Their efforts towards the recognition of their mandates were not successful. The representatives of these bodies felt disadvantaged. Not only was their right refused, against the Decree of 28th November 1918, but their opinions were not taken into account as they were not invited to participate, even in an advisory capacity.⁴⁷ This bitterness was aggravated by an awareness of not only the political but also the financial defeat. The harsh fiscal measures imposed by the Polish authorities on those returning from Russia with merely a fraction of their former resources proved to be the last straw.⁴⁸

However, the Polish parties and factions representing the lands of the former Grand Duchy were not unanimous in their views on the future of these territories. The existence of fundamental differences in viewpoints forced Józef Piłsudski to reconsider everything thoroughly. The Association of Poles of Ruthenian Lands offered yet another direction of political activity, different from that of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia, and the Lithuanian Commission. They believed that the entirety of the Commonwealth lands should be treated as one political issue, which should eventually be resolved “in the form of the unity of individual lands: Poland proper, Lithuania, and Ukraine.”⁴⁹ As a result, on 28th February 1919 the Chief of State was visited by a delegation of the Association composed of Count Zdzisław Grocholski, Wiktor Gutowski, and Ignacy Baliński; their purpose was to set out their principal position of the ‘Association’ regarding the Eastern Borderlands.⁵⁰ In contrast to the Association of Poles from Ruthenian Lands, the Presidia of Polish National Councils of the Minsk Land, Mogilev Land, Vitebsk Land, and Livonia, as well as the Vilnian Committee with the Lithuanian Commission

47 LCVA, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 7: ‘Fragment of the petition submitted to the Sejm Club Committee, probably in autumn 1919’.

48 See Chap. II.

49 LCVA, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 5: ‘The (outlined) principal political stance of the Association of Poles of Ruthenian Lands in Warsaw on the south-eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland. Resolution of the Association’s Council of 6th Feb. 1919 – upon the request of the Political Commission and the Presidium of the Association.’ Round seal [inscription reads, in the rim: ‘Association of Poles of Ruthenian Lands’, in the central section: Podolia, Volhynia, Kiev Land], certified original copy signed by Z. Grocholski.

50 *Monitor Polski* [Official Journal of the Republic of Poland], 1st March 1919, Non-official Section.

(with a new mission since the beginning of 1919), informed not the Chief of State, but the Polish National Committee in Paris of their position.

The resolution of the Borderlands' issue was a fundamental matter for the lives of many Poles who had left their possessions in the East and evacuated to Warsaw. The Association for the Defence of the Possessions of Poles harmed in the territory of the former Russian Empire, with its seat in Warsaw at Moniuszki St., had the right, at its board's discretion, to open branches outside Warsaw.⁵¹ The general meeting of this body held on 5th March 1919 in Warsaw was attended by delegates from the Association of Poles of Ruthenian Lands (Jan Wiszniewski), the Union of Lithuanian Poles (Marian Strumiłło), the Union of Poles from the Byelorussian Borderlands (Ludwik Uniechowski), the Association of Ukrainian Lease-holders (Władysław Hulanicki), the Association of Merchants and Industrialists in Russia (Mr. Słaboszewicz), and the Association of Merchants and Industrialists of the City of Łódź (Edward Babiacki). The Union's board involved well-known personas: Prince Hieronim Drucki-Lubecki, Henryk Lautenberg, Mieczysław Obieziński, Gustaw Ostrowski, Stanisław Pniewski, Bernard Raabe, Rajmund Stodolski, Michał Wawelberg, and Aleksander Półkozic-Wolski, with their deputies Zygmunt Dziewanowski, Władysław Hulanicki, and Stanisław Mielecki. The Audit Committee was composed of Józef Biszewski, Maurycy Landau, Kazimierz Spinek, Stanisław Wilczyński, and Teofil Wasilewski. The Mediator Court had Włodzimierz Łęski, Ludwik Pułjanowski, Adolf Wejnstein, Władysław Zabiełło, with Zygmunt Korsak and Józef Skarbek-Kruszewski as deputies.

The purpose of the Association was to conduct a joint consolidated defence of the economic and financial institutions and interests of the Polish citizens in the territories of the former Russian Empire. In order to achieve this goal, the Association's activity was to be multiform. Firstly, it would describe and state the amount of any losses and damage caused to members of the Association in the said territories, both as a result of war and of the revolutionary and Soviet-Bolshevik rule. Secondly, it would ensure that the authoritative bodies and institutions recognise all the losses caused by the revolution and Soviet rule as eligible for indemnity on an equal footing with wartime losses. A third form of activity was to be soliciting advance payments to cover the losses for the Association's affected members. The body's task was also to determine the

51 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/11/2: 'Brochure 'Association for Defence of the Possessions of Poles harmed in the territory of the former Russian Empire', 15 pp., Social Printery of the Christian Workers' Association, [Warsaw], 3/5 Grzybowski Square'.

method of reckoning and settling the amounts-due resulting from liabilities and agreements concluded by Association members before or during the war, which had become subject to regulation in the altered currency conditions. The execution of the objectives was facilitated by the statute's provision which obliged Association members to maintain regular contact with official bodies as well as related institutions and organisations.

In its own words, the Association, which was composed of a number of related organisations, associations, and groups of Polish citizens within an "ethnographic scope of settlement", constituted "the apparatus of people of good and strong will, who, acting in the name of their co-victims, came to the aid of the government apparatus by means of comprehensive internal and external action."⁵² Internal action was to be expressed in the work of four sections: I, trade/industrial; II, financial/commercial; III, agrarian; IV, legal, whose task was to draw up memoranda for state offices defining the course of their work. External action consisted in obtaining support from the Ministries of the Treasury, Commerce, and Industry, in maintaining contacts with the Central Liquidation Office and, above all, in marking the organisation's presence at the Paris Peace Congress. It appears that the Association's activity was also to cover the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and it cannot be excluded that Zygmunt Dziewanowski was a delegate of the Main Welfare Council to the County of Wołkowysk (this aspect is analysed more thoroughly in Chapter IV).

The Polish community's activities in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania prior to the establishment of the ZCZW

The political activity of Poles in Vilnius during the Great War (1914–18) and in Grodno in March 1919 is not the actual subject of the present study.⁵³ However, the fact that such activity was pursued created the conditions that, in my opinion, determined how the programme formulated on 22nd April 1919 by Józef Piłsudski was received by Polish society in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The lands under the authority of the ZCZW were inhabited by people diverse in terms of ethnicity/nationality, religion, level of culture, and awareness. They could also be divided according to profession (or lack thereof), gender and

52 Ibid., p. 15.

53 See. J. Jurkiewicz, *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi w latach 1905–1922*, Poznań 1983.

age, material status, aspirations; and their mobility should also be taken into account. All of these factors were not without influence on their opinions.

In view of the complexity of the problem, an analysis limited to selected aspects could result in a false assessment of the situation. The only assumption that can be made with a degree of certainty is that the course of events in the Eastern Territories was influenced by the ongoing struggle for power. Its beneficiaries could exploit it to fulfil their political or economic goals. The nominal foundation of the ZCZW in 1919 posed no obstacle to this struggle, as that Administration had no executive body whose functions should have normally been fulfilled by the police. The Polish population generally believed that, given the historical occurrences as well as the economic and, above all, cultural potential, they were first and foremost entitled to initiative and a leading role to play in determining the shape of future relations.

The lands that were due to fall under the jurisdiction of the ZCZW were home to the Polish community. Its representatives, while legally remaining citizens of the Russian Empire, identified themselves with the reborn Polish state. In the first phase of the First World War, the Polish political elites in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were led by people generally considered to be seeking opportunities for cooperation with one of the partitioning powers that would be beneficial for the Polish cause. It is important, however, that the conciliatoriness of the Borderlands-based conservative landowners, who were rather reluctant towards politics – unlike the Muscovy-*philia* of the National Democrats of Warsaw – was considered an element of national loyalism. Demonstrating it at the right time was regarded as an act of foresight and a manifestation of national wisdom. These people, whose merits for Polish affairs in many fields are undeniable, later fell for the tricky German policies, intensified after the defeat of White Russia.

The mentality of Polish ‘landed citizen’ circles of Vilnius was perspicuously described by Michał Römer.⁵⁴ While he did not deny the merits and focus on public well-being (with promising results at the time) displayed by Paweł Kończca⁵⁵ and other representatives of the ‘conciliators’, he observed the following:

From the time-of-yore, autocratic addictions have remained in them, the inability to reckon with the public will and the tendency to underestimate it, as well as arbitrariness

54 In a confidential memorandum (‘memorial’) entitled ‘Litwa wobec wojny’ [Lithuania and the war], LMAB, Fond 168–33, lap. 1–37.

55 Paweł Kończca, Director of the Bank Ziemiański [Agrarian Bank], Chairman of the Vilnian Agricultural Society.

and a lack of social discipline. Moreover, they have grown addicted to believing in the methods of personal influence, in their own providential quality, in the subtle and, in fact, fragile consensual machinations with the ruling governments.⁵⁶

They occasionally acted with no prior consultation with their fellow citizens. This was possible thanks to the substantial fragmentation of Polish public opinion and its fear of taking responsibility for their decisions, as well as the social and societal hierarchy. When choosing their political affiliation, the Polish moneyed strata had also to take into account the situation of their possessions. As for the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's lands, the extent and condition of Polish estates or demesnes was commonly associated with the extent of Polishness in ethnically diverse areas. This assumption was the foundation for the reasoning of some conservative landowners. The Polish inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy were full of initiative, so long held back by the Germans (as in Kaunas, Vilnius, and Grodno) and Russians (Minsk), who favoured the other ethnic groups. When informed of the events of 11th November 1918 in Warsaw, they recalled their previous experience with German occupation, and took fateful decisions and steps. The Polish military-men organised themselves in mid-July 1918. On 10th September, a 12-member Union of Polish military men [*Związek Wojskowych Polaków* (the ZWP)] from the City of Vilnius was founded at the initiative of Major Stanisław Bobiatyński.⁵⁷ On 7th October 1918, the ZWP convened a Polish rally that saw the election of the ZWP's board. Colonel Lucjan Żeligowski was elected President-in-absentia. A network of ZWP branches was established in the smaller towns and localities of Lida, Kowno, Oszmiana, Koszedary, Świr, Łyntupy, Szlapobierz, Wiljec, Szyrwinty, and Niemenczyn. For the purposes of communication, a Military Commission was established, composed of Messrs. Minejko, Umiastowski, Teofil Szopa, and Stanisław Kognowicki. It was resolved that a delegation be dispatched to Warsaw in order to establish contact with the Polish Government.

On 17th October 1918, the Polish Committee in Vilnius issued a proclamation entitled 'To the people of Lithuania!' 'In the face of the approaching end of the

56 LMAB, Fond 168-33, lap. 1 (as in fn. 54).

57 It was headed by Major Bobiatyński, and composed of Colonel Grabowski, Captain Konasiewicz, Captain Janczewski, military official Popławski, Lieutenant Wołłowicz, Lieutenant Czyż, 2nd Lieutenant Giedrojc, Ensign Giedrojc, Kadenacy, Hajdukiewicz, and Sobolewski. Central Military Archives [Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (hereinafter, CAW), Laudański's Dossier [Teki Laudańskiego], I. 440.12/2-3, c. 315.

‘all-world war’ and “the new order emerging in the world, based on the principles of justice and law”, all nations desired not only lasting peace, but

everyone is willing to be a master in their own country, to rule by their own laws, to possess their own independent homeland ... we do not wish to return to Russian captivity ... We, the Poles in Lithuania, associate the broadest security possible of not merely our own interests and freedoms, but those of the entire population of the country alike, with unity with Poland. We wish to see the whole of Lithuania connected with Poland, regardless of the form in which this may be accomplished. In particular, the Polish population of the Lithuanian territories, inclusive of Vilnius, which they inhabit as a majority, must call for their unification with Poland in the strongest possible terms.⁵⁸

In Vilnius on 20th October, a solemn civilian parade marched to the Cathedral in order to demonstrate Polish identity in Lithuania. It was attended by crowds of people. Clashes with the police occurred.

On 1st November 1918, in view of the announced retreat of the Germans from Lithuania and Vilnius, the Polish Committee appointed a Public Security Committee, with Mr Bańkowski as Chairman, Ludwik Abramowicz as Vice Chairman, Stanisław Kognowicki as Treasurer, Aleksander Zwierzyński, Zygmunt Nagrodzki, and Stanisław Bobiatyński as representatives of the ZWP. At the same time, in Minsk, at the initiative of Dr Bernatowicz, the Association of Self-help of Polish Military-men of the Former Corps was founded, tasked with defending the Minsk Land. The organisation’s board was composed of Dr Bernatowicz as Chairman, along with Colonel Malinowski, Colonel Kobordo, and Messrs. Parafjanowicz and Brzozowski. Władysław Raczkiwicz, delegate of the Minsk Land Council to Warsaw, brought along a decree issued by General Tadeusz Rozwadowski, Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, dated 28th October 1918, establishing General Władysław Wejtko as the commander of all of the self-defence formations in Lithuania and White Ruthenia (and Colonel Kobordo being the formation’s chief for White Ruthenia), on condition that the said formations would be revealed and legalised, the German authorities not objecting to military exercises. The Germans, of course, did not give their permission.

On 10th November, as the news spread of the revolution in the German army, Soldiers’ Councils (*Soldatenrats*) were established, and the German army in Lithuania, in view of an imminent return home, collectively engaged in looting and selling the booty. In this situation, all ethnic groups requested the Ober-Ost

58 LVIA, Fond 1135, Ap. 24 B. 25, lap. 14: ‘To the people of Lithuania!’ [‘Do ludności Litwy!’], Vilnius, 17th October 1918, signed: Polish Committee in Vilnius.

authorities for help and permission to create their own self-defence forces. The Germans authorised the Byelorussian Council in Minsk and the Lithuanian Taryba in Vilnius to form militias. General Kandratovich (soon to be known as Kondratavičius), appointed by the Germans as the leader of the Lithuanian militia, unsuccessfully attempted to use Polish self-defence troops as 'cannon fodder'.⁵⁹

The Poles renewed their attempts to create their own defensive formations. Teofil Szopa brought forth the idea of 'Parochial Committees' to facilitate the organisation of provincial militias. The first Landed Gentry Congress took place in Vilnius and elected new members to complement the hitherto-inactive Security Committee. Contacts were established with General Mikołaj Sulewski, head of the Self-Defence Forces of the Grodno Land. Another appeal by the Polish Committee in Vilnius, dated 20th November 1918 and entitled 'To the Polish people',⁶⁰ proclaimed that until a proper state authority, in the form of a provisional administration, was set up in cooperation with the Polish delegation, the Polish people were supposed to refer any and all matters concerning public order and public safety to the Polish Committee in Vilnius, which acted as a temporary organisation of the Polish society in Lithuania.

It appears that many among the euphoric Vilnian politicians lived in a certain virtual reality. This was a consequence of living in Vilnius, a city steeped in history but not representative of the social composition of urban areas characteristic of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (with the exception of Kaunas, perhaps). Those of the Poles who lived outside Vilnius⁶¹ had a completely different perception of reality. The information in the proclamation of the Polish Committee in Vilnius dated 20th November addresses the negotiations conducted by the Polish Committee with the German occupying authorities on the establishment of a Provisional Board. The politicians of the Polish Circle urged the population of the entire [*sic*] country to immediately create local organisations tasked with securing public security before these 'negotiations' were concluded. It is clear that these politicians were therefore still attempting to

59 CAW, Laudański's Dossier, 1.440.12/2-3, c. 315: 'Report of 14th February 1919, done at Ostrów'.

60 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/VII, c. 106: 'Appeal 'To the Polish people', Polish Committee in Vilnius, Vilnius, 20th November 1918' [printed leaflet, size 37 cm x 31 cm].

61 The atmosphere is masterfully described in the two volumes of Eugeniusz Romer's diaries, edited by P. Łossowski: E. Romer, *Dziennik*, Vol. 1: 1914-1919; Vol. 2: 1919-1923, Warsaw 1995, pp. 641+590.

cooperate with the Germans. The attitude of General Max Hoffman in Kaunas aroused some hope, as he promised to accept the Poles' requests for weapons and money, provided that the Poles would not use the weapons against the Germans. The Vilnian *Soldatenrat* sabotaged Hoffman's decisions by confiscating these weapons and carrying out searches on the premises of the self-defence forces. A similar outcome occurred in Minsk, although all Polish requests for the provision of weapons were categorically rejected. This attitude of the German authorities soon resulted in the Counties of Lepel, Bobrujsk, and Łuck falling into the hands of the Bolsheviks, and the horror was exacerbated by the many robberies carried out in the manors by local peasants. On 5th December 1918, General Wejtko filed a request, in person at the Polish command, asking for retaliatory action. On 8th December, Józef Piłsudski appointed him commander of all the national self-defence formations in Lithuania and White Ruthenia, and all the other Polish troops.

On 18th December, Bobiatyński received the following reply from the Germans: "No permission will ever be granted for the creation of military formations to fight the Bolsheviks ... Anarchy is not to be feared since Bolshevik troops are arriving as soon as the Germans have left, as was the case in Minsk, and it would probably take a miracle for the same thing not to occur in Vilnius."⁶² The German authorities would only allow the formation of a militia, and then on the condition of submitting written personal pledges that the conscripted militiaman would not act against individuals affiliated with the army of the Soviets. A materially reinforced self-defence unit became the object of desire for Major Finkel von Finkelstein, who submitted his own plan (not approved by the Polish partners) on 15th December 1918 detailing the organisation of the militia in such a way that the militiamen were to be Polish while the command was to remain in the hands of the Germans.⁶³

On 21st November 1918, the Organisational Commission of the Congress of the Polish Committee in Vilnius announced the instruction of the All-Polish Congress of Delegates from Lithuania.⁶⁴ December 1918 saw the election for the

62 CAW, Laudański's Dossier, 1. 440.12/2-3, c. 322: 'Report [unsigned] of 14th February 1919, issued in Ostrów'.

63 On 24th December 1918, Captain Klinger arrived in Vilnius and five days later the self-defence was dissolved, all of its members joining the Polish army in Lithuania. General W. Wejtko took command of the Military District of Lithuania and White Ruthenia; General Adam Mokrzecki became the commander of the city of Vilnius.

64 The constituencies were located in all counties (*Kreises*) west of the former front line, their numbers having been determined for each county by the Congress's Organising

Polish Congress in Vilnius;⁶⁵ Polish nationals from the Kowno/Kaunas region took an active part.⁶⁶ Although no full agreement was reached regarding the further course of action, a group of Polish landowners,

aware of the situation that the course of events may require them to take a stance in relation to the emerging Lithuanian statehood, although noting that, whilst they express a sincere desire for the whole of Lithuania to form a free union with Poland, they do not consider it advisable to prejudge this arrangement in external enunciations for tactical reasons. To their designated representatives, they provide the following instructions

Commission. One delegate was elected for every 4,000–5,000 Poles, plus one additional delegate for each county. An indirect electoral system was adopted, and it was stipulated that all social strata be represented evenly, with particular regard to the lower classes; the participation of women was ensured. Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka (the 'Martynas Mažvydas' National Library of Lithuania, hereinafter: LNMMB), Fond 99–1939, lap. 1.

65 LNMMB, Fond 99–1939, lap. 1: 'Instruction for the All-Polish Congress of Delegates from Lithuania, 21st November 1918, [signed by] Organisational Commission of the Congress [of the] Polish Committee in Vilnius'

66 The candidates were: from the Gendarmerie Bezirk [*sic*] (hereinafter, GB) Poschwa – Mr. Kossakowski; GB Łohojsk – Mr. Montwiłł; GB Wiłkomierz (city) – Mr. Kozenkowski; GB Wiłkomierz (forest) – Mr. Wolbeck jr.; GB Wieprze – Messrs. Ratowt and Michałowski; GB Zejmy – Bereyno; GB Baty – Mr. Skaczkowski; GB Siesiki – Mr. Hończa; GB Pogiry – Messrs. Downarowicz and Kończa; GB Szyty – Messrs. Kulwiec and Radziwiłł; GB Towiany – Narkiewicz; GB Kowarsk – T. Rouba-Tański; GB Kurhle – K. Bystrum. An eighteenth candidate from Wiłkomierz was sought. LNMMB, Fond 99–1939, lap. 1 (verso). In total, around 293–299 people were expected to participate in the Congress, including seven from Kaunas (urban), six from Kaunas (rural), five from Poniewież [Panevėžys], five from Wiłkomierz [Ukmergė], two from Uciana [Utena], five from Syłgudyszki [Saldutiškis], four from Rakiszki [Rokiškis], three from Kupiszki [Kupiškis], two from Birże [Biržai], one from Johaniszkiele [Joniškėlis], three from Szawle [Šiauliai], one from Okmiana [Akmena], two from Kurszany [Kuršėnai], two from Siady [Seda], two from Telsze [Telšiai], one from Kretynga [Kretinga], one from Wieżajcie [Vėžaičiai], two from Taurogi [Tauragė], two from Skaudwile [Skaidvilė], two from Jurbork [Jurbarkas], 20 from Vilnius (urban), 19 from Vilnius (rural), 13 from Szyrwinty [Širvintos], five from Malaty [Molėtai], 16 from Nowo-Święciany [Švenčionėliai], nine from Koszedary [Kaišiadorys], five from Olita [Alytus], 13 from Raduń [Radun'], eight from Planta [Plyanta], seven from Lida, six (seven) from Zdzięcioł [Dzyatlava], five from Białowieża, seven from Wołkowysk [Vawkavysk], six from Olekszyce [Alyekshytsy], three from Wyłkowyszki [Vilkaviškis], three from Mariampol [Marijampolė], two from Władysławów [Naumiestis], 26 from Białystok, 17 from Bielsk (Podlaski), 13 from Sokółka, ten from Augustów, 13 from Suwałki, five from Sejny, and two (one) from Olita Suwalska. *Ibid.*, lap. 2.

concerning their platform, in case their position needs to be disclosed to the public: We, the Polish landed-gentry of the Kowno Land, deeming it our most sacred duty to work together with other nations to establish Lithuanian statehood as a nationality [i.e. nation]state, shall strive for the erection of Great Lithuania with the recognition of equal rights of all the nationalities and the recognition of the co-officiality of the Polish and Lithuanian languages [i.e. their equal status as official languages]. Should the coming-into-effect of the establishment of the nationality state of Great Lithuania prove impossible for any reason, the state of Lithuania having only been established within the territory of ethnographic Lithuania, we, the Polish landed-gentry of the Kowno Land, shall devote our efforts and resources to it, provided that we receive equal rights and freedom of cultural development. Nevertheless, in view of the forthcoming general election among the Polish Society for the general Polish congress, which should also serve as a reliable indicator of the attitudes of the Polish society of ethnographic Lithuania, we shall postpone the announcement of our position in the press until said general congress.⁶⁷

Established in the autumn of 1918, the Polish Committee of Kowno Land⁶⁸ participated in the holding of election to the Kaunas City Council in December 1918, based on a five-point electoral law.⁶⁹ During the election, the Committee established that Poles in the Kaunas region were only allowed to participate in Polish conventions.⁷⁰ The consequences of this decision, never revoked and enforced in the Polish community, conflicted not only with the abovementioned unannounced position of the group of Polish landed gentry of the Kaunas region, but also with the federationist concept proposed by Józef Piłsudski in the spring of 1919.

On 3rd December 1918, General Wejtko, commander of self-defence troops, paid a visit to the Commander-in-Chief in Warsaw accompanied by a delegation from Lithuania and Byelorussia, requesting military assistance, which Piłsudski could not provide as his hands were tied by developments in Lwów.

67 LNMMB, Fond 99–1939, lap. 3, typescript [place and date unspecified], incipit: 'A group of Polish landed gentry from the Kowno Land . . .'

68 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 460: 'Report by Ignacy Sokołowski, Chairman of the Polish Committee of the Kowno Land 2nd August 1919'.

69 It transpired that 43 % of the residents of Kaunas were Polish and only 17 % were Lithuanian.

70 In February 1919, two members of the Committee were excluded for unconsulted participation in the Lithuanian conference. The Committee convened an extraordinary meeting in March 1919 and, in a repeated vote, all members showing conciliatoriness towards the Lithuanians were removed. A Committee decidedly hostile to the Kaunas-based Lithuanian Government was elected instead.

The Provisional Governing Commission in Lithuania established itself relatively late, on 22nd December 1918, with the following cast of members: Witold Abramowicz, Stanisław Kognowicki, Stefan Mickiewicz, Konrad Niedziałkowski, Jan Piłsudski, Kazimierz Świątecki, and Aleksander Zwierzyński. All of them but Stefan Mickiewicz were signatories to the 'Memorandum of 44', a declaration made by representatives of Polish politicians in Lithuania and delivered on 24th May 1917 to the head of the Civil Administration of Lithuania, to be forwarded to the Chancellor of the German Reich.⁷¹ Delivering this declaration to the Chancellor proved to be a critical mistake. The exponents of Polish political thought approached the German authorities with the idea that the Polish-Lithuanian issue be resolved in accordance with Polish and Lithuanian interests, unaware that the Germans were not interested in building a strong state or association of states that would separate them from Russia. The Poles thus effectively pointed out, as if it had already not been clear enough, whom Germans should expect to threaten their interests in the East. At that time, representatives of all aspects of Polish political thought in Lithuania already believed that "as an integral part of the great Polish nation ... they will always strive for unity with Poland, in state terms ... and this aspiration is by no means discordant with the interests of other nationalities of that country; on the contrary, it is harmonised with them in the most advantageous way possible, through the establishment of a single common state based on the principles of the self-governance of its components." It remains a matter of debate why the 'Memorandum of 44' was passed by the representatives of the Polish political thought from Vilnius to the Chancellor of the Reich, instead of the Provisional Council of State.

This fact did not facilitate the manoeuvres of the 'Memorandum of 44' signatories in the Vilnian-Polish political arena in December 1918, after Germany's defeat – all the more so as the Germans had previously rejected the offer, consistently choosing the Lithuanians instead, the weakest of the possible 'partners'. What is extremely telling is that the deliberations of the 'Congregation of county Delegates and representatives of political parties, trade unions and social organisations of the city of Vilnius' (the name officially adopted by the Polish Congress in Vilnius, which took place on 28th–30th December 1918) were attended by only one signatory of 'Memorandum of 44'. Perhaps, instead of thinking about the future, the Poles in Vilnius were dealing with the recent past?

71 The text of the Memorial (with the 44 signatures) was published in *Biuletyn Wileński*, No. 5, 29th May 1917.

One of the last conclusions of the Polish Congress was the statement pronounced by Władysław Wielhorski: "The All-Polish Congress of Delegates from Lithuania, held in Vilnius on 28th–30th December 1918, hereby appeals to the Polish Government in Warsaw with a strong request to accelerate the expedition of armed forces in order to defend Lithuania against the onslaught of Bolshevism. The All-Polish Congress considers that aid would be strictly military in nature and would not prejudice the political future of our country."⁷² Such an imprecise formulation aroused, among listeners with the best of wills, the hope that the idea of cooperation between Poles from the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and other inhabitants of these lands had a chance of success. The formation of the Provisional Governing Commission in Lithuania, six days before the beginning of the Polish Congress, must have influenced its inactivity in the face of the sudden change in the military and political situation that occurred at the beginning of January 1919.⁷³

Amidst a general conviction that a German-Bolshevik agreement existed, the Red Army subjugated Vilnius on 5th January 1919. On 27th February 1919, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania and Byelorussia, also known as the 'Litbel', was proclaimed. The three-month-long period of Bolshevik rule sunk deep into the memories of those Vilnians who had to accustom themselves and their families to the conditions of survival. Amongst those who chose to stay in Vilnius, the conviction prevailed that cooperation with the authorities was acceptable, or even that it was in many cases admissible, if not recommended, to take up employment with the Bolshevik authorities. And so, Count Wincenty Łubieński joined the Presidium of the Council of Delegates of Workers and the Vilnian Red Army. In the revolutionary government, the Commissariat of Justice was headed by a certain Kozłowski, a Pole. The director of the Agricultural Commissariat, a Lithuanian named Bielski, filled all managerial positions with Poles. Ludwik Chomiński, Tadeusz Niedzielski, Lubkowski, Zastowski, Zygmunt Ruszczyc and Kątkowski all found employment there. The fact that Poles were employed with the Bolshevik authorities must have been confusing to the members of other nationalities, since it caused a lively stirring among their compatriots. The cases of cooperation with the Bolsheviks were tried by a peer tribunal on a personal basis after the liberation of Vilnius. Accepting the method of taking part in an ideologically alien power, only to obtain measurable benefits, had confusing effects during the

72 Lietuvos centrinis valstybes archyvas (hereinafter, LCVA), Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 23, 22,24: 'Motions submitted to the National Council'.

73 As in fn. 71.

subsequent recruitment of staff to the ZCZW. But before that happened, the delegation of the Byelorussian National Council of the Borderlands declared to the Polish Government on 23rd March 1919 its willingness to seek close ties between Byelorussia and Poland.⁷⁴ According to the Commissioner-General's information of 10th May 1919, the Byelorussian National Council comprised of, among other things, the 'Selyanskaia [Peasant] Byelorussian Council', which, in turn, was composed of left-oriented Byelorussians whose susceptibility to the Bolsheviks' slogans and money was growing as the latter were approaching; the Byelorussian Committee in Grodno, composed of Byelorussian statehooders seeking employment in politics; and the 'Grodno Governoral *Uprava* [= Council]', consisting mainly of Russians with reactionary and pro-Russification views.⁷⁵

Almost simultaneously with the Declaration of the Byelorussian National Council of the Borderlands, a letter from the Polish Supreme Council [*Polska Rada Naczelna*, PRN] of the Grodno Land, dated 30th March 1919, was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Polish Department of the Eastern Territories that requested an immediate takeover and protection of the country by the Polish Government.⁷⁶ This was the Polish counter-proposal to that of the Delegation of the Byelorussian National Council of the Borderlands of 23rd March 1919. The outrage among Poles was caused by Germany's decree handing over the courts in Grodno to Lithuanian judges. The Military Board of the County of Grodno issued an official letter, signed by Rittmeister Schweinitz,⁷⁷ suggesting that Germany would not resort to taking the courts by force. On the same day, its signatory, Schweinitz, reportedly informed the city's mayor, Listowski, that if

74 Based on BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1682, c. 25–26.

75 This information, and the remark: "... it would be interesting to explain whether Lutskevich's group (the cabinet of *narodnye* [= national] ministers) participates in this [Grodno Governoral *Uprava* [= Council] and what is the relation of this organisation to the Byelorussian State National Council (Ćwirko-Godycki, Janson) firmly advocating the liaison with Poland", is included in the Comments to the Response from the Commissioner-General given to the Central Byelorussian Council of the Grodno Land during a personal audience on 10th May 1919. BPW, Old Printing and Manuscripts Department, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 1–2.

76 The letter was signed by the Rev. Leon Żebrowski – President, Stanisław Iwanowski – Vice President, Antoni Żaboklicki – PRN Secretary, and J. Cytarzyński.

77 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/ II, c. 145: Military Administration of the County of Grodno. Oddz [Sec.] I Nr [No.] 279: 'To the Municipal Office of the City of Grodno. Grodno 26. 3. [26th March] 1919, signed by v. Schweinitz, Head of the County, Rittermeister' [a translation].

Grodno did not voluntarily surrender the judiciary, the Lithuanian Government would seize the courts with the help of its army, and the German occupation authorities would not prevent this. The PRN members were shocked by such hypocrisy.

The Germans themselves created and armed Lithuanian troops in Grodno; now they are giving them *carte blanche*, and towards us they pretend to be neutral. The matter is growing increasingly serious, becoming more and more threatening, and only the immediate intervention of Polish troops would put an end to all these prevarications and trickeries of the muscovites [*sic*] united with Germany and working under the banner of the Lithuanian government, under the name of the Byelorussian army, under Russian command, in line with the German guidelines, wearing hats of a Japanese design.⁷⁸

It is highly probable that this skilfully provoked mood should be seen as the actual cause of the unambiguous reluctance among Polish society towards the idea of creating a Byelorussian military formation, which in the near and long term was to harm efforts made by the ZCZW in the Byelorussian matter. The signatories of the Grodno Land PRN's appeal, provoked by the actions of the Germans, expressed in writing (on 30th March) their fear of finding themselves:

faced with accomplished facts sinister to us, the fictitious character of which would always be understandable to us and to the Polish Government, but nonetheless difficult to explain to arbitrators less familiar with our matters. We must see as falling in the same category of developments the Germans' efforts, intensified in recent days, to consolidate the rule of the so-called Lithuanian government [*Litovskiy Urad*] and its ministry of Byelorussian affairs [*Ministerstvo Belorusskikh Sprav*].⁷⁹

The address of the Poles from Grodno delivered on 30th March 1919 eradicated in Warsaw the chance for a successful outcome of the Byelorussian attempt to overcome the deadlock of 23rd March.

Immediately after explaining the claims to Grodno and the Grodno Land of the Government residing in Kaunas and declaring itself 'Lithuanian', Germans began supporting this matter completely openly with their disposable power. After the arrival of Yazep Varonka, the Lithuanian Minister for Byelorussian Affairs, in Grodno, the Germans began to harass the emerging germs of the Polish armed forces in the country with all possible means, in order to remove all obstacles to his deceptive agitation, and, on the other hand, they tried to aggrieve the masses and smother all possibility of getting organised and self-defended, by means of ineffable terror. ... It was not until now that all the dark elements, together with the Germans, began to strenuously organise the

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., c. 144–144 (verso), Speech of the Polish Supreme Council of the Grodno Land of 30th March 1919, No. 174.

troops of the Lithuanian government under the name of the Byelorussian regiments. This endeavour was undertaken by all the former oppressors and Russifiers of our land, and the former Russian officials, officers, and proprietors of wealth, possessing estates torn away from the Poles by the Russian government, who fell in for this roll call. This handful of people, scarce as it was, decided to reinstate the Russian yoke in this country with the help of the Germans. These armed units are commanded by Russian officers, the command is Russian, and Russian is the spirit and their aspirations – except, of course, for the soldiers, who only have been led to join these ranks for the sake of meals and clothes ... these soldiers, shod and dressed in German boots and uniforms, armed with German hand-held rifles and machine-guns, are standing guard in the city ... the number of these soldiers is too scarce for them to effectively oppose the seizure of Grodno by any army, whereas the purpose of the existence of these armed forces is to overpower the city, with the authorisation and secret support of the Germans, and to seize power by force for the Lithuanian Government, so when the Polish troops enter the city, to rely on this fiction and harm the Polish cause in all areas. The plan of this action has been elaborated in detail and is now starting to be implemented.⁸⁰

The extensive appeal by the PRN of the Grodno Land concluded with a terrifying analysis of the situation:

We are presently threatened, in the political direction [i.e. in political terms], by reinforcement of the fiction of the Lithuanian Government recognised by the Germans in this country, of giving the city and fortress of Grodno away to armed rascals, who have titled themselves Byelorussian regiments of the Lithuanian Government, and of giving power and influence back to the Russifiers, who have now hastened crowdedly to the service of the Lithuanian Government; in the social direction, we are threatened by complete anarchy and the demoralisation of the masses as a result of impunity, corruption, and the dark elements in the voluntary German army that is occupying our country; and, finally, in the economic direction, our country is facing a disaster of unfathomable magnitude.⁸¹

The official declaration on the creation of a commission for the registration of war affairs on behalf of the Lithuanian Government announced the freedom of the valuation of damages, and a separate rescript proclaimed the unity of the entire former Governorate of Grodno with the Lithuanian state. These instructions boosted discontent, which was probably the main purpose behind their release. The gap between the Byelorussians and the Poles worsened rapidly also due to the terror imposed on the population, the majority of whom were in favour of Poland. Germany not only introduced preventive censorship but also a German

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

stamp became mandatory on all announcements, directives and proclamations. As a result, all Polish demonstrations were paralysed.

Grodno was enclosed within a ring-shaped demarcation line, preventing communication with the Polish authorities. In anticipation of their withdrawal from this area, the Germans applied the 'scorched land' tactic, including sacrilege, which plunged the Catholic population, mostly Polish, into despair. German gangs looted, stole and destroyed villages untroubled, immersed in ever-increasing anarchy, which sowed terror.⁸² As a result, the German army not only failed to fulfil the duty of maintaining order entrusted to it by the coalition, but also willingly brought chaos and a sense of threat, and deliberately robbed the Grodno area of everything that could be deported to Germany.

Two programmes regarding the Eastern Territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as reflected in Polish political thought

According to Oskar Halecki, 'only' the borders remained a debatable issue once the Great War ended.⁸³ I think that saying 'only' is fairly inaccurate. The issue of the eastern border of the restored state divided the citizens of the former Commonwealth before they reunited, and put a strain on the entire twentieth-century history of Poland. The worst thing for the Polish cause was that the Polish public had still not reached unanimity regarding the borders. There were two contradictory arguments, not without connection with pre-war differences of views on Poland, historical and ethnographic. The entire Polish nation shared a common stance with regard to the western frontier. Rallies demonstrating unity with Silesia were held in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Borderland Guard organised trips for Borderlands peasant to Poznań. The issue of the eastern border, on the other hand, was extremely sensitive. First of all, it was plunged into a civil war due to the situation of Russia. Although the country was not officially represented at the Paris Conference, Russia remained a former ally and this fact made the international situation extremely complicated. From the very beginning, the policies of the national camp took into account Russia's participation in the coalition. In the political situation at that time, the national camp activists were left with only one option: to suspend their activities and

82 Numerous examples of reprehensible German behaviour can be found in the Speech of the Polish Supreme Council of the Grodno Land of 30th March 1919 (cf. fn. 79).

83 O. Halecki, *Historia Polski*, Lublin and London 1992, 260 ff.

withdraw from politics. Such solution was unacceptable to the long-standing regulars of political salons and those involved in backstage activities. It is logical that the plan of Roman Dmowski, who operated in the Parisian milieu, was based, from the outset, on the Entente's policies. Dmowski was a child of his times and acted within the field of manoeuvre given him by the Entente and the factors influencing the it. His decision-making was surely strongly influenced by his awareness that, due to his own arrangements, acquaintances, and various past events (not all of them explainable today), he could do a great deal for the good of Poland. However, the question whether all of his colleagues were guided by equally noble motives is not the subject of this study.

The protagonists of the drama that was taking place in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were the descendants of the inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The national programme proposed by Roman Dmowski for the reborn country was fundamentally at odds with the Polish tradition of the state. It was effective as it took into account both the German and Russian plans. Since January 1915, several organisations that reunited Poles affected by the war were active in Lausanne and Paris.⁸⁴

The publication, on 29th March 1917, of the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Russia concerning the establishment of the Polish state, connected with Russia by a military union, fundamentally altered the existing situation – regardless of its actual intentions. The plans of the national camp could be further pursued only with the acceptance, as a basic condition, of the reactivation of the most dangerous (in Piłsudski's opinion) of the partitioners of Poland. According to the agenda proposed by Dmowski, Poland was to become a homogeneous national state – strong internally, but weak externally. The national camp's leader believed that Poland should simply annex those areas of the Eastern Borderlands where Poles constituted at least a relative majority of the population, while the rest of the former Commonwealth, inhabited predominantly by Byelorussians and Ukrainians, would remain with Russia.⁸⁵ It was an optimal political line, given the popular trends of the time, yet it sacrificed the Poles living in those territories that would be taken over by Russia, whilst preventing any aspirations of the Polish state towards regaining the position lost as a result of the Partitions. Such an approach from Poland was in the interests of both Russia and Germany.

84 It is significant that the French authorities would only allow the establishment of any committee for Polish affairs if the applicants had first obtained approval from the Russian ambassador.

85 O. Halecki, *op. cit.*, 260 ff.

The situation was complicated by the fact that in 1918, the Allied Forces regarded the Polish National Committee (KNP) in Paris as the sole official representative body of the state, whereas the country was ruled Piłsudski and the government appointed by him. It was not until January 1919 that Ignacy Paderewski took up the mission of reconciling these two divergent courses. The mere existence of the KNP consolidated the de-facto dual power in the country.

Politics is, among other things, an art of exploiting opportunities. The practical possibility of realising Woodrow Wilson's slogans in practice was widely doubted in 1918; the Chief of State also approached them with disbelief. It is a paradox that he, 'an incompetent amateur in the world of politics', as opposed to a 'professional politician' such as the leader of the national camp, noticed new opportunities opening up before Poland and desired to use them for the benefit of the state.

Józef Piłsudski was a strong supporter of the federation idea. As early as 1895, he wrote:

... But fortunately, the Russian state consists, apart from Russia proper, of other countries, violently subdued and tethered with the chain of bondage to the tsardom. The people of these countries – Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Ruthenians – fill these lands, formerly belonging to the Republic of Poland [i.e. the Commonwealth]. They have therefore a completely different historical past, different traditions; all of them who nonetheless suffer severe persecutions on national and religious grounds under the tsarist regime, which raise hatred among them towards current political relations ... these conditions make one believe that this is where a force will come out to tear down the power of the tsardom.⁸⁶

The federationist concept assumed that the borders of the pre-partition Poland should be reinstated both in the east and in the west, but with the recognition of the right to self-determination of non-Polish nationalities in the Eastern Borderlands, i.e. Lithuanians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians, who were expected to opt for a union with Poland in their own interests.

Piłsudski knew very well that in 1918, the geopolitical situation of Poland, for which he felt responsible, was not favourable and the optimal solution, not only for Poland, would be to establish an association of all of the countries in the region. The stronger such a federation would be, the greater the benefits for its members. The Chief of State, brought up in the Borderlands and familiar with the local realities, was deeply convinced that projects which relied on Russia, that

86 'Jednodniówka "Robotnik"', in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe. Wydanie prac dotyczących drukiem ogłoszonych*, Vol. I, Warsaw 1937 [reprinted 1990], pp. 88–89.

fiercest enemy of the Lithuanians and Poles, regardless of its colour, were unfeasible. Piłsudski had been developing his own vision of future relations in these territories since December 1918.⁸⁷

In January 1919, he began to formulate his new concepts, but only in February did he start to “pursue his thoughts”; that is, to create the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories.⁸⁸ Around the Easter of 1919, Vilnius was liberated by the Polish army from Bolshevik forces. True to his vision, on 22nd April 1919 Piłsudski addressed his famous Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania:⁸⁹

For more than a hundred years, your country has not known liberty; oppressed by the hostile Russian, German, and Bolshevik violence – one that, never consulting the population, imposed foreign paragons of behaviour that shackled the people’s will and, not infrequently, broke their lives.

This state of perpetual bondage, with which I am so well acquainted as I was born in this misfortunate land, has to finally be abolished, once forever, and once forever in this land. God-forsaken, as it were, freedom must start reigning, with the right of unrestrained and unrestricted expression of the people’s strivings and needs.

The Polish Army, which I have brought with me in order to expel the rule of outrage and violence, to abolish the governing of the country against the will of its people – this Army is bringing liberty and freedom to all of you.

I wish to create an atmosphere for settling your internal, nationality-related, and religious affairs in a manner that you yourselves may wish to determine, without any sort of force or pressure from Poland.

For this reason, even though cannons still rumble and blood is being shed in this land of yours, I am introducing a civilian administration and not a military one, to which in due course I shall call members of the local population, sons of this land.

The aims of this Civilian Administration will be to:

1. Facilitate the people, through freely elected representatives, in determining their own destiny and needs. The election shall take place upon the basis of secret, universal, and direct voting, without distinction between the sexes.

87 For a broader discussion, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, ‘Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego wygłoszony 24 sierpnia 1923 roku w Wilnie’, *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. V, 1999, fasc. 4 (20), pp. 775–798; eadem, ‘Ścieranie się koncepcji federacyjnej i inkorporacyjnej w stosunku do ziem byłego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w okresie poprzedzającym Odezwę Wileńską’, *Zeszyt Naukowy Muzeum Wojska*, 17, 2004, pp. 74–88.

88 ‘Wykład wojskowy II’, in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma ...*, Vol. VI, pp. 101–3.

89 This study alternately uses the terms ‘Vilnius Proclamation’, ‘April Proclamation’, ‘Chief of State’s Proclamation’, and ‘Proclamation of 22nd April 1919’.

2. Provide assistance with food for those who require it, support productive labour, and ensure order and peace.
3. Extend care to everybody, without making any difference due to one's religion or nationality.
4. As the head of the Administration, I have named Jerzy Osmołowski, to whom directly, or to those appointed by him, you may turn, openly and honestly, regarding any manner that hurts you or causes you concern.⁹⁰

The author of this Proclamation wrote to Ignacy Paderewski:

Since I found Vilnius itself abandoned by Poles, Lithuanians, and Byelorussians alike – their men-of-authority, I mean – I could not create anything broader ... During the negotiations, the Poles, the Lithuanians, and the Byelorussians alike, looked towards Warsaw, others toward Kowno, or Minsk I could not bring them to any decision. As a result, I stopped at resolving the question in a manner that would not obstruct the way in any of the directions. I provided general assurances about the necessity of expressing a general opinion on the fate of the country by the population itself ... I have offered no promise, though, ... with regard to the form of this expression, as with such unspecific answers as those that I received from the representatives of the population, I would not want to raise any controversial issues. However, I did two things to highlight the general trend, the first being the fact that I addressed the proclamation to the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, thus taking historical Lithuania as a whole. The second thing I did, I established the city's administration in such a way that not only representatives of Poles, but also those of Jews, and of other nationalities too, would partake in it.⁹¹

Therefore, despite Piłsudski often being accused of being 'imprecise', the establishment of the motives guiding him in April 1919 is no longer a matter of dispute. He confirmed the consistency of his will to resolve the issue of the lands of the former Grand Duchy thusly not only on September 19th in Minsk Litovsk, but also on 9th January 1920 in Równe:

This land will resolve on its own how to live, and which law to follow ... You will be called, my dear folks, in the near future to begin governing by yourself in local governmental institutions. Then, the time will come for you to decide freely on how your State shall be arranged. This will be a glorious act when, for the first time, men of this land shall be able to speak freely. Everyone will be called upon – rich or poor, every man will have a say, so that the majority decide the fate of the land. [Minsk]

90 'Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania', in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma ...*, Vol. V, 75–6.

91 J. Piłsudski, *Pisma...*, Vol. VI, 116; quoted after B. Skaradziński, *Polski rok 1919*, Warsaw 1939, p. 218.

While dishonesty reigns in the Borderlands' policies worldwide, I would like our Borderlands' policies to be honest. [Równe]⁹²

Piłsudski was well aware that cooperation among all religions, estates/classes and ethnicities/nationalities was crucial to the well-being of all citizens of the former Commonwealth, but at the same time admonished that a government which does not find support in the population is powerless.⁹³ He was aware of the immensity of the task that he had undertaken.

In my childhood years, I often heard these so-called wise sayings: "Do not blow against the wind!", "You can't put your head through the wall!", "Don't rush with the hoe at the sun! [= Don't bite off more than you can chew]." But then I concluded that a strong will, energy and enthusiasm may permit one to overcome these rules. And now that we are facing the great tasks of the continued building of the Polish state, we need people who are able to oppose the old wisdom of these proverbs.⁹⁴

He also realised how hard it was to find the right people.

One of the curses of our lives, one of the curses of our statehood construction effort, is that we have divided ourselves into several types of Poles; that we speak one Polish language but understand the same Polish words differently; that we have brought up among ourselves Poles of different genres, Poles with difficulties in communicating, Poles so accustomed to living according to foreign templates, to foreign-imposed ways of life and methods of conduct, that we have almost adopted them as our own, and now find it so difficult to renounce them.⁹⁵

He elaborated further on this idea in mid-February 1920, when asked by *Echo de Paris* correspondent Charles Bonnefon about his policy towards Lithuania, Byelorussia, and Ukraine:

I know that many Poles do not share my opinion. They attribute the reluctance of some of our neighbours towards becoming Poles to a "brain and heart deficiency" ... That was the language used by Russians and Germans. They also attributed to this deficiency of brain and heart the disgust of Poles towards Russia and Germany.

And he went on to declare:

92 J. Piłsudski, *Pisma...*, Vol. V, 106–7 and 131–2.

93 'Speech delivered in Łuck, 10th January 1920', in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma...*, Vol. V, 133.

94 'Reply to the address of the Rector of the University of Lublin' (11th January 1920), in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma...*, vol. V, 134.

95 'Speech delivered at a banquet in Lublin (11th January 1920)', in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma...*, Vol. V, 136.

The will of the states we occupy is the only decisive factor for me. Never in the world would I want Poland to possess vast spaces inhabited by hostile people. History has proved to us that, in the long run, such heterogeneous concentrations of people are dangerous. ... Bringing freedom to the neighbouring nations will be the pride of my life as a statesman and a soldier. I know the historical ties that they have with us, and I know that these ties were often tightened after the partition of Poland. By liberating those who are oppressed, I want to erase the last traces of the partitions. Binding them with Poland through violence? Out of the question! It would mean responding to prior violent acts by committing new ones.⁹⁶

At the same time, he revealed his plans in an interview for the correspondent of *Le Matin*:

It is necessary to have the courage to understand that a huge change has occurred in the east of Europe ... For this reason, we are currently working on a plan to create a legal state of affairs in the east of Europe. This plan will soon be presented to the Entente powers. It may not be ideal in every detail. Some of its clauses may raise debate, but in any case, our draft could serve as a basis and a starting point for a final settlement of this issue.⁹⁷

Although Piłsudski expressed his concern with German aspirations in Bolshevik politics in the same interview, it was not properly interpreted in Paris. Contrary to Piłsudski's opinion, attempts were still being made at reviving the former Russia, as evidenced by the thwarting of the 'Polish plan' by the coalition's note of 6th March 1920, which banned Poland from conducting a plebiscite in the Eastern Territories.⁹⁸ This move did not support the fallen White Russia, but it was instead used by the Red Russia, and also by the 'other kind' of Poles who did not understand that "a great effort awaits us in this regard, one which we all, the modern generation, must rise to if we want to secure an easy life for future generations; if we want to turn the wheel of history around so far as to make the great Republic of Poland the greatest power in the entire East, not only in military but also in cultural terms."⁹⁹

The proclamation to the inhabitants of Ukraine – published six weeks after the Peace Conference, whose proceedings proved unfavourable for Poland – confirmed the promises that the Polish Army, having temporarily satisfied the needs

96 Ibid., 147.

97 'Interview by the Le Matin correspondent, signed by Henryk Korab-Kucharski', in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma ...*, Vol. V, 148.

98 LMAB, Fond 168–23, lap. 180 (a duplicate).

99 'Speech delivered at a banquet in Lublin (11th January 1920)', in J. Piłsudski, *Pisma ...*, Vol. V, 138.

of all the inhabitants without any difference in status, descent, or religion, would respect the self-determination of the free nation about its fate.¹⁰⁰ In Winnica, in reference to the appeal by Ataman Symon Petlura to convene a free parliamentary (Sejm) assembly in a free Ukraine, the Polish Chief of State stated: “In the flash of our bayonets and our sabres, you should not see a new imposition of someone else’s will. I want you to see in it a reflection of your freedom.”¹⁰¹

Józef Piłsudski’s willingness to pursue this plan was evidenced by the appointment of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, whose policies were based on the Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This programme’s manifesto was additionally supported before 25th November 1919 by a resolution of the Legislative Sejm of 23rd May 1919.¹⁰² No public speeches by the Chief of State/Commander-in-Chief are known which confirm that he had changed his mind, in the way the Sejm did.

Poles of Vilnius and the centre of power alternative to the Chief of State

Much could be written about the attempts between Józef Piłsudski and the national camp to reach an agreement. The point of importance for the present argument is that the Chief of State, driven throughout his life by the principle of loyalty, believed that Polish politicians should not challenge his authority, since he had been entrusted with the highest authority in the state, and had complied with it. Since he had assumed responsibility, he would expect cooperation. Meanwhile, the National Committee of Poland, recognised as an official representation and the leader of the state, was responsible, if not for the conception, at least for the consolidation in Paris of the image of the Chief of State as a suspect ex-socialist, megalomaniac, and, most importantly, the commander of a formation that had fought on the side of the Central Powers at the beginning of the war.

Piłsudski, who sought national unity, perceived the KNP as a potential negotiating body for Poland in Paris. He was aware that Roman Dmowski and his team would strive in the best possible way for the western borders of Poland, where he himself had no possibility of military manoeuvre. Therefore, he postponed decisions on the issues of eastern policy in order to make it easier for the KNP to work on the matter in which Poland was actually fully dependent upon the

100 ‘Proclamation to the inhabitants of Ukraine (26th April 1920); in *ibid.*, 156.

101 ‘Speech delivered in Winnica’ (17th May 1920); in *ibid.*, p. 159.

102 For a broader discussion, see Chapter V.

Entente's decisions. He trusted Dmowski's abilities. This trust, based on rational premises, resulted in the unfounded accusation recurring in historical literature whereby the Chief of State had foregone the issue of western affairs in favour of eastern ones. He did not neglect them, though; he took care of them the best way he could have. The KNP was the first to present an eastern programme, thus, in fact, anticipating the Vilnius Proclamation¹⁰³ – as early as October 1918.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the evaluation of Piłsudski's eastern policies by Paris was influenced not only by Russian emigration circles and Lithuanian declarations, but also the (double) voice of the Poles. No wonder, the day after the announcement of the Vilnius Proclamation, the Committee on Polish Affairs and the Subcommittee on the Delimitation of Eastern Borders hired Augustinas Voldemaras as an expert (yes, indeed). Did those KNP 'negotiators,' whom the Chief of State had given a free hand in decision-making with regard to Poland's Western Borderlands in recognition of their competence and merits (and, frankly speaking, in the absence of any other possibility), not usurp their powers in matters of the Eastern Borderlands as well, by initiating a *faits accomplis* policy? Were they not conflicting with the competencies of the Chief of State, to whom such decisions actually belonged? The dramatic situation was exacerbated by the fact that the political elites of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania had placed their hopes not in the Chief of State, but in the Polish National Committee. The opinion-forming circles of the Polish residents of the Borderlands recognised the national camp and its elite as the decision-making centre, thus ignoring the Chief of State and the Warsaw-based Government cooperating with him.

In November 1918, due to the handing-over of power by the Regency Council to Piłsudski, freshly released from Magdeburg, the national camp lost its chance to take power in the country in a somewhat natural way.¹⁰⁵ The KNP was unlikely

103 T. Jędruszczak and M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa (eds.), *Dokumenty z dziejów polskiej polityki zagranicznej 1918–1939*, Vol. I: 1918–1932, doc. No. 6, pp. 35–38: 'Note of the Polish delegation to the Peace Conference on the Eastern Borders of Poland, Paris, 3rd March 1919. The territorial agenda of Piłsudski's camp was announced as 'The Political Programme for Polish Democracy' in the editorial of *Gazeta Polska* of 16th March 1919, postulating a federation of ethnographic Lithuania and Byelorussia (Catholic and Orthodox) with Poland, followed by the demand to extend the federation to the Baltic States, up to and including Finland.

104 'Memorandum delivered by R. Dmowski to U.S. President W. Wilson on 8th October 1918 in Washington, D.C.', in: S. Kozicki, *Sprawa granic Polski na konferencji pokojowej w Paryżu 1919 roku*, Warsaw, pp. 160–165.

105 According to an opinion published in print sometime after 1925 by Waław E. Zieliński, a former ministerial inspector at the Ministry of the Treasury, "after the

to abandon its struggle for power. The question that must remain unanswered is: How would the fate of Poland have unfolded had the KNP limited itself to acting as a 'branch office' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

The decisions of 20 January 1919, made after the fall of Jędrzej Moraczewski's Government in Warsaw, were crucial to the future of the federation and the apparatus expected to bring it into being: the ZCZW. The delegations of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia, and the Lithuanian Commission, assumed that the concept of incorporating the land of the former Grand Duchy did not entail any danger "in terms of Poland's future internal policy." This ascertainment was the foundation of a Warsaw meeting with the representatives of the KNP, at which they were informed of the remarks on the report of members of the Delegation of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia, and the Lithuanian Commission in Warsaw, regarding the eastern frontier of the Polish state.¹⁰⁶

The report by KNP representatives regarding the eastern border of the Polish state met with approval from the representatives of the Polish inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹⁰⁷ The delegation approved the Committee's plan to incorporate Lithuanian territories into Poland, rather than creating a separate Lithuanian entity. The adoption of this plan by representatives of the former Grand Duchy, three months before the establishment of the principles of Piłsudski's federal concept, caused turmoil, which – in connection with other events – largely determined the position of Polish society towards the federal idea.

From the viewpoint of the Delegation of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia and the Lithuanian Commission, the advantages of the project included not only the possibility of basing Polish demands on the nationality principle, but above all the opportunity to satisfy

collapse of the German occupation, the Regency Council of the Kingdom of Poland completely lost their minds, and on 12th November 1918 handed over all of their powers and mandates to Mr Józef Piłsudski, making him something of a dictator." Zieliński was no less critical of the Government: "A few days later, the Moraczewski Cabinet was formed, with a completely discretionary composition of ministers, whose only qualification was party affiliation." Cf. W.E. Zieliński (ed.), *Nasi Ministrowie Skarbu i błędy ich polityki w oświetleniu danych urzędowych (1918–1925)*, Warsaw [undated], p. 11.

106 LCVA, Fond 13, Ap 1 B. 97, lap. 13–17: 'Remarks submitted to the Polish National Committee on 20th January 1919 by the Delegation of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia, and the Lithuanian Commission in Warsaw]'.
107 Ibid.

the claims of a large majority of Lithuanian Poles. ‘Personal interest’ prevailed among the delegates, rather than the well-being of the general public or solidarity with the co-citizens of the former Commonwealth, including Poles from the Kaunas region.

It should be emphasised that the Delegation, which considered itself to be a representative host and decision-maker in matters concerning the fate of the former Grand Duchy lands, made a political decision in January 1919 that proved pregnant with consequences, ignoring the Chief of State and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. It held conferences with unnamed representatives of the KNP (the body undoubtedly competing with Piłsudski for real power) on the Committee’s draft project for ensuring Polish interests in Lithuania.

The opinion of the Polish Committee *et consortes* was delivered to Paris by Wawrzyniec Puttkamer and Bronisław Krzyżanowski. The latter exchanged extensive and cordial correspondence with Witold Abramowicz.¹⁰⁸ He complained about the Parisian atmosphere, where the French favoured the tone adopted by the Latvians, Lithuanians and Yugoslavs. He shared his experience at the KNP meeting on 1st February 1919 discussing Lithuanian and Byelorussian affairs. His impression was very negative, though, because the Committee had not approved the borders from 1772. Unlike Puttkamer, Krzyżanowski did not support the KNP’s standpoint. He was in fact surprised, and accused the KNP of being ready to give some of the Byelorussian lands away to Russia, going for all possible concessions, at the “moment an anti-Russian coalition emerges.” He was surprised to see Dmowski avoid arrangements with the Lithuanians, even though “[Juzoas] Gabrys was soliciting contact.” He found that the Latvians had established contact with the Delegation of the Chief of State. Krzyżanowski concluded that Dmowski’s plan was impossible to implement, while its success would mean that the 1772 frontier could also be defended.¹⁰⁹

Talks between the Delegates of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia, and the Lithuanian Commission on the

108 LCVA, Fond 13, Ap 1 B 97, c. 9–9 (verso): ‘Letter one, dated 31st January/1st February 1919’; *ibid.*, c. 10–10 (verso): ‘Letter two, dated 4th February 1919’.

109 A barely legible letter dated 4th February reads: “The situation is simply strange and unproductive. It ultimately seems to me that there is nothing to do here, for everything is decided by the Committee. And the Committee is almost against us. The front against Russia is breaking down ... Gabrys is seeking to talk with us, Latvians are talking to Piłsudski’s delegation ..., whereas Dmowski, accepting all possible concessions, is handing away parts of the Minsk, Vitebsk, and Mogilev regions ... Puttkamer, of course, disagrees and expresses his solidarity with the Committee. The

one hand, and representatives of the KNP on the other, were held after Marian Januszajtis-Żegota's coup and the Legislative Sejm election. Cooperation with the aforementioned delegates offered an opportunity for the KNP to significantly expand its own electorate (so badly needed by every party in each era) in the struggle for power through parliamentary methods. It is difficult to determine today whose initiative it was that led to the first meeting of the representatives of the Polish community in Vilnius with KNP members. If any observations were submitted to the KNP, a draft must have been received beforehand.

The Poles of Vilnius and Grodno represented an excellent potential electorate for the national camp. Other factors that came to light were the disappointed hopes of the Borderlanders, their disillusionment with 'Pro-German' Warsaw, and the understandable embarrassment by the fact that, owing to a lack of insight, the Germans had led them by the nose since before December 1918.¹¹⁰

The decision of the Delegation of the Polish Committee in Vilnius, the Polish Borderlands Council in White Ruthenia, and the Lithuanian Commission was exploited by the politicians of the national camp, who were interested in consolidating their political concept in the widest possible circles. The Poles in the Borderlands and the Borderlanders in Warsaw, as well as the existing electorate of the national camp, shared the same dread of the social reforms introduced by Moraczewski's cabinet, which had not been cancelled despite the change of government.

In this climate, the situation inevitably became favourable for all those whose political goals interfered with the harmonious reconstruction of the Polish state. While not questioning the legitimacy of the motives that guided the Polish politicians in Paris, whose struggle for power was driven, as they believed, by the interest of their homeland, it must be clearly stated that in their pursuit of their political (party-related) objective, they did not hesitate to create a situation of potential threat to the country's and state's welfare. Regardless of the source of the initiative, it should be stressed that, unlike the Borderlands' personalities, members of the KNP were proven and experienced politicians; consequently, they should have been aware of the dangers emerging in front of their eyes.

Committee is not working for an arrangement with the Lithuanians. The Committee has offered a position in Paris to Zawadzki." Ibid.

110 For a broader discussion of this topic, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Społeczeństwo polskie Ziemi Północno-Wschodniej byłej Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów wobec niemieckiej okupacji Ober-Ost', in Grzegorz Kucharczyk (ed.), *Pierwsza niemiecka okupacja. Królestwo Polskie i kresy wschodnie pod okupacją mocarstw centralnych 1914–1918*, Warsaw 2019, pp. 561–668.

CHAPTER II: FORMATION AND ORGANISATION OF THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION OF THE EASTERN TERRITORIES

Territorial scope

The Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands was in charge of an immensely vast territory. Traditionally considered backwards in economic and civilisational terms, the area had suffered considerable war damage, particularly severe in the zones of long-term front-line operations. Another hindrance was the lack of an organic connection between the large number of local communities, whose proximity was rather incidental. Particularly troublesome was the lack of transportation facilities and communications, food supplies and medicines, farming equipment, as well as of banks and land-and-mortgage registers. Society was visibly exhausted, and often showed signs of demoralisation. The caste-like prejudices inherited from the previous generations led to the spontaneous erection of a 'Chinese wall',¹ which precluded anything new, unknown, and potentially posing a threat.

The frontiers of the territory subject to the Civil Administration were fluid throughout the latter's period of operations. The eastern border was simply defined by the ever-changing front line. By the end of 1919, the offensive of the Polish armies, which had begun in the spring, has reached the Dźwina/Daugava and Berezyna/Berezina Rivers, Bobrujsk, the Ptich River, Olevsk, Zwiahel [today, Novohrad-Volynskyy in Ukraine], Lubar, and Derażnia, and continued southwards to the Dniester. As a result of the April 1920 offensive, the Polish troops reached the Dnieper River as well as the border of the former Commonwealth in the area of Homel [Gomel, Homyel] and Kijów/Kiev. The powerful counter-offensive by the Red Army launched in late May 1920 then forced the Polish Army to retreat along the entire front line. In mid-August, the Red Army reached the central part of the Vistula river. A successful Polish counter-offensive conducted from the banks of the Wieprz river saved the city of

1 The term was in use in the period concerned.

Warsaw and pushed the enemy back to the east.² A breakdown prepared before the evacuation,³ which specified 172 communes in the eight counties of the District of Brześć Litewski, 193 communes in the ten counties of the Vilnius District, and 101 communes from the six counties of the Minsk District that were located in the area under the ZCZW, had already been published.⁴ There were 30 towns of more than 4,000 inhabitants under ZCZW jurisdiction, of which five were located in Brześć Litewski District,⁵ 11 in Minsk District,⁶ ten in Vilnius District,⁷ and four in the District of Volhynia.⁸ The ethnic distribution in the areas administered by the ZCZW is most precisely described in *The Census in the Areas Administered by the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories in 1919* (*Spis ludności na terenach administrowanych przez Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich w 1919 roku*), published by the eminent geographer and cartographer Eugeniusz Romer in 1920.⁹

The instruction of the Commissioner-General of 7th June 1919 brought about the formation of the Districts of Vilnius and Brześć Litewski¹⁰ as well as the

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- 2 See H. Dominiczak, *Granica wschodnia Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1919–1939*, Warsaw 1992, 53 ff.; also, A. Nowak, ‘Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1919–1921 roku w świetle najnowszych publikacji’, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1993, No. 3, pp. 79–107.
 - 3 Although the county borders underwent certain alterations during the conflict due to the expansion of ZCZW-managed territory, the fundamental trend persisted. ZCZW counties in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania’s territory were almost equal in size to the voivodeships of the former Congress Kingdom. The average county in Vilnius District equalled 4,800 sq. km, in Brześć Litewski District it was 7,200 sq. km, and 7,300 sq. km in Minsk District.
 - 4 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999, pp. 115–122 (Annex No. 15).
 - 5 Namely, Prużana, Baranowicze, Kleck, Nieśwież, and Mir.
 - 6 Namely: Minsk, Raków, Kojanów, Słuck, Kopyl, Ihumeń, Berezino, Bobrujsk, Borysów, Dokszyce, and Hłusk.
 - 7 Namely: Nowo-Wilejka, Święciany, Nowo-Święciany, Oszmiana, Troki, Troki-Nowe, Lida, Grodno, Krynki, and Nowogródek.
 - 8 Włodzimierz Wołyński, Luboml, Horochów, and Kowel.
 - 9 E. Romer (ed.), *Spis ludności na terenach administrowanych przez Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich (grudzień 1919) z mapą*, Lwów 1920, 31. Also, see E. Maliszewski, ‘Polski spis ludności na Ziemiach Wschodnich z grudnia 1919’, *Wschód Polski* 1920, No. 10/11, pp. 14–21.
 - 10 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands – Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich – Naczelne Dowództwo Wojsk Polskich* (hereinafter, ‘D.U. ZCZW NDWP’), Yr. I, No. of 28th June 1919 III. 39 & 41.

Administration of the Volhynian Counties. On 11th July, an instruction was issued to organise a central office of the ZCZW, namely the Commissariat-General, and specified the body's tasks.¹¹ On 9th and 12th September 1919 respectively, Jerzy Osmałowski issued orders regarding the organisation of the administrative districts of Volhynia¹² and Minsk.¹³

Activity of the Ministers of the Treasury in the revived Poland in 1918–20

The overall *Balance Sheet of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands (Bilans Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich)*¹⁴ covers the period beginning on 18th November 1918, i.e. with the appointment of the Government headed by Jędrzej Moraczewski.

The loans granted on paper and the supply of cash were both extremely limited. This observation prompts a broader analysis of the facts and events that led to the establishment of the ZCZW.

The literature demonstrates that the policies of some of the prime ministers were not consistent with that of Józef Piłsudski.

There has been one Chief of State in Poland's history, and there were as many as five premiers in the time of the establishment and operation of the ZCZW. By order of term, they were: Jędrzej Moraczewski (17th November 1918–16th January 1919), Ignacy Paderewski (16th January–27th November 1919), both of whom showed signs of cooperation with the Chief of State, which cannot be said of Leopold Skulski (14th December 1919–9th June 1920) and Władysław Grabski (23rd June–23rd July 1920). Skulski even appeared to have been propelled by the idea of undermining Piłsudski's programme. The term of Wincenty Witos (23rd

11 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 11, 14th August 1919, III. 90.

12 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 17, 12th September 1919, III. 153.

13 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 19, 23rd September 1919, II. 174.

14 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1664: "General balance sheet of cash turnover of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories as for 18th October 1918 to 31st March 1921". The end date is incorrect, from a formal point of view. This probably results from the inclusion of diverse 'costs/expenses' of the operation of ZCZW's Liquidation Commission as sums allocated for the purposes of the Administration itself (N.B., the Commission was headed by Jerzy Osmałowski, former Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories).

July 1920–9th September 1921) coincided with the agony of the federationist concept, in which the creation of the ZCZW was rooted.

In every age and country, an enormous degree of informal power is held by the administrator of the treasury. The unwillingness to cooperate harmoniously with the Chief of State shown by several successive Ministers of the Treasury was thus highly disturbing. A brief history of the five ministerial terms-of-office might offer some explanation on the functioning of this crucial decision-making centre of the newly-restored Polish state.

There were five Treasury Ministers during ZCZW's operation:

1. Władysław Byrka (17th November 1918 to 16th January 1919)

In Moraczewski's Cabinet, he held the office according to the principle of seniority. In the opinion of W. E. Zieliński, this former official of the budgetary department of the Austrian Imperial-and-Royal Ministry of the Treasury "stood in opposition to the entire Cabinet, as he shared the opinion of the general public that this Cabinet had been superimposed against the will of the majority and simply did not respond to the wishes of society, which demanded the immediate resignation of the Cabinet, deliberately refusing to support it financially and boycotting taxes."¹⁵

During Byrka's term, the Council of Ministers made a seminal choice to exploit the opportunities created earlier by Franciszek Jossé, Minister of the Treasury with the Regency Council.¹⁶ As a result, the first Polish government bolstered the currency of its former Russian partitioner, instead of its own (even though introduced by the Germans). Was Minister Byrka protecting the interests of the state that he was a minister of, or those of Russia?

In Paderewski's cabinet, the position of Minister of the Treasury was held, consecutively, by Józef English, Stanisław Karpiński, and Leon Biliński.

15 Ibid., c. 12.

16 The Decree of the Regency Council of 30th October 1918 and Resolution of the Council of Ministers of 3rd November 1918 enabled short-term 5 % treasury loans to be issued in Polish Marks and Austro-Hungarian Crowns, maturing on 1st November 1919. Since "the majority of society did not trust the Polish Mark, choosing to hoard tsarist Roubles instead, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of 22nd November 1918 decreed the issuance of these loans in the Rouble currency." Ibid., c. 11.

2. Józef English (16th January 1919 to 4th April 1919)

As opposed to Byrka, the next minister did protect the best interests¹⁷ of the Polish state.¹⁸ The reluctance and indignation of the Ministry's staff towards their new superior had an absolutely implausible cause: he was accused of "being completely ignorant of matters and of disregarding the law ... since the enforcement proceedings in all three Partitions were regulated by appropriate provisions [established by the partitioning powers (J. G.-K.'s note)] that retained legal force."¹⁹ According to treasury formalists, the minister in the revived state of Poland was not allowed to order tax enforcement within 24 hours, because the partitioning powers had determined a seven-day notice!

3. Stanisław Karpiński (4th April 1919 to 31st July 1919)

Just like his predecessor, Stanisław Karpiński, a native of the Congress Kingdom and chief director of the Polish National Loan Office [Polska Krajowa Kasa Pożyczkowa (PKKP)],²⁰ was received adversely due to his reports from the Ministry of the Treasury. This time, province- (Partition-)related separatism was involved, as a majority of the Ministry's staff originated 'from other provinces'.

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- 17 Minister English ordered the enforcement by telegraph, with assistance of the police and the army, of the taxes due resulting from the passive resistance of society, taxed according to the regulations of the partitioning countries. Unfortunately, the regulation was not enforceable. The army was on the front lines, and the police were almost non-existent in smaller towns and rural areas.
- 18 The executive activity of the Chief of State during English's term of office, also extending to matters of the treasury, was truly impressive. The following Decrees of the Chief of State were issued: (i) dated 29th January 1919, 'on the establishment of the National Treasury'; (ii) 29th January 1919, 'on the collection of one-off tribute on assets in real properties and capital, pro-rata to the totality of the assets owned'; (iii) 4th February 1919, 'prohibiting the export of noble metals in any form'; (iv) 5th February 1919, 'on property tax, in proportion to owned property'; (v) 7th February 1919, 'authorising the Polish National Loan Office [PKPP] to continue the issuance'; moreover, (vi) the Act of 7th March 1919, turning the 5 % loans into legal securities; and, (vii) the Act of 28th March 1919, authorising the drawing of a loan of 5 billion Francs.
- 19 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1664, c. 12.
- 20 On 12th May 1919, Stanisław Karpiński issued a regulation regarding a wartime profit tax, applicable only in the former Russian Partition lands. It remains a matter of speculation whether the date coinciding with that of the Commander-in-Chief's order of 12th May is only accidental.

One attempt at breaking the deadlock was the new minister's decree, issued five weeks into his term, on phasing out the former k.u.k. bureaucratic terminology, with a written recommendation regarding the introduction of Polish terms. At the same time, the first quotations of the United States Dollar were introduced on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The settled bureaucrats reacted immediately: "The resistance was no longer passive; the ordinances issued by Minister Karpiński were downright sabotaged."²¹ Seemingly internal, these ministerial rivalries regretfully occurred at the expense of the country and its Eastern policy.²²

4. Leon Biliński (31st July 1919 to 27th Nov. 1919)

The tenure of this returning minister in the Austrian-Hungarian government, Governor of a k.u.k Austrian-Hungarian bank, former Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and university professor, brought another reorganisation to the headquarters of the Ministry of the Treasury. It had already become a custom in this ministry that every new minister brought about rearrangements and personnel changes. However, Biliński succeeded in imposing the fundamental provision that only the current Treasury Minister be authorised to manage state funds. This was crucial for the financing of work related to the planned plebiscite in the Eastern lands and to the preparatory work for the agricultural reform in Poland. On 23rd September 1919, Biliński's administration issued its first regulation. A Central Foreign-Exchange Office was established and granted dictatorial powers in currency matters, as it was the only body with the capacity to set the exchange rate and the exclusive right to manage foreign currencies. Without the Office's consent, no bank was allowed to cover foreign liabilities; let us remark here that from the legal standpoint, the territory under the ZCZW's jurisdiction was outside the borders of Poland. Under the law, the Poles from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were not Polish citizens; many of them, however, had settled in Warsaw, awaiting clarification in the matter. A so-called 'black' stock exchange emerged, where prices were, on average, 30 % higher than the fictitious quotations of the official stock exchange. In this context, imports of goods and raw materials from abroad appeared profitable whilst exports of raw materials

21 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1664, c. 18.

22 The Ministry of the Treasury's communiqué on the purchase of gold and silver at par by the Polish National Loan Office was in fact not intended to encourage anyone to dispose of their bullion coins, since the Polish Mark had been devalued three times in relation to gold during that period. The real intention was to ridicule the PKKP, presided over by Minister Karpiński.

from Poland were deterred. This situation obstructed the activity of the ZCZW's Provisioning Department. The Act of 7th November 1919 'on the compulsory buyout of gold and silver coins and of gold and silver', at prices 20 % lower than the official Central Foreign-Exchange Office quotations and 50 % lower than the free-market prices, also met with dissatisfaction among those affected. The regulations were regarded as an attempt at partial expropriation.

The crisis was exacerbated by two consecutive ordinances, which were understandably unpopular especially among owners of 'safeses' (safe-deposit boxes) and among the 'foreigners' who had arrived 'from abroad'; that is, Poles inhabiting the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The first anniversary of Poland's independence was celebrated by the launch of an oversight of safe-deposit boxes, with a three-week deadline to open them in the presence of an official from the Office for the Suppression of Usury and Speculation, for the purpose of the forced exchange of coins and bullion. A circular dated 12th November 1919 ordered customs offices to confiscate any valuables held by outlanders except for one wedding ring, two regular rings, and one watch. For those who had just evacuated from the East with all their salvaged property (or its equivalent), this was yet another most severe setback and a decision that they perceived – probably rightly so – as discrimination.

On 25th November 1919, the Legislative Sejm adopted important resolutions related to the ZCZW. The unpopular Foreign-Exchange Office was dissolved and all related institutions and regulations were annulled the following day as a result of "friendly advice offered at the same time by several diplomats accredited to the Polish Government." On 27th November, Paderewski's Government collapsed, effectively ending Leon Biliński's mission on the same day. The dispositions of Minister Biliński mainly affected Polish landowners from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, who were sojourning at the time in Warsaw, awaiting clarification about their situation.

5. Władysław Grabski (14th December 1919 to 24th November 1921)

In the Skulski Cabinet, the Ministry was handed to Władysław Grabski, who later maintained the post during his own tenure as Prime Minister, and in the succeeding Government of Wincenty Witos alike. He resigned from his function only on 24th November 1921; that is, after the dissolution of the ZCZW and the establishment of Central Lithuania. The post then passed to Jan Kanty Steczkowski.

Grabski's actions arouse questions – especially the formation, on 26th February 1920, of the State Lumber Export Agency at the Ministry of the Treasury, later dissolved on 5th January 1921 by Steczkowski. *Nota bene*, Steczkowski also abolished the Spirits Monopoly Directorate on 31st December 1920.²³ Both of these institutions operated during the existence of the ZCZW, even though the latter's economic survival was to depend in 1920 on the export of wood and trade in spirits. Perhaps both offices were established with the aim of monitoring the activities of the ZCZW. After much effort, an equivalent of the Central Foreign-Exchange Office, this time under the name of 'Foreign-Exchange Commission', was re-introduced via a regulation of 7th August 1920. Thus, it was confirmed that Minister Biliński's treasury policies, as part of the Paderewski Cabinet, were justified, and resistance to his actions was driven by factors other than substantive or rational ones.

The announcement of the plebiscite made in the Proclamation brought in an element of provisionality which hardly contributed to stability. Neither did it encourage the Borderlanders to return home, as Warsaw was deemed safer and more interesting, with new prospects opening up.

The above-discussed regulations of the Ministry of the Treasury deprived the Poles of a sense of relative financial security. This applied, in particular, to the Borderlanders in Warsaw, who were additionally burdened with the need to rent places to live. As was easily predictable, the landowners decided to recoup their losses incurred in the Borderlands. In order to reduce costs, they decided not to invest in grain and sowing, especially since they could not know what next day would bring, never mind the next year.

At the same time, they raised their economic expectations towards the administrators of their estates abandoned in the East. In order to meet these expectations, and sometimes merely to survive, the latter would then take it out on the farmhands, ruthlessly pursuing their employers' property rights. "The proprietary right is sacred. The quality of mercy is not strained."²⁴

23 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1664, c. 32.

24 W. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene 1.

Preparatory works aimed at regulating Poland's Eastern policies

As mentioned earlier, at some point the Lithuanian Commission appointed the Committee for Defence of the Borderlands [*Komitet Obrony Kresów (KOK)*],²⁵ a “partly social and partly political” institution, which in 1918 engaged in agitation activities related to the formation of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Division. A significant portion of the officials of the future ZCZW would be recruited from this organisation. KOK operated in conjunction with the Union of Military Poles based in Vilnius.

The first head of the Ministry of External [i.e. Foreign] Affairs of the resurrected Poland was Tytus Filipowicz, appointed on 14th November 1918 and tasked with organising the Ministry's work. Among the seven units of the Political Section were the Eastern Department and the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department.²⁶

In Jędrzej Moraczewski's cabinet, the position of Minister of External Affairs was on 18th November 1918 given to Leon Wasilewski, who was extremely well-versed in matters related to the Borderlands, and a personal friend of Józef Piłsudski.

On 21st December 1918, the General Administration of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department was entrusted to Ludwik Kolankowski. From the end of December 1918, the Department consisted of two (sub-)departments:

The **Political Department** included:

- the Press Section, covering the issues of divergent national aspirations in the Borderlands; and
- the Law and Statistics Section, which studied the legal and formal relations of the Lithuanian Territories with Poland. This unit was also responsible for financial law and issues related to the economy, transportation, and local authorities.

The **Organisational Department** (economic) was tasked with keeping records and evaluating the provisional management by Russians in the fields of administration, public security, education and schooling, religious denomination

25 [Komitet Obrony Kresów Wschodnich,] *Zarys powstania i działalności Komitetu Obrony Kresów Wschodnich*, Warsaw 1919, p. 10.

26 W. Michowicz, 'Organizacja polskiego aparatu dyplomatycznego w latach 1918–1939', in P. Łossowski (ed.), *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, Vol. IV: 1918–1939, Warsaw 1995, pp. 8, 15.

matters, state property, as well as with taking care of refugees from Lithuania and Byelorussia.

On 26th January 1919, the unit was restructured as the Department of the Eastern Borderlands, and Kolankowski served as both Director of the Department and head of section at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The **Legal and Administrative Unit** of this Department included sections for:

- school affairs and statistics,
- administrative law,
- state law and the judiciary,
- administration.

The **Economic Unit** included the following sections:

- agriculture and forestry,
- industry,
- trade,
- transportation,
- provisioning.

Autonomous sections were also formed for the following issues:

- statistics and assistance for refugees,
- registration of wartime damage and requisitions,
- press and canvassing,
- Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Livonian affairs,
- Ukrainian affairs.²⁷

Overview of the ZCZW's activities, by stage

The Civil Administration (of the Eastern Territories) was an administrative unit brought into existence by the Chief of State with the aim of implementing his political programme, whose purpose was to protect the Polish state and his native Lithuania not only from the Russian threat, but also from internal revolutionary turmoil. Its activity in the areas of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania formally spanned 19, but practically 14-plus, months, and can be divided into six basic stages:

27 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773, bundle 5, file 1, c. 37: 'List of attendees at a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 26th January 1919'.

1. 8th (19th) February 1919 to 22nd April 1919: preparations made by Piłsudski with a view to installing the Civil Administration in such a way as to ensure the widest possible scope for political manoeuvre in the future.
2. 22nd April 1919 to 10th October 1919: intense rivalry between the ZCZW and the Supreme Command of the Polish Army.
3. 10th October 1919 to 25th November 1919: high point of conflict between the Legislative Sejm and Piłsudski regarding the right to decide on the future of the lands of the former Grand Duchy, which ultimately severely affected the ZCZW.
4. 25th November 1919 to 17th January 1920: transitional period, marked by the climax of the press campaign aimed at dividing the lands under the ZCZW's jurisdiction and diminishing the Commissioner-General's prerogatives.
5. 17th January 1920 to 1st June 1920: an 'administrative' period, marked by the ZCZW's attempts at gaining economic autonomy.
6. 1st June 1920 to 9th September 1920: the ZCZW in terminal decline.

First period (8th February 1919–22nd April 1919)

The decree of 8 February 1919, countersigned by Prime Minister Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the Chief of State, instituted, "upon the commencement of operations by Polish troops in the lands of Lithuania and Byelorussia", a Military Administration over the said territory.²⁸ The executive dispositions were to be issued by the General Staff of the Polish Army, jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department.

The decree of the Commander-in-Chief (Supreme Command N. Dz. 966/IV) of 19th February 1919 appointed the head of section at the Foreign Ministry and Director of the Department of Eastern Borderlands (Lithuanian-Byelorussian) as Civil Commissioner-General at the Military Administration of the Eastern Borderlands.²⁹ The form of this nomination was unusual ('To Professor Ludwik Kolankowski ...'), and it seems to have been deliberate move by Piłsudski.

On 22nd February 1919, a 'Scheme of the Administration of the Eastern Borderlands' was produced at the General Staff in consultation with the

28 *Official Journal of the Civil Commissioner-General – Supreme Command of the P[olish] A.[rmy] – Military Administration of the Eastern Territories* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Generalnego Komisarza Cywilnego Naczelne Dowództwo W.P. Zarząd Wojskowy Ziem Wschodnich* (hereinafter, 'D.U. Gen. Kom. Cyw. NDWPZWZW')], Yr. I, No. 1, 10th April 1919, I. 1.

29 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 3.1, 14th June 1919, 12 [erroneously printed as '10'].

Committee for the Defence of the Eastern Borderlands.³⁰ The way the Commissioner-General was positioned in relation to the other state authorities was replicated in the future, giving rise to conflicts of competencies.

Commissioner-General (more specifically, Civil Commissioner-General) L. Kolankowski served as the highest position of civil administrative and executive power. However, he had a decisive say solely in formal terms. The district commissaries assigned to individual armies were indeed appointed by the Commissioner-General, but on behalf of the Supreme Command.

Administration in the counties³¹ was handled by a county commissioner, appointed by the Commissioner-General but acting on behalf of the Supreme Command, as a representative of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Subordination to the Supreme Command was necessary as the Commissioner had not been appointed by the Chief of State, who, after 10th February, would be unable to do so without the approval of the Sejm, and also in order to obtain the funds needed to organise the administration from sources beyond the control of the Council of Ministers, i.e. from financial resources allocated to the military.

As Civil Commissioner-General, Kolankowski managed the Foreign Ministry's Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department, composed of seven sub-departments (sections) and a head office:

- the Personnel Management Section, which was responsible for the recruitment of staff and for disciplinary matters;
- the Political Section, which was responsible for political, ethnicity/nationality, and press affairs, as well as for drafting ordinances and regulations/provisions of the Civil Administration;
- the Administrative Section, which was in charge of general administration, police, sanitation, veterinary service, and statistics;
- the Treasury Section, which was entrusted with matters of employment, cashbox, taxes, customs duties and monopolies, plus oversight of credit institutions;

30 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773, bundle 5, file 4.

31 The smallest administrative units were settlements, villages and 'manorial areas' [estates]. Several such entities formed a commune, managed by a *wójt* (commune head). A county consisted of a dozen-or-so communes within the boundaries of the former Russian division.

- the Economic Section, which was to handle the organisation of agriculture, forestry, industries, provisioning/supplies, trade, transportation, and registration of wartime losses;
- the Justice Section, which was tasked with organising the judiciary and penitentiary system, in line with the existing laws;
- the Denominations and Education Section, which supervised matters of religion and schooling;
- the Head Office, which handled daily office operations of the Department.

It seems that Piłsudski's intention was to take control of the structure which, following a lengthy struggle, was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather than as part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.³² Kolankowski was an excellent planner. The structure of the Civil Administration organised according to his concept is depicted on a board, a copy of which is kept at the Central Military Archives in Warsaw.

The district commissioners assigned to military groups (armies) operating in Lithuania, Byelorussia, and Volhynia were subordinate to the Civil Commissioner-General in the capacity of inspectors. The post of district commissioner at the command of the Polish Army Group led by General Stanisław Szeptycki (temporarily in Wołkowysk) was held by Maciej Jamontt, with Stanisław Kozakowski as his deputy.³³ The competence of Commissioner Jamontt spanned the following counties: Białystok,³⁴ Bielsk [Podlaski]³⁵

32 Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk (hereinafter, APAN)], M. Handelsman's file. Also, see Chapter I, fn. 87.

33 Konstanty Rouba served as clerk [*referent*] and Witold Honwalt [Houwalt?] as secretary.

34 August Cyfrowicz, PhD, was County Commissioner; Bolesław Szymański was his deputy; Aleksander Woźniacki was the clerk in charge of economics; Witold Giejsztowt was County Engineer, Włodzimierz Tarło-Maziński was the School Inspector, Franciszek Protasiewicz was County Veterinary Officer; Mikołaj Boguszewicz was auxiliary clerk for fiscal matters; Napoleon Cydzik was the town's governmental commissary; Władysław Songajłło was municipal police officer/instructor; Władysław Dąbrowski was Police Commissioner.

35 Józef Sienkowski was County Commissioner; Franciszek Kulikowski, Deputy County Commissioner; Dr Stanisław Złotnicki, County Physician; Jan Zasztowt, County Engineer; Paweł Powierza, Provisioning Clerk; Mr Szulc, School Inspector; Antoni Wysocki, Police Commissioner.

Sokółka,³⁶ Grodno,³⁷ and Wołkowysk.³⁸ The position of district commissary at the command of the Polish Army Group led by General Antoni Listowski (temporarily stationed in Brześć Litewski) was held by Antoni Wojewódzki, with Mieczysław Ines as his deputy.³⁹ The competence of the voivodeship commissioner spanned the following counties: Brześć Litewski,⁴⁰ Prużana,⁴¹ Kobryń,⁴² Słonim,⁴³ and Pińsk.⁴⁴ The position of district commissary at the command of the Polish Army Group under General Edward Rydz-Śmigły (temporarily in Kowel) was held by Zdzisław Rodzynkiewicz, with Antoni Stanisław Pilarski as deputy.⁴⁵ His competence spanned the Counties of Włodzimierz Wołyński,⁴⁶

36 Marian Bachr acted as County Commissioner (on a replacement basis), Bronisław Wysocki was Economic Clerk, Józef Nitecki was School Inspector, and Władysław Chojnicki was Police Commissioner.

37 Stanisław Iwanowski was County Commissioner, Jan Nitosławski was Economic Clerk, Rafał Woźniakowski was School Inspector, and Józef Lewandowski was Police Commissioner.

38 Kazimierz Sulistrowski was County Commissioner, Mirosław Ciszewski was his deputy; Ignacy Przysiecki was County Veterinary Officer, Stefan Cier was School Inspector, Stanisław Przekiszewski was Economic Clerk, Kazimierz Wimbor was Provisioning Clerk, Szczepan Sołonkiewicz was Police Commissioner, and Ryszard Bitner was the county's Cash Clerk.

39 Stanisław Wiśniewski was clerk [*referent*], and Julian Zell was secretary.

40 Marian Zbrowski was County Commissioner, his deputy was Bronisław Eckhardt; Artur Branowski was County Engineer, Alfred Pilecki was Economic Clerk, Aleksander Lissowski was Provisioning Clerk, Walerian Romański was Assistant to the Fiscal Clerk; officer Waclaw Bołdok was the Police Instructor and Napoleon Koszutski was Police Commissioner; Władysław Raniszewski was Assistant to the Secretary.

41 Jan Sienkiewicz was County Commissioner, Zygmunt Czerwijowski was Economic Clerk, Marian Sienkowski was County Engineer, Michał Łukaszewicz was Cashbox Controller, and his deputy was Zygmunt Bukowski.

42 Aleksander Lenkiewicz was County Commissioner, and Leon Landsberg was his deputy; Felicjan Winel was Provisioning Clerk, Antoni Mirecki was Economic Clerk, Waclaw Kieniewicz was Police Commissioner, Józef Zawadzki was Forest Manager, and Benedykt Klimowicz was Secretary.

43 (Post unfilled.)

44 Józef Niemczynowicz was Provisioning Clerk.

45 Michał Miratyński was Secretary.

46 Tadeusz Krzyżanowski was County Commissioner, Henryk Ziembicki was County Engineer, Dr Stanisław Cybulski was County Physician, Zdzisław Stecki was Provisioning Clerk, Kazimierz Brzostowski, Eng., and Aleksander Szumowski acted as

Kowel,⁴⁷ and Łuck.⁴⁸

During Kolankowski's term of office, magistrates' courts began to be set up, namely in Białystok,⁴⁹ Bielsk,⁵⁰ Sokółka,⁵¹ Wołkowysk,⁵² Brześć Litewski,⁵³ Prużana,⁵⁴ Włodzimierz Wołyński,⁵⁵ and Kowel.⁵⁶

Ludwik Kolankowski was officially in favour of regulating the borders with a 'possible' Lithuanian state based upon the freely expressed will of the people inhabiting the disputed territories; yet, in his memoirs, he does not refer to the Borderlands otherwise than 'our lands'.⁵⁷ He did not support the opinion, lingering among historians to this day, that the declaration contained in the Proclamation of 22nd April 1919 was merely a symbolic gesture.⁵⁸

To quote Janusz Szczepański's opinion (published in 2000), "The Proclamation was undoubtedly of a propagandist nature and was designed to produce an effect not only in Byelorussia – it was meant to charm the foreign decision-makers with the Polish leader's democratic intentions."⁵⁹ To my mind, it would have

Economic Clerks for the town/municipality and county, respectively; Tadeusz Andler was Assistant to the Tax Clerk, and Edward Kowalski was County Cash Clerk.

47 Stanisław Starczewski was County Commissioner, Adam Winiarski was the Commissioner's Deputy, Stanisław Dąbrowski was Economic Clerk, Leon Massalski was Provisioning Clerk; Officer Jakub Chodakowski was the Municipal Police Instructor, and Piotr Ciesielski was Police Commissioner.

48 (Post unfilled.)

49 City/municipality: Stanisław Jankowski was Justice-of-the-Peace (Magistrate), Mr Średnicki was Secretary. County: Kazimierz Janowicz was Magistrate and Jan Góral was Secretary.

50 Jan Reutt was Justice-of-the-Peace.

51 Mieczysław Norwid-Raczkiewicz was Justice-of-the-Peace.

52 City/municipality: Witold Szumski-Szauman was Justice-of-the-Peace. County: Ludwik Brodowski was Justice-of-the-Peace and Władysław Brzozowski was Secretary.

53 City/municipality: Władysław Strzałko was Justice-of-the-Peace, Władysław Soczyński was Secretary. County: Gustaw Kotyński was Justice-of-the-Peace and Albin Brincken was Secretary.

54 Waclaw Wyszyński was Justice-of-the-Peace.

55 Szczęśny Poniatowski was Justice-of-the-Peace.

56 Józef Siewiorek was Justice-of-the-Peace.

57 APAN, Deposit 12, L. Kolankowski, *Pamiętniki* [Memoirs].

58 See B. Skaradziński, "Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919–1920 – alternatywy i konsekwencje. Odpowiedź na ankietę dwumiesięcznika "ARCANA. Kultura – Historia – Polityka", *Arcana* 2000 (September–October), No. 35, p. 65.

59 J. Szczepański, *Spoleczeństwo Polski w walce z najazdem bolszewickim 1920 roku*, Warsaw–Pułtusk 2000, p. 139.

been better if this author had not argued against the opinion expressed in Piotr Łossowski's study on the Polish-Lithuanian conflict of 1918–20.⁶⁰

Kolankowski did know that the Proclamation stood for a programme, as is testified by a number of facts. To name the key ones:

- the emphasis placed during his tenure on the fact that the official acting as the “highest instance of civil administrative and executive power”, i.e. the Civil Commissioner-General, was simultaneously the “Director of the Department for Polish Affairs in the Eastern Territories” [in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], which automatically implies his subordination (via the Foreign Minister) to the Council of Ministers;
- the assumption of administration, on equal rights, over the lands already incorporated into Poland and those successively liberated by the progressing ‘occupying’ troops of the Polish Armed Forces;⁶¹ and,
- the fact that he himself had resigned, having fulfilled his duty to the best of his knowledge. However, he stayed in Vilnius, at its freshly reactivated University. The rescript of the Chief of State dated 5th May 1919 released him (at his own request) from the post of the Civil Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories.⁶²

The first period of activity of the Civil Administration concluded not only with Kolankowski's resignation, but, above all, with the issuance of the ‘Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania’, which constituted the programme framework of the ZCZW. On 22nd April 1919, Józef Piłsudski wrote from Vilnius to Stanisław Wojciechowski, Minister of Internal Affairs: “I will be arriving [in Warsaw] with Osmołowski, who will be needed to reorganise the Byelorussian-Lithuanian Department. I am sending you the proclamations issued to the people of Vilnius: by Belina, General Śmigły, and myself. Submit them all to the press. As for my proclamation, you will have to take responsibility for it before the Sejm if necessary, even though you have not countersigned

60 P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 45–46. Also, cf. the reference literature specified in Chapter I, fn. 83 to 94, hereof.

61 According to the electoral law pertaining to the Legislative Sejm, the eastern part of the former Governorate (*Guberniya*) of Suwałki, roughly along a parallel line slightly offset east of the current Polish-Lithuanian border, was excluded from the election. No election to the Legislative Sejm was planned for the Counties of Kalwaria, Mariampol, Władysławów, and Wołkowysk. *Journal of the Laws of the State of Poland [Dziennik Praw Państwa Polskiego]* 1918, No. 18, Item 46 – Electoral Law of 28th November 1918.

62 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 3, 14th June 1919, I. 13.

it. Order its translation into French and send it by radiotelegraph to Paris, to Paderewski. Naturally, there is no need for you to encrypt it.”⁶³

Among the dispatches received by Wojciechowski, there must have also been the ‘Proclamation from the entering troops’, whose preserved draft clearly defines what had not been precisely disclosed in Józef Piłsudski’s Proclamation.

Citizens,

The tsarist despotism, the bloody German rule, and the Bolshevik violence – are all broken.

The Polish troops are bringing freedom to all the peoples of Lithuania and Byelorussia.

We are coming to you as brothers to brothers.

We are bringing equal rights to all the nationalities, without exception.

We bring freedom of confession, so that everyone can praise their God in their own way, be it at a Catholic church, an Orthodox one, or a synagogue.

The opportunity to work, and obtain fair remuneration therefor, is to be ensured.

Land is to be provided justly to those who work it.

The country is to be reconstructed, and all the suffering caused by the terrible war alleviated, and, as far as possible, bread is to be provided to those who are hungry.

The laws shall be constituted by the people themselves, at a *sejm* to be elected by all the strata of the population – by factory and farm workers, as well as the enlightened classes of the nation.

The free people’s Republic of Poland wants to ensure prosperity, law and justice to all.

All unlawful acts and offences against the regulations in force shall, therefore, be punished. All extrajudicial judgements [*resp.* acts of mob law], arbitrary disposal of others’ property, and all robberies shall be suppressed mercilessly.

Before peace prevails everywhere, before order and discipline reigns here, before the Bolshevik gangs have been completely banished from the country, it shall be ruled by the military authorities with the assistance of civilian commissariats.

As Civil Commissary appointed on behalf of the government of the Free People’s Republic of Poland for the present county, within its pre-war boundaries, I hereby inform you of the above. I call on the people to show support and cooperation in the

63 Józef Piłsudski Institute in New York, Adjutancy General of the Supreme Command, Group II B: Ukraine–Russia–Lithuania, file 16, 707/5, April–June 1919 [Materials supplied by Dorota Cisowska-Hydzik].

performance of my duties, and I hope that they will loyally comply with all the orders, in their own interest.

May God bless our work and the free peoples of Poland, Lithuania and Byelorussia.⁶⁴

It is difficult to know unequivocally today whether this text was published anywhere. Perhaps I have found in Marian Świechowski's dossier only a copy, objected to by an unknown reader, and put aside. In the documents of Jerzy Osmołowski's Personal Secretariat, I have discovered a puzzling and certainly not chronologically structured, 'Inventory of Polish Proclamations', in Polish, Russian (ten items) and Lithuanian (one item), numbering 37 items. In 20 cases, the publisher has been identified. Proclamation No. 32 on the list bears the title 'To the inhabitants', and its author is J. Piłsudski, who has also authored the untitled proclamation No. 33.⁶⁵ There is no proclamation by Belina or Śmigły.

According to Ludwik Abramowicz, head of the Press Department in the District of Vilnius, the Commander-in-Chief's proclamation "has been received by the Lithuanian, Byelorussian, and Jewish political circles partly with disbelief, and partly with some irony. This did not prevent them from exploiting the freedom of views guaranteed in the proclamation to a very large extent ... once they were confident that the authorities would consistently adhere to their principles and would not restrict the freedoms, once granted, the [anti-Polish] tones of dissent began to resound even more intensely." Although Abramowicz largely

64 LMAB, Fond 168–58, l. 9. Draft version of the 'Proclamation from the entering troops'.

65 Proclamation No. 34 is 'List Poselski' [Letter to the Deputies] by Fr. J. Teodorowicz; No. 35 is 'Broliai Lietuviai!' [Lithuanian brothers!] by the Borderland Guard's Press Dept.; No. 36 is 'Wypadki postępują' [Events are progressing] by the Polish Socialist Party [PPS]; No. 37 is Order No. 95 of the Command of the 2nd Legions' Infantry Division, issued by Gen. Bolesław Roja. Also included are (among others) 'Do młodzieży ziemi mińskiej' [To the youth of the Land of Minsk] by the Board of 'J. Piłsudski' Society (No. 10), 'Obywatele!' [Citizens!] by the Br.[anch] of the Ch.[ief] Com.[mand of] POW [= Polish Military Organisation] (No. 15), 'Witajcie' [Welcome] by Polish People's Union (No. 16), 'Wyciąg z uchwał zgr.[omadzenia] delegatów' ['Extract of resolutions of the ass.[embly] of delegates'] by the Provisional Polish National Council (No. 17), 'Koledzy i koleżanki' [Dear colleagues] by the Centr.[al] Com.[mittee] of Nat.[ional] Indep.[endence][?] (No. 21), ZCZW's 'Do ludności kresów wschodnich' [To the population of the Eastern Borderlands][sic] (No. 23), 'Wojna dobiega końca' [The war is nearing its end] by Polish Christian Democracy (No. 25), 'Pp. Oficerowie Armji Polskiej' [Messrs. Officers of the Polish Army] by the Organisat.[ional(?)] Com.[mittee] (No. 30). BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/VII, c. 39–40.

blamed the Byelorussian socialist Hryb for this state of affairs, he also criticised the Poles for the escalation of moods. “One has to admit that the Polish press is not without blame here, and neither is the attitude of various Polish political and social organisations, which have often taunted the Lithuanian and Byelorussian national feelings in an irritating manner, whilst the smear campaign against Jews, especially in *Dziennik Wileński*, must have often envenomed the opposite side greatly.”⁶⁶ In addition, another newspaper, *Głos Litwy*, would publish announcements of the Lithuanian Staff regarding the Polish front. In this situation, the introduction of preventive military censorship was the only option.

Second period (22nd April 1919–10th October 1919)

The order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army of 15th April 1919 appointed Jerzy Osmołowski Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories.⁶⁷ Osmołowski’s candidacy was recommended by the Minister of Agriculture, Stanisław Janicki.⁶⁸

The Civil Administration was initially seated in Warsaw. As of early October 1919, only the Branch Office remained in Warsaw while the Central Office was relocated to Vilnius, despite Osmołowski’s insistence on choosing Grodno.

The Proclamation of 22nd April 1919 entailed a change in the structure of the Administration under the new Commissioner-General, Osmołowski. The decrees of 8th and 19th February 1919 were repealed.⁶⁹ The Commander-in-Chief approved the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 12th May 1919, and on the same day he issued an order related to the organisation of the Civil Administration in the eastern areas occupied by the Polish Army.⁷⁰ Until the institution of a genuine administrative system in the eastern areas ‘in the proper way’, civilian administration was to be exercised by the Commissioner-General

66 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives (hereinafter, LCVA)], f. 13, ap. 1, b. 57, l. 18–18 (verso)–19: ‘Press report by L. Abramowicz, Head of the Press Department, of 24th July 1919’.

67 As in fn. 29.

68 According to Kolankowski’s opinion: “a *krajowiec* [member of the ‘Fellow Countrymen’ movement] and a rather peculiar candidate, since he was a political, social and economic activist with confirmed radical views, and between March and September 1917, he was even Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soldiers’ and Workers’ Councils of Kishinev Delegates, and Chairman of the Governoral Executive Committee.” APAN, d. 12: L. Kolankowski, *Pamiętniki* [Memoirs], pp. 1–30.

69 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, no.1–4 of 10th September 1919, I. 1 & 2.

70 *Ibid.*, Yr. I, No.3 of 14th June 1919, I. 12 & 15.

affiliated to (and not on behalf of) the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces, appointed and dismissed by the Commander-in-Chief at the request of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland. The Commissioner's authority covered the areas constituting the theatre of war and staging areas/districts (*etaps*) beyond the eastern borders of the former Congress Kingdom, with the exception of the counties included in the decree on the Electoral Law pertinent to the Legislative Sejm of 28th November 1918 (since the counties of Białystok, Sokółka, and Bielsk became part of the Republic of Poland, remaining under the control of the Ministry of the Interior).

The Commissioner-General, responsible for his actions before the Supreme Command, was granted the right to issue interim regulations, being decree-laws, in all spheres of civil administration and thus excluding military matters. He exercised executive power, oversaw the country's administration, and appointed and supervised all judicial officials. He also established expenditure and revenue estimates, ordered elections – but only for local-government institutions – and represented the Supreme Command in matters of the country's civil administration before the central authorities. A special representative acted on behalf of the Commissioner-General before the Council of Ministers in Warsaw, responsible in particular for ensuring supplies for the areas under the Administration's jurisdiction.

The Commissioner-General performed all of his tasks through the directly subordinate Commissariat-General and the district commissioners, who in turn reported to the county and town/municipal commissioners. In order to reconcile the activities of the military and civil authorities in the field of administration, the Commissioner-General appointed his representatives to the commands of all the army groups. In anticipation of disputes over competencies, on 13th May 1919 the Commander-in-Chief issued an order separating the spheres of control of the military authorities and the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories.⁷¹

On 14th May 1919, Osmołowski appointed Michał Stanisław Kossakowski as his representative in Warsaw.⁷² On 28th May, he issued an ordinance on the organisation of districts and district authorities in the eastern areas seized (*not* occupied) by Polish troops.⁷³ Authority in the district was to be exercised on the basis of regulations issued by the Commissioner-General. In all unregulated matters,

71 Ibid., I. 16.

72 Ibid., V. 21.

73 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 5, 28th June 1919, III. 39.

the district commissioner would take over all of the rights of the Russian governor that had been in force until 5th September 1915. The district office, apart from the district commissioner, consisted of the latter's deputy and of inspectors assigned for assistance purposes by the Commissioner-General, based on adequately motivated requests from district commissioners.

On 7th June 1919, J. Osmałowski issued a directive concerning the establishment of the Vilnius and Brześć Litewski Districts, as well as the Administration of the Volhynian Counties.⁷⁴ He signed an ordinance regulating the organisation and tasks of the Commissariat-General on 11th July 1919.⁷⁵

The Commissariat-General was the central institution of the Civil Administration; it remained under the direct authority of the Commissioner-General, and consisted of departments headed by chiefs/heads. The departments were grouped into four sections, responsible for: I. – General Affairs; II. – Administration; III. – the Economy; and, IV. – Revenue.

The departmental structure seemed to be the most transparent. In addition to the autonomous Personal Secretariat, headed by the Personal Secretary to the Commissioner-General, the Commissariat-General was composed of the following departments:

- General Department, consisting of:
 - a) the central office,
 - b) the archive,
 - c) the Commissariat purchasing department,
 - d) the Commissariat's cashbox (treasury),
 - e) the Commissariat's reckoning (accounting) office;
- Department of Justice, Codification and, Editorial Board of the *Official Journal*;
- Conscription-and-Enlistment Department;
- National Affairs and General Press Department;
- Personnel Management Department;
- General Administration Department, in charge of:
 - a) public security,
 - b) management and administration,
 - c) local government [*resp.* self-government],
 - d) social care [*resp.* welfare],

74 Ibid., III. 41.

75 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 11, 14th August 1919, III. 90.

- e) veterinary services,
 - f) technical services and public works,
 - g) religious confessions, and,
 - h) statistics;
- Public Health Department;
 - Enlightenment [*resp.* Education] and Culture Department;
 - State Property Department;
 - Revenue Department;
 - Agriculture Department;
 - Industry and Trade Department;
 - Budget and General Reckoning [Accounting] Department;
 - Inspection Department.

On 22nd July 1919, by order of the Commander-in-Chief of 12th May 1919 regarding the organisation of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories by the Polish Armed Forces, Osmołowski published a directive concerning the prerogatives and duties of the Commissioner-General's Representative in Warsaw.⁷⁶ The Office of the Representative was established in order to represent the Commissioner-General before the supreme authorities and to conduct the Commissioner-General's activities that needed to be carried out in Warsaw. Michał Kossakowski, appointed to this post on 14th May, spoke for the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories before the Council of Ministers and the central authorities, and notified the Commissioner-General of the desiderata (rather than orders) submitted by the central authorities. He reported on his activities to the Commissioner-General. He was also charged with obtaining loans from the Polish Treasury for the ZCZW, and using them to pay for goods and products sent to the ZCZW, or for making payments on behalf of the Commissioner-General. The Representative moreover ran the ZCZW departments which were directly entrusted to him. The Branch Office consisted of a General Department, a Procurement and Provisioning Department, the Assistant Representative of the Commissioner-General,⁷⁷ a

76 Ibid., III, 91, Directive (8213/105) of the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories regarding the prerogatives and duties of the Representative of the Commissioner-General in Warsaw.

77 In the absence of the Representative, his functions were temporarily performed by an assistant. The Representative and the assistant were not supposed to be outside Warsaw at the same time, and the split of functions between them was to be determined by internal regulations to be issued by the Representative.

Secretary, a commissioning officer and a legal counsel. The Economic Section's subsection (bureau) of passes, the Passport Section, Finances and Reckoning Section, Liquidation Committee, the Liquidation of War Losses office, as well as the central office, were all directly subordinate to the Commissioner-General's Representative; the Trade and Agricultural Subsection of the Economic Section, Health and Social Care Section, and the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department's liaison station were only assigned to the Branch Office, while reporting to the relevant departments of the Commissariat-General.

In view of the progress of military action on the front, on 9th September 1919 the Commissioner-General issued an ordinance on the formation of the Volhynian Administrative District⁷⁸ and, on 12th September, that of the District of Minsk.⁷⁹ Personnel at all levels were being successively recruited in these newly-established districts.

The second period of the ZCZW's activity was marked by the development of the structure devised by Civil Commissioner Kolankowski. In parallel, it was a period of constant tensions and clashes, in all possible aspects, with the military authorities, who, notwithstanding the explicit intentions of the Commander-in-Chief expressed in his order of 13th May, considered themselves a superior authority to the ZCZW. The said order clearly stated that the Commissioner-General was accountable for his actions to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, and not, as formerly, to the Supreme Command.⁸⁰

Third period (10th October 1919 to 25th October 1919)

The terms 'commissioner' and 'commissariat', which evoked unfortunate associations among the inhabitants of the Borderlands, were changed by the order of the Commander-in-Chief of 10th October 1919, which introduced several alterations in the structure of the Civil Administration in the eastern areas seized by the Polish army. The 'district commissioner' was renamed as 'head of the district', the 'county commissioner' became a starost, and the 'town [or, municipal] commissioners' were turned into 'civil administration commissioners'. The title 'Commissioner-General' retained its name, however.

On 5th November 1919, Deputy Commissioner-General Edmund Iwaszkiewicz signed an ordinance on the organisation of counties and county authorities.⁸¹

78 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 17, 12th September 1919, III. 153.

79 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 19 z 23rd September 1919 r., II. 174.

80 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 22, 24th October 1919, I. 22.

81 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 28, 11th November 1919, III. 303.

On 13th November 1919, the Commissioner-General issued a directive modifying the name of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories: the phrase ‘Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces’ was removed from the title of the *Official Journal* issued by the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories as well as from the names of all the offices and bureaux.⁸²

Proof of Piłsudski’s efforts to normalise the situation in the area under the ZCZW’s jurisdiction was a fact well remembered by the inhabitants of Vilnius at that time. On 11th October 1919,

Józef Piłsudski, the Supreme Commander of the victorious Polish troops that have, by bold deed and sacrifice of blood, clawed Vilnius back from the hands of the enemy and restored freedom to Polish culture there, has solemnly installed – in the presence of the highest Church dignitaries, of the commanders of the Polish armed forces, and emissaries of universities, of the delegates of Polish cities and scientific societies, of academic youth arriving from all over Poland, and of other numerous guests – the circle of professors of the University of Vilnius, its Senate and its Rector, enabling them to resume their academic work and, upon the re-opening of the Stefan Batory University, he handed the university’s emblems of power to the Rector. The present act has written-down to the everlasting remembrance of this solemn moment, with all those present having placed their signatures thereupon.⁸³

The ceremony took place as a result of Piłsudski’s decision of 28th August 1919, which – in reference to the words of Jan Zamoyski, founder of the University in Zamość – re-established the University of Vilnius, closed down 87 years before by the Russians, and gave it the name of King Stefan Batory, the founder of the University. The Senate was composed of: Michał Siedlecki, PhD;⁸⁴ Józef Ziemacki, MD;⁸⁵ the Rev. Bronisław Żongołłowicz, PhD;⁸⁶ Piotr Wiśniewski,

82 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 30, 15th November 1919, III. 325.

83 LVIA, Fond 1135, Ap. 13, B. 936: Original copy of the document, with autograph signatures of sixty-five persons, including J. Piłsudski and J. Osmołowski, Bishops Zygmunt Łoziński, Jerzy Matulewicz, and Józef Fedorowicz, the Rev. Adam Sapieha, Zenon Przesmycki, Aleksander Prystor, Adam Czartoryski, Franciszek Potocki, Maciej Romer, Stanisław Radziwiłł, Mirosław Obiezierski, Leon Łubieński, Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Józef Kallenbach, Władysław Wejtko, Stanisław Szeptycki, Stanisław Downarowicz, Dominik Dowgiałło, Jan Łukasiewicz, Władysław Zawadzki, the Rev. Bronisław Żongołłowicz, and a number of other Polish signatories.

84 Full Professor at the Jagiellonian University; Rector.

85 Former Professor of Surgery in St. Petersburg; Vice-rector.

86 Former Professor at St. Petersburg Theological Academy, full profesor of Canon Law at the University of Lublin; Dean of the Faculty of Theology.

PhD;⁸⁷ Ferdynand Ruszczyc;⁸⁸ and Władysław Mickiewicz, son of the poet Adam.⁸⁹ As of 1919, the University was composed of the Faculties of the Humanities,⁹⁰ Law and Social Sciences,⁹¹ Mathematics and Natural Sciences,⁹² Fine Arts,⁹³ and Theology.⁹⁴

The university cadres became a natural intellectual base for the Bureau of Congress Works at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw. In early November 1919, many personalities were invited to help prepare a treaty with Russia and to discuss ways of solving the complex problem of Poland's eastern border and analysing the issues of coexistence with the neighbouring 'nationalities'. On 6th November, another meeting was held to discuss further arrangements with regard to the eastern borders. However, the invited guests felt obliged that the proceedings should be moved to Vilnius. A private letter survives from Professor Zygmunt Jerzy Fedorowicz, Deputy Head of the Bureau in Warsaw, requesting the Eastern Administration [*sic*] to make efforts toward opening a sleeper-train line from Warsaw to Vilnius. The idea did not probably come to fruition as his

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- 87 Full Professor of Botany at the Major School of Rural Economy in Warsaw; Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences.
- 88 Former Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków; Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts.
- 89 Appointed Honorary Professor of the History of Polish Literature on 1st September 1919.
- 90 Associate Professor Wincenty Lutosławski; Assoc. Prof. Włodzimierz Szyłkarski; Deputy Professor Władysław Tatarkiewicz, PhD; Dep. Prof. Władysław Horodyski, PhD; Assoc. Prof. Jan Dąbrowski, PhD; Dep. Prof. Feliks Koneczny, PhD; Assoc. Prof. the Rev. Kazimierz Zimmermann, PhD; Prof. Stanisław Ptaszycki, the Library Director; Full Professor Marian Zdziechowski, PhD; Dep. Michał Bogucki, PhD; Full Prof. Józef Kallenbach, PhD; Dep. Prof. and Lector Stefan Glixelli.
- 91 Dep. Prof. Jerzy Fedorowicz, PhD; Full Prof. Alfons Parczewski; Assoc. Prof. Władysław Zawadzki, PhD.
- 92 Assoc. Prof. Wiktor Staniewicz, PhD; Dep. Prof. Władysław Dziewulski, PhD; Dep. Prof. Józef Patkowski, PhD; Dep. Prof. Waclaw Dziewulski, PhD; Full Prof. Kazimierz Sławiński; Dep. Prof. Stefan Bazarewski, PhD; Full Prof. Piotr Wiśniewski, PhD; and Full Prof. Michał Siedlecki, PhD.
- 93 Prof. Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Benedykt Kubicki, Bolesław Bałzukiewicz, Stanisław Bohusz-Siestrzeńciewicz, Józef Czajkowski, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Bonawentura Lenart, Jan Bulhak, Bronisław Zapaśnik, Dep. Prof. Jerzy Aleksandrowicz, PhD, and Juliusz Kłos.
- 94 The Rev. Full Prof. Bronisław Żongołłowicz, JD; the Rev. Full Prof. Kazimierz Zimmermann, PhD in Economic Sciences; the Rev. Full Prof. Bolesław Wilanowski, PhD in Theology.

name is absent among those present at the two meetings of the Bureau in Vilnius, on 6th and 13th December 1919.

On 6th December 1919, the following people appeared in Stefan Batory University's Lecture Hall No. 2: Stanisław Łopaciński, who presided the meeting; the Rev. Stanisław Maciejewicz, a deputy; former Minister Leon Wasilewski; Jan Piłsudski, Deputy Head of the District of Vilnius; Jan Klott, Head of the General Section at the Commissariat-General of the Eastern Territories; moreover, Hipolit Gieczewicz, Janina Studnicka, Waław Mohl, Professor Feliks Koneczny, Professor Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Franciszek Oskierko, Waław Studnicki, Stanisław Łopaciński, the Rev. Prof. Bronisław Żongołłowicz, and Marian Świechowski, the last of these being secretary of the meeting on behalf of the ZCZW. He was the one who accused the Bureau of Congress Works of being 'out of touch with reality' for not trying to influence international opinion. However, according to the Bureau itself, the dossiers of politicians in Paris were full of maps by Jużoas Gabrys, including covering a part of the Congress Kingdom, and of postcards that were offensive to Poland.⁹⁵ "A whole series of papers remain in dossiers and on shelves at the office, ready to serve as examples of good intentions for future historians."⁹⁶ Świechowski was backed by Leon Wasilewski, who complained that fundamental issues had not been addressed.⁹⁷ The resulting heated debate prompted the Bureau to ask Fr. Żongołłowicz to present, on 10th January 1920, a visualisation of the disputed Polish-Lithuanian borderland based on gubernatorial archives, diocesan registers, and other sources. However, the prevailing opinion was that the focus ought to be, in the first place, on drafting ethnographic maps. The necessity to cooperate with the ZCZW and prepare propagandist materials jointly with it for foreign authorities was pointed out only by Professor Koneczny.

The subsequent meeting of the Bureau took place at the Stefan Batory University on 13th December 1919, and was attended by Professor Stanisław Łopaciński (meeting chairman), Stanisław Kognowicki, Wincenty Łubieński, J. Domaniewska, Leon Wasilewski, Jan Dąbrowski, PhD, Tomasz Zan, Waław Studnicki, Janina Studnicka, Jan Piłsudski, Hipolit Gieczewicz, Marian Plater,

95 See illustration 10: Anti-Polish Lithuanian propaganda postcards (author's collection).

96 LMAB, Fond 168-13, lap. 184-184 (verso): 'Minutes of the meeting of the Bureau of Congress Works in Vilnius, 6th December 1919, at the Stefan Batory University'.

97 LMAB, Fond 168-63, c. 1-61: 'Bibliographical and political materials concerning Poland and its individual provinces (save for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). Typescripts for the Bureau of Congress Works.' This resulted in the development of new research areas; for a list, see *ibid.*, c. 62-70.

Feliks Koneczny, S. Ziemacki, Władysław Zahorski, PhD, Waclaw Mohl, and Marian Świechowski as secretary. Two papers received from Warsaw were selected for duplication: 'Union of Poland with Lithuania' and 'The Organic Statute for White Ruthenia'. J. Dąbrowski, empowered by a mandate from Warsaw to form a Historical Commission for the Office of Congress Works in Vilnius, was appointed to the management of "a certain executive department to organise and supervise the works undertaken [on 6th December]";⁹⁸ which seems to have referred to F. Koneczny's proposal. Dąbrowski's Commission was joined by Count Marian Plater, Stanisław Kognowicki, Tomasz Zan, and Count Wincenty Łubiński. It was decided that the following four subjects would be elaborated at a faster pace:

1. Horoscopes of the rebirth of Russia.
2. Russian militarism in relation to Europe.
3. The reconstruction of Eastern Europe from the viewpoint of the League of Nations.
4. The interests of Western Europe in the superpower position of Poland.

I have not found the minutes of the meeting planned for 10th January 1920, to which, due to the importance of the topics discussed, the Presidium of Congress Works in Warsaw was to be especially invited;⁹⁹ I suspect that it never took place.

The lack of political judgment (or a different political knowledge than that of the ZCZW) was characteristic of the Polish intellectual elites. The public, not only in Vilnius but all over Poland, knew even less of the situation, although they considered themselves – as is usual at any moment in history – to be the most well-informed.

Representatives of this society were members of the Legislative Sejm. The autumn of 1919 was a time of change in the attitude of the Sejm towards the ZCZW. The Commander-in-Chief's success consisting in making the Commissioner-General independent of the Supreme Command, which had been attempting to hinder the Administration's efforts, was thwarted by the invalidation by the Sejm of the resolution of 23rd May on the right of nations to self-determination, by virtue of the resolutions of 25th November and 19th December.¹⁰⁰

98 LMAB, Fond 168–13, lap. 185–185 (verso): 'Minutes of the meeting of the Bureau of Congress Works in Vilnius, 13th December 1919, at the Stefan Batory University'.

99 Ibid.

100 For a broader discussion, see Chapter V.

Fourth period (25th November 1919–17th January 1920)

The smear campaign conducted in the Polish press and directed against the ‘Borderlands cacique’ Osmołowski, which unveiled numerous individual facts, indeed unflattering to the activity of the ZCZW administration, attracted the attention of members of the Legislative Sejm, who summoned the Commissioner-General to provide explanations regarding his office.

Osmołowski realised that not only had the position of his office deteriorated, but also his own. The impasse in foreign policies conducted by the Commissariat-General was triggered by steps taken by the Byelorussians on 13th December 1919,¹⁰¹ which reassured all of the opponents of the Chief of State’s pro-Byelorussian policy in the belief that they had been right all along. Additionally, the Christmas and New Year season had arrived, a period that is usually conducive to drawing personal summaries and making plans for the future. Eventually, the District of Volhynia was removed from under the Commissioner-General’s jurisdiction, based on convincing economic arguments.

The ZCZW also fought for its position using, at last, popular publications. This was all the more important as the public not only in Warsaw, but also in Vilnius, was unaware of this authority’s structure.

The ‘Information Calendar for the year 1920’, published in Vilnius at the end of 1919, offered a dozen-or-so pages of information on the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. Established “by virtue of the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces of 12th May 1919, by the time the system of the areas in the East seized by the Polish troops is rectified, the civil administration will be exercised in these areas by the Commissioner-General, appointed and dismissed by the Commander-in-Chief, at the request of the President of the Ministers of the Republic of Poland. The aforementioned order was supplemented by the Order of 10th October 1919. The Commissioner-General was responsible for his actions to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces.”¹⁰² This was a comprehensive compendium of knowledge about the ZCZW, presumably prepared by the Commissariat-General itself.

The calendar specified that the Commissioner-General was entitled to issue temporary decrees with the force of law in all areas of civil administration, except for military matters. He had the final say on the ZCZW’s estimates of expenses and income, and was responsible for obtaining loans and subsidies from the Polish

101 More broadly on the topic in Chapter VIII.

102 LMAB, Rare books archive, ref. No. L-20/267/1920, c. 83–92: ‘Information Calendar for the year 1920’.

Government. He ordered elections to local government institutions, appointed representatives of the local population to advisory bodies, and represented the Supreme Command in matters of civil administration before the central Polish authorities. The Commissioner-General was to perform his duties via district heads and their subordinate starosts in the counties, and via commissaries of civil administration in the municipalities, as well as through control/inspection offices, judicial authorities, local-government bodies, and representatives at the central authorities in Warsaw and the commands of military groups in the area subject to the Civil Administration.

The district heads were to issue regulations on matters of public safety and peace and to oversee civil administration in the assigned area, in accordance with Commissioner-General's regulations and instructions. They were responsible for the supervision and control of administrative bodies and officials. A starost (or civil commissioner) exercised the corresponding functions in their respective areas, in accordance with instructions and recommendations from their superiors.

The delimitation of the spheres of competence of both civil and military authorities was set out according to the Order of the Commander-in-Chief dated 13th May 1919. The Civil Administration was given authority in all areas of social and economic life, save for affairs relating directly to war operations. Thus, the exclusive competence of the ZCZW included the following fields:

- (i) Any administrative and police matters concerning the civilian population.
- (ii) Any fiscal/tax-related matters; the normalisation of industry, trade and agriculture, including the shipping of goods and foods.
- (iii) The management of state assets and estates abandoned by their owners, property left behind by German and Bolshevik authorities, save for war material; the settlement of cases involving losses of property and woodland.
- (iv) Food provisioning for the civilian population.
- (v) The administration of justice in civilian matters, save for cases falling within the competence of military courts.
- (vi) All requisitions and performances in kind.
- (vii) Controlling the movement of civilians through the issuance of passes.

The Representative of the Commissioner-General of the Civil Administration was in charge of the Branch Office located in Warsaw, and his tasks included, in particular, ensuring food supplies for the areas under the Commissioner-General's jurisdiction.

The Commissioner-General's Representative to the Command of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front was tasked with notifying the military authorities

of the regulations and intentions of the civil authorities and – a distinctive trait of the relations prevailing in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania – with submitting complaints by the Civil Administration authorities regarding the conduct of the army to the Command.

As the administrative districts were created gradually as the army progressed in the field, there were four more entities when the Calendar went to print:

- the District of Vilnius, with the district authorities' seat in Vilnius, comprising the city itself and the following counties: Vilnius, Troki, Oszmiana, Święciany, Lida, Grodno, Nowogródek, Dzisna, Wilejka, and Braclaw;
- the District of Brześć Litewski, with its seat in Brześć Litewski, comprising the Counties of Brześć Litewski, Wołkowysk, Prużana, Słonim, Kobryń, Mozyrz, and Baranowicze (formed of portions of the Counties of Słuck and Nowogródek);
- the District of Minsk, with its seat in Minsk, encompassing the Counties of Minsk, Borysów, Bobrujsk, Ihumeń, and Słuck; and,
- the District of Volhynia, with its seat in Kowel, including the Counties of: Włodzimierz Wołyński, Kowel, Łuck, Dubień, Równe, Krzemieniec, Ostróg, Zasław, and Zwiahel.

The provisioning administration was an independent structure. As already mentioned, supplies were entrusted to Warsaw's Branch Office. There were also separate supply districts, not directly subordinate to the Commissariat-General in Vilnius. These were:

- the District of Vilnius, comprising the Counties of Vilnius, Troki, Święciany, Oszmiana, and Wilejka;
- the District of Wołkowysk, with the Counties of Wołkowysk, Lida, northern part of the County of Słonim, and the County of Nowogródek;
- the District of Brześć Litewski, with the Counties of Brześć Litewski, Prużana, southern part of the County of Słonim, the Counties of Kobryń and Pińsk;
- the District of Volhynia, with the Counties of Kowel, Włodzimierz Wołyński, and Łuck;
- the District of Grodno, consisting of the County of Grodno.

The provisioning districts of Vilnius, Wołkowysk, Brześć Litewski, and Volhynia were headed by supply inspectors, and the Grodno district by a supply clerk. The Grodno supply district also had a salt section under the direction of a dedicated clerk. Supply clerks, subordinate to starosts, also operated in the counties.

For the purpose of managing State-administered goods, the following bodies were established: the State Assets Department, the District Boards of State

Assets, and forest inspectorates with their field branches. In order to determine the levels of obligations and war losses incurred by the Eastern Territories, the Department for the Liquidation of War Losses was established at the Branch Office of the Commissariat-General of the Eastern Territories in Warsaw. Its competencies included:

- (i) the organisation and control of the registration, recognition, and assessment of performances and losses caused by the war and by the actions of foreign military and civil authorities, followed by the approval of the resulting estimates exceeding the amount of 20,000 Marks;
- (ii) the organisation, supervision, and control of the evaluation and liquidation of performances and losses caused by wartime activity of Polish troops;
- (iii) the collection of documentation and accounting data for inter-state settlements arising from the occupation of the Eastern Territories by foreign countries.

At the request of owners, losses caused “directly by war incidents in the Eastern Territories” were estimated and established. The performances and losses incurred due to war and actions by foreign military and civil authorities, considered eligible for registration and evaluation, would include the following:

- (i) losses resulting from looting by troops;
- (ii) losses, damages, and destruction of property done by foreign troops or caused by the war;
- (iii) losses of wealth or property, resulting from forced sale, forced deprivation, quartering, evacuation, forced administration or exploitation, and from a forced contract;
- (iv) contributions, seizures, compulsory levies, and personal performances or benefits;
- (v) losses resulting from requisitioning and sequestering;
- (vi) losses in deposits made with banks and savings-banks that were evacuated, in claimed dues and hard cash.

It should be noted that the performances/benefits and losses caused by the military activity of Polish troops were subject to recording and assessment to the extent which, by virtue of the laws and military regulations in force, such performances/benefits and losses were payable by the military authorities. The recognition and estimation of losses and performances/benefits caused by the actions of Polish troops lay within the competence of special county and district commissions, headed by representatives of the authorities, whereas the

registration and evaluation of losses caused by foreign military and civil authorities was entrusted to social organisations.

Organisations such as the 'Association for the Defence of the Property of Poles' were expected to set up estimation commissions at the commune and county levels, which were to include representatives of the authorities. Declarations of war losses could be submitted by all victims, namely owners (and, in case of factual or legal inability, persons duly entitled or obliged), as well as users and depositaries. Such declarations could also be presented by guardians or curators on behalf of minors, and duly authorised representatives on behalf of legal entities; on behalf of municipal bodies they were to be submitted by their boards. The submission of such applications involved the payment of a fee¹⁰³ corresponding to the declared total value of the loss incurred. This, in my opinion, should be considered a decisive reason for the limited number of applications submitted, which concerned losses proving immense for the owners but falling within the first, relatively highest, range of fees. The unstable situation would not make a quick reimbursement any more plausible, which extended to allotment of damages, whilst the fee was payable on the spot.

The education and schooling system was defined in detail. The competent section was led by the head in charge of education, and his subordinates were county inspectors. The educational institutions in the Eastern Territories were allowed to teach in the mother tongue of the ethnic groups residing in the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Religious instruction, representing the denominations present at the school, were taught in the native language of the students and were compulsory. Establishments with a non-Polish language of instruction were required to introduce Polish as a regular subject (two hours a week).¹⁰⁴

The regulation stating that schools with a non-Polish language of instruction could receive government subsidies only if their instruction language was the mother tongue of at least two-thirds of the total number of students, most

103 For a total loss of 1.00 to 10,000.00 Roubles (rb), the fees ranged from 1.00 to 100,00 rb; for the loss of 10,000.00 rb to 50,000.00 rb – 1 Mark per 100 rb plus 100 Marks; for 50,001.00 to 100,000.00 rb – 1 Mark per 100 rb plus 300 Marks; for 100,001.00 rb to 500,000.00 rb, one-eighth Mark per 100 rb plus 425 Marks; for 500,001.00 rb to 2,000,000.00 rb; one-sixteenth Mark per 100 rb plus 925 Marks; for 2,000,001.00 rb and above, one-thirty-second of Mark per 100 rb plus 1,862 Marks. LMAB, Rare books archive, ref. No. L-20/267/1920, c. 88: 'Information Calendar for the year 1920'.

104 Elementary schools from the second or third year of schooling (depending on the location); secondary schools in first grade.

probably triggered a mass ‘White-Ruthenisation’ of the Russians, or multitudinous ‘Russification of the locals.’ In practice, the language of instruction at each school would be determined by which of the languages was best spoken by a majority of children in the area. Undoubtedly, school principals therefore tried to influence the decisions of the children’s parents, who seemed relatively indifferent to how they would be identified in the statistics, as long as the school would receive the funds. For parents of Jewish students, who looked forward to successes for their children in Russia, it is only natural that they sought to create conditions for them to speak Russian as well as possible. There were also children who struggled at school, and for them it was best to continue learning in a language they understood well. Some wanted to learn in Polish, others in Russian. The dividing line ran along that of the former front.

Schools could be organised by private individuals, associations, and local-government bodies. A permit had to be obtained to set up such an establishment. Authorisations for general schools, elementary as well as vocational, were issued by the inspector of the relevant district, to whom all institutions (related to pre-school and extracurricular education and training), subject to pedagogical control by the school inspectorate, were supposed to apply, after prior approval by the local county starost or head of the district. The issue of permits for secondary schools, both general and vocational, was reserved to the competence of the Head of the Public Enlightenment [*resp.* Education] Section of the Commissariat-General of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories.

All systematic courses, supplementary schools, and folk universities had to obtain a licence from the district inspector. In order to receive state assistance at the end of 1919, it was mandatory to use the curricula developed by the Public Enlightenment Section. Polish was the language of instruction in all teacher training seminars. Private, social, and communal seminars were also allowed to operate, but there were none due to financial constraints.

The right of admission to the reactivated University of Vilnius was granted only upon passing appropriate examinations in the Polish language and history, and, optionally in, Latin – for Law or Philology student candidates, and in Mathematics and Physics – for those willing to study at the Faculties of Natural Sciences, Medicine, or Mathematics. Youth associations established with the consent of educational authorities, and religious associations, were not subject to the applicable regulations on associations and unions. Therefore, the head of the Public Enlightenment Section obtained authority far exceeding its originally envisaged scope.

The ordinance of the Commissioner-General of 25th September 1919 granted the Commissioner-General the right to dissolve associations, branches and

unions at his discretion, should he consider their activities to be a threat to public peace or security. The procedure for founding an association was extremely simple: it required the submission of a statement of intent¹⁰⁵ to the district head and, if no letter of rejection was received within three weeks, it was possible to begin operations without any formalities; the association would simply be entered in the register of associations.

The procedure was more complicated if the association was to operate in several districts; in such case, its legalisation would require approval from the Commissioner-General. In the event of a refusal, the applicants had the right to appeal to the Commissioner-General. Associations and unions were subject to control by district and county offices. Associations entered in the register had the right to purchase and sell real estate, raise capital, conclude contracts, assume obligations, as well as pursue rights and stand trial in court.

Public assemblies coordinated by associations were subject to the regulations on public meetings and assemblies. Marches, parades and outdoor rallies were held in exceptional cases, upon written permission from the district commissioner. Societies and organisations with legalised statutes were allowed to hold meetings of their members upon prior notice of the gathering's expected date.¹⁰⁶ According to the procedure in force, the organisers of events such as readings were required to submit a request to the administrative office three days prior to the event. The adoption of regulations so favourable to petitioners may have been intended to encourage political and social activity among the representatives of minorities. Among the numerous entries in the registers kept at the Lithuanian Central State Archives (*Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas* [LCVA]), the significant activity of Jews and Poles is noteworthy. Chess clubs appear to have been the most popular form of gatherings, by the way.

However, the Vilnian calendar for 1920 mentions only 71 major legalised associations (excluding trade unions). Among these were, notably, the Polish Borderlands Association (at 26 Wielka Street), the Committee for Defence of the Eastern Borderlands (19 Ostrobramska St.), the Union for the Defence of

105 The notice needed to specify the purpose of the association, the first name(s) and surname(s) of the founder(s) and their place(s) of residence, the area of activity, the selection method of the person(s) to manage the association and, in the case of electing a board of directors, the method of their appointment and supplementation; the location of the seat or place of residence of the managing person(s) and, finally, the admission and resignation procedures. LMAB, Rare books archive, ref. No. L-20/267/1920, c. 90: 'Information Calendar for the year 1920'.

106 Ordinance of the Commissioner-General No. 30, of 25th May 1919.

the Property of Poles (26 Wileńska St.), the Polish Women's Circle Club (22 Świętojska St.), Ladies' Committee II (8 Zaułek Świętojski St.), the Polish Club (10 Jagiellońska St.), the Nobility Club ('*Resursa Obywatelska*' building, 9 Trocka St.), the Polish Educational Society of the Eastern Territories [*Polska Macierz Szkolna Ziem Wschodnich*] (2 Benedyktynska St.), and two Polish Popular Teachers' Associations in Lithuania [*Polskie Związki Nauczycielstwa Ludowego na Litwie*] (4 Gubernatorska St. and 2 Benedyktynska St.).

Pursuant to the ordinances of the Commissioner-General, local municipal (for cities with more than 2,000 inhabitants, under the Municipal Act of 14th August 1919) and communal authorities were instituted in the territory of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands, except for a few districts adjacent to the front line. In the areas subject to the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories, in cases falling outside the jurisdiction of martial courts, the justice system consisted of magistrates' courts, with a single justice-of-the-peace, as well as regional courts and a court of appeals, which included a president, a vice-president and judges whose number was determined by the number of full-time posts. Magistrates' courts operated in counties and towns/cities, and regional courts in Grodno, Vilnius, Minsk, and Łuck. The court of appeals was located in Vilnius.

The rulings were made by sets of three judges. At the regional court, the team could be supplemented, on a decision of the court's president, with an investigating judge, a justice-of-the-peace or an honorary judge, appointed from among persons designated by the Commissioner-General for the court's presentation. However, magistrates, investigating judges, and honorary judges were not allowed to chair the regional court sets. The justice-of-the-peace could not take part in judging a case that he had heard in the first instance, and the investigating judge did not partake in recognising a case he was investigating. By a decision of the court's president, the regional judge could be appointed to complete the team of the court of appeal, but without the right to chair. The judges were independent in the exercise of their office. National languages could be used for applications and before the courts; however, the judgments and decisions of the courts were delivered 'in the name of the law' in Polish.¹⁰⁷

107 The courts applied Russian civil law (*Zbiór Praw*, 1914, v. X, pt. I), the Russian Civil Procedure Act (*Zbiór Praw*, 1914, v. X, pt. I, article 1 – 1460/61), the Commercial Law, the Commercial Procedure Law, the Russian Bill-of-Exchange Law (*Zbiór Praw*, 1903, v. XI, pt. II), and the provisions of Russian civil law insofar as these laws were in force in the area before the departure of the Russian authorities (i.e. before 1st August 1915), with the repeal, however, of all laws establishing legal restrictions depending on the

The starosts and the Civil Administration Commissaries had the power to impose penalties. For breaching the Commissioner-General's ordinances published in the *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of Eastern Territories*, one was subject to legal and administrative jurisdiction. By way of administrative-and-criminal proceedings, fines of up to 3,000 Roubles or up to six weeks' imprisonment were imposed. The first instance of adjudicating fines in administrative-and-criminal proceedings was the head of the district.

It can thus be concluded that efforts were not spared to lay the foundations for a functional administrative system. Unfortunately, this required enthusiasm and commitment from the design's executors – and they were involved on the wrong side of the domestic conflict.

On 1st December 1919, in the premises of the Central Welfare Council [Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (RGO)] in Warsaw, a meeting was held to prepare the 'Congress for securing Polish society against Bolshevism.'¹⁰⁸ Alas, the term 'Bolshevism' was used in this case to define the democratic thought, in all its aspects, professed by the Chief of State/Supreme Commander, along with the motto of the Borderland Guard, i.e. 'The free with the free, the equal with the equal'. Obiezierski's remark was directed at this particular matter: "In some strata of society, one type is increasingly contributing to the spread of Bolshevism ... the moral condition, so to put it, of the agents forming the bodies of our government is not sufficiently clear and does not always stand up to the task."¹⁰⁹ The speaker saw a way out of this situation in stimulating the society towards influencing the decisions of its authorities, which might oppose the 'Bolshevik temptations'. It was agreed that of the three conflicting elements of power in

nationality and religion of the area's population, and with some minor amendments and additions, as indicated in the Ordinance of the Commissioner-General of 15th May 1919. The latter recommended applying the provisions of criminal law and proceedings in force in the district of the Court of Appeal in Warsaw, with numerous amendments and additions. For more on the judiciary in the areas subject to the ZCZW, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Władza sądownicza na terenie byłego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w czasach Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich (1919–1920)', in Hanna Konopka and Daniel Boćkowski (eds.), *Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi w XX wieku. Studia i materiały ofiarowane Prof. dr hab. Michałowi Gnatowskiemu Natowskiemu w 70-lecie urodzin*, Białystok 2004, pp. 67–92.

108 LVIA, Fond 1135/13/245, c. 1–35: 'Report on the meeting held in order to reach an agreement in view of organising an action against Bolshevism, on 1st December 1919 in the premises of the Central Welfare Council, 32 Jasna St.'

109 Ibid., c. 11 (as in fn. 108).

the state, the military, unlike the Sejm and the Government, held “quite sound views.”¹¹⁰

Fifth period (17th January 1920 to 1st June 1920)

The order of the Commander-in-Chief of 17th January 1920, regulating the formation of the Commissariat of the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian front, fundamentally changed the organisation of the Administration. It is not true that the territorial scope of Jerzy Osmołowski’s activities “was extended in January 1920 to the south-eastern areas of the Republic of Poland via the appointment of the Civil Administration of Volhynia and the Podolian front, nominally subordinate to him”,¹¹¹ in reality, this move was tantamount to a significant reduction in the competencies of ZCZW’s Commissioner-General. The position of Chief Commissioner in Volhynia was entrusted to Antoni Minkiewicz.¹¹²

Osmołowski made plans to divide further the lands under the ZCZW’s jurisdiction, possibly inspired by the suggestion of someone from his surroundings. He wanted to divide the territories subordinate to his office into two districts along the German-Russian front line, which clearly calls into question his political common sense and understanding of the ideals that guided the establishment of the ZCZW.

These ideals were not shared by the Poles of the Borderlands, either. At a Polish national rally held on 4th January 1920 in Grodno, two important resolutions were passed, one of them demanding immediate inclusion of the remaining part of the Grodno Land into the free and united Poland. This was apparently supported by hundreds of thousands of signatures submitted earlier to the Regency Council, and by resolutions from countless rallies as well as from the Grodno County local assembly that took place in 1919. Moreover, “in recognition of the purposefulness of the resolution of the Polish Legislative Sejm of

110 Archbishop J. Teodorowicz was designated Honorary President of the Congress. M. Obieziński, member of ZCZW’s Commissariat-General staff, was entrusted with the mission of forming the Editorial and Paper Submission Committee. Eventually, his responsibilities were taken over by [Michał?] Muttermilch.

111 See A. Chojnowski, ‘ZCZW’, entry in A. Garlicki A., Z. Landau, W. Roszkowski, P. Stawicki, and J. Tomaszewski (eds.), *Encyklopedia Historii Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1999.

112 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wołyń i Frontu Podolskiego*], Yr. I, No. 1, 17th February 1920 I. 1 & 2.

25th November 1919”, the rally called for an immediate plebiscite in the Eastern Territories, strongly confident in an outcome favourable for the Polish cause, in its statehood and national aspects.¹¹³

On 4th January 1920, 11 political and social organisations from Vilnius submitted a petition to the Sejm in Warsaw to “put the Sejm resolution [of 25th November 1919] into practice as soon as feasible.”¹¹⁴ These were: the Union of Force and Unity of Poland, the Polish Bourgeois Club in Vilnius, the National Club, the Union of Farmers of the Vilnius Land, the National Party [*Stronnictwo Narodowe*], the National Organisation of Polish Women, the Workers’ League (*Liga Robotnicza*), and the Christian Democracy Party [*Stronnictwo Demokracji Chrześcijańskiej*]. On 8th and 9th January 1920, Vilnius was the site of the Convention of the Presidia of the People’s Councils of the Vilnius Land, the bodies that had been successively formed in the autumn of 1919, with Borderland Guard emissaries playing a significant part in their creation.¹¹⁵ Since they considered the federation with Lithuania, Byelorussia, Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine within their ethnographic borders, upon the principle ‘the free with the free, the equal with the equal’ useful, if not necessary, they could not understand the purpose of federating with Poland such thoroughly Polish territories as the Grodno and Minsk Lands. They argued that there was no need to rush the elections ordered by the Legislative Sejm’s resolution, and that the peripheral regions around Grodno and Minsk should simply be incorporated into Poland. They saw the extension of all laws and acts in force in the Polish Republic to the Eastern Territories – and the resolutions on the agricultural reform already adopted by the Legislative Sejm, in particular – as a visible sign of unification with the Republic of Poland. The law on freedom of religious confessions and nationhood, and all other laws and resolutions approved by the Legislative Sejm, were also expected to be extended. The reconstruction of the Vilnius Land was planned to begin with the convening of the Congress of the Eastern Territories.

The subsequent session of the Secretariat of the People’s Councils of the District of Vilnius, supported to this end by representatives of political parties and of the Borderland Guard, unanimously voted in favour of a merger with the

113 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/11, c. 577: ‘Echo (Grodno), No. 3, 6th January 1920’.

114 See Chapter V.

115 For more on the Borderland Guard, see Chap. VI. Also, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa ...*

Motherland by means of either the plebiscite proper, or a ‘plebiscite *sejm*’ or the Constitutional Sejm, to be convened in Vilnius or Warsaw, respectively.

The lack of decisiveness was aggravated by Warsaw’s hesitant attitude. “The Sejm once stood on the viewpoint of [i.e. opted for] the plebiscite, then of a gradual incorporation, and now [as of 20th January 1920] the idea of a plebiscite is sprouting again. Ever-changing divergences of opinion [are] also [appearing] in the Council of Ministers ... It seems as if some kind of politics is being practised regardless of the political parties.”¹¹⁶

The end of January and beginning of February 1920 marked a significant change in the political line of the Borderland Guard, an organisation set up to support the ZCZW’s activities aimed at creating a federation. While constantly drawing more and more funds “for the preparation for the plebiscite action”, the Guard reacted accordingly to social expectations, using ZCZW funds allocated for the plebiscite to acquire the support of broad masses professing a political agenda that excluded any idea of a plebiscite.¹¹⁷

The issue of the Polish eastern frontier was, of course, extremely sensitive. Above all, it was related to the complex affairs of Russia, which had been plunged into civil war. Although the country was not officially represented at the Paris Conference, it remained a former ally and this fact dramatically complicated the international situation. The representatives of White Russia certainly exploited the conditions created for them by the Polish National Committee.

Astonishingly, very few Poles were aware of the Coalition’s protest voiced on 6th March 1920 against the plebiscite proposed by Poland, having learned about this from the Lithuanian press. Marian Świechowski’s dossier contains a copy of the full content of this note.¹¹⁸ Perhaps, it was only then that the exponents of the national camp realised what had really happened?

116 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 65 (verso).

117 For a broader discussion, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa ...*, p. 128.

118 The sheet bears the handwritten annotation ‘Confidential’. The text reads as follows: “The President of the Peace Conference, ... Mr President, the Major Coalition and Befriended Powers have learned that the Polish State intends to make efforts in the nearest future to fulfil for its benefit the wishes of the population concerning the ultimate annexation of various Russian provinces, seized by the Polish armed forces as a result of their current activity against the Bolsheviki, anticipating the election of representatives of these lands. Should this message, which seems to have been confirmed by a resolution of the Polish Sejm on 25th November 1919, prove to be accurate, the Major Coalition and Befriended Powers consider it their duty to immediately notify the Polish State that such an action may – so it seems to them – entail serious accusations. By signing the Treaty of Versailles, Poland agreed that its

After 6th March 1920, the creation of Committees for the Unification of the Eastern Borderlands with Poland in the counties took a more intense course.¹¹⁹ Józef Piłsudski also doubled his efforts. By a lucky coincidence, Osmołowski, who was ill at the time, was replaced (to the displeasure of the Polish community) in the important political negotiations with the Byelorussians held in March 1920 by Władysław Raczkiewicz, Head of the District of Minsk, whose loyalty in the execution of the mission entrusted to him has never been questioned.¹²⁰

The Rev. Bronisław Żongołowicz, who was unquestionably a 'Prince of the Church',¹²¹ added in his biography with his own hand: "In March 1920, I was sent to Rome by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I submitted a report on this

borders, not marked in that Treaty would later be established by the Major Coalition and Befriended Powers (Paragraph 87). While fully recognising the importance of the reasons that led Poland to seize the aforementioned provinces, the Powers must point out that it is up to them – and not to the Polish State – to decide when and under what conditions inquiring the residents' about the change of the same as regards the future of these lands will be possible. Finally, they refer to their Declaration of 8th December 1919. Moreover, they firmly adhere to the principle, stated by the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles concerning the order adopted in the conduct of the plebiscite, whereby no plebiscite may be held under the rule of the war occupation of any of the interested parties: the election concerning the statute of future lands may only be recognised after they have been conducted under the leadership and control of the Coalition or the League of Nations. Under these conditions, the Major Coalition and Befriended Powers cannot consent to Poland considering itself entitled to conduct such elections in conditions that do not – by their very nature – secure, not even to the least degree, the expression of unrestrained and impartial wishes of the population. Such election – if conducted – would be considered a would-be election by the Coalition, and thus could not have any influence on the final decision on the affiliation of the provinces where these elections would be conducted. Please accept, Mr President, the assurance of my high regard. Millerand, Paris, 6th March 1920." Copy: LMAB, Fond 168–23, lap. 180.

119 The archive of the Borderland Guard Association at the Central Archives of Modern Records [AAN] contains a large number of blank forms, which were to be used in setting up the related clubs.

120 For a broader discussion, see Chapter VIII.

121 Secret Chamberlain of His Holiness the Pope and canon of the Samogitian Chapter (since 1907); judge at the Samogitian Consistory in Smolensk (since 1914); as Chancellor of the Episcopal Curia in Kaunas (1902–12), he was responsible for ecclesiastical and state policies and nationalities; moreover, he was Professor of the Canon Law at the theological seminary.

three-month mission to Minister Patek.¹²² If found someday, this report might perhaps shed new light on the situation that arose in the Eastern Territories in March 1920.

The importance of the Polish-Byelorussian negotiations from late March 1920 to the resolution of the stalemate was confirmed by the sudden intensification in Soviet political activity. On 3rd April 1920, Georgy Chicherin, Russia's People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, sent a note (via the Lithuanian Embassy in Riga) from the Soviet Foreign Ministry in which the Russian Government recognised Lithuania's independence and committed itself to confirm this in a political agreement that would be expected to be concluded between the two countries. Bilateral talks were to begin after 27th April, in Estonia.¹²³

The Administration attempted to improve the efficiency of its supervision in the vast area under its jurisdiction. On 27th March 1920, Edmund Iwaszkiewicz and Stanisław Downarowicz, Head of the Administrative Section, co-signed the Commissioner-General's ordinance concerning the institution of provinces [*rejony*] and the official regulations for provincial chiefs.¹²⁴ The provinces were so large that the reform failed to significantly improve the administration, whilst creating yet another level of hierarchy, resulting in an increase in administrative personnel.

On 22nd April 1920, an ordinance was issued abolishing the office of the Commissioner-General's Representative to the Command of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front, effective as of 1st April. The tradition of appointing representatives of the Commissariat-General of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories to individual armies operating in the territory previously under the Command of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front, originally introduced under Ludwik Kolankowski, was reintroduced.¹²⁵ The representatives to the Army

122 LMAB, Fond 98 (736) 1186, lap. 10 (verso). [This report is not included in fasc. 1 of the compendium of Polish-Vatican relations *Stosunki polsko-watykańskie w latach 1918–1939*, published by the Polish Institute of International Affairs (based on archival materials compiled by J. Jurkiewicz), Warsaw 1955.]

123 A copy of the note is kept in LMAB, Fond 168–23, lap. 70.

124 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich* (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW')], Yr. II, No. 28(72), 17th April 1920, II. 656. The chiefs of provinces were representatives of the administrative and executive authorities, directly subordinate to the starost, with three to five communes under their supervision. The regulation equipped them with extensive powers.

125 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 39(83), 31st May 1920, II. 982.

Commands were to be appointed by the Commissioner-General, at the request of the head of the Administrative Section. The competence of the latter official included handling all matters exceeding the powers of Commissioner-General's Representatives at the Army Groups, in consultation with the Representative of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army at the Commissariat-General of the ZCZW.

The *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* (initially published as *Dziennik Urzędowy ZCZW ND WP* [Official Journal of the ZCZW – Supreme Command of the Polish Army])¹²⁶ published decrees and ordinances organising everyday life in the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The dissolution of the ZCZW did not entail the annulment of a surprising number of decisions, which makes one wonder whether the body that had established them was indeed as much of a failure, in terms of organising the life in the former Grand Duchy lands, as its opponents considered it to be. The breakdowns compiled by Atanazy Bardzki show that as many as 54 essential acts were maintained and repealed only after five years, while eight others were merely amended. The regulations on the Municipality Act,¹²⁷ on the rules governing the issuance of concessions and the operation of pharmacies,¹²⁸ on the requisitioning of forests and wood for the heating needs of towns,¹²⁹ and on the stamp tax (duty)¹³⁰ were all maintained in force until 1925. The regulations on stamp duty for contracts concerning the sale of forests¹³¹ and for donated properties¹³² remained in force until 1922.

126 For more on relations between the military authorities and the ZCZW, see Chapter IV.

127 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. II, No. 12, Warsaw, 11.99: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General [of the] E.[astern] T.[erritories] of 14th August 1919 on the Municipality Act.'

128 *Ibid.*, No. 13, Warsaw, II. 114: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E. T. of 19th August 1919 on the rules governing the issuance of concessions and the operation of pharmacies.'

129 *Ibid.*, No. 19, Warsaw, II. 175: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E. T. of 12th September 1919 on the requisitioning of forests and wood for heating in urban areas.'

130 *Ibid.*, No. 26, Vilnius, II.273: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E. T. of 23rd October 1919 on the stamp tax.'

131 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 30, Vilnius, II. 322: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 5th November 1919 on the sale of forests.'

132 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 35, Vilnius, II. 403: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 20th November 1919 regarding the legal assessment of properties upon determining the treasury fees on properties transferred by free-of-charge or chargeable title.'

During this period, in Central Lithuania were accepted, among others, ordinances concerning the administration of abandoned property,¹³³ criminal law and proceedings,¹³⁴ press regulations,¹³⁵ import and export of goods from the Eastern Territories,¹³⁶ granting construction wood for reconstruction purposes,¹³⁷ as well as indirect taxes¹³⁸ and administrative fees.¹³⁹ The regulations on the protection of forests remained in force.¹⁴⁰

Regarding the orders issued after 25th November 1919 and maintained after the dissolution of the ZCZW, one should note the retention of exclusive rights for exports of flax, bristles, and animal hairs from the Eastern Territories,¹⁴¹ of the tax on income from monetary capital and of the tax on current accounts,¹⁴² of the existing temporary prison law,¹⁴³ and of the regulations concerning summary

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- 133 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 1, Warsaw, II.4: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 5th March 1919'; *ibid.*, No. 6, Warsaw, 11.42: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 30th June 1919 on the administration of abandoned property and sowings conducted by the former occupying authorities.'
- 134 *Ibid.*, No. 12, Warsaw: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 15th May 1919 on the criminal law and criminal proceedings in the eastern areas under the authority of the Commissioner-General E.T.'
- 135 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 8, Warsaw, II. 50: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 17th July 1919 on temporary press regulations.'
- 136 *Ibid.*, II. 52: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 17th July 1919 on imports and exports.'
- 137 *Ibid.*, II. 60: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 18th July 1919 on the granting of construction-material timber for reconstruction purposes to owners of settlements destroyed by warfare.'
- 138 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 9, Warsaw, II. 73: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 17th July 1919 on indirect taxes.'
- 139 *Ibid.*, No. 30, Vilnius, II. 322: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. 17th July 1919 on stamp duty on forest sales contracts.'
- 140 D.U. ZCZW, R. I, No. 31, Warsaw, II. 341: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 30th October 1919 on the protection of forests.' (NB, these provisions were based on regulations issued by the Russian Government.)
- 141 *Ibid.*, No. 43, Vilnius, II. 518: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 30th July 1919 on the granting of exclusive rights to exports of flax, bristles, and animal hairs from the Eastern Territories.'
- 142 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 2(46), Vilnius, II. 15: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 23rd December 1919 regarding the tax on income from monetary capital and the tax on on-call accounts.'
- 143 *Ibid.*, II. 14: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 21st December 1919 regarding the tax on income from monetary capital and the tax on on-call accounts.'

courts.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, the decisions regarding measurements and weights¹⁴⁵ were preserved, along with those on eradication of infectious diseases and compulsory sanitary service.¹⁴⁶ Among the numerous regulations, those relating to the monopoly on alcoholic beverages and tobacco were also retained.¹⁴⁷

All of the above-mentioned acts were issued prior to submission by the Commissioner-General and the ZCZW to the Polish Government.

The following main successes of the ZCZW need to be specified:

- the completion of the census work, which technically permitted the conduct of the plebiscite (or election);¹⁴⁸

144 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 3(47), Vilnius, II. 25: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 20th December 1919 on summary courts.'

145 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 4(48), Vilnius, II. 56: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 15th January 1920 regarding the determination of measurements and the formation of offices.'

146 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 19(63), Vilnius, II. 503: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 28th February 1920 regarding the eradication of contagious diseases'; *ibid.*, II. 504: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 8th March 1920 on the appointment of physicians to compulsory sanitary service in the Eastern Territories'; D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 26(70), Vilnius, 11.643: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 29th March 1920 on the issuance of medical certificates to persons travelling by rail.'

147 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 35, Vilnius, II. 401: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 27th November 1919 regarding the criminality of preparing the making of intoxicating beverages and the court proceedings in the said cases'; *ibid.*, Yr. I, No. 26(70), Vilnius, II. 642: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 26th March 1920 regarding the criminality of preparing the making of intoxicating beverages'; *ibid.*, Yr. II, No. 32 (76), Vilnius, II. 802: 'Ordinance of the Commissioner-General E.T. of 23rd April 1920 on the increase in tax rates (excise duty) and the marking of selling prices of tobacco and tobacco products, and the increase in tax rates (excise duty) on matches and cigarette-tubes.'

148 On 12th May 1920, J. Osmołowski prepared for J. Piłsudski a draft Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces concerning the election of representatives of the population of the Eastern Territories, plus an annex: 'The Electoral Law for the Eastern Territories'. The Eastern Territories were considered to include the lands located east of the Voivodeships of Białystok and Lublin, seized by the Polish army and belonging to the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before the 1772 Partition. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/IV, c. 35: [Osmołowski's letter bearing the handwritten annotation 'Draft to be submitted for signature in due time – JO 29 VI [June]']; c. 36. Draft Order; c. 38–46 [The Electoral law for the Eastern Territories].

- the preparation of essential premises for the agrarian reform in the Borderlands¹⁴⁹ (the reform adopted by the Sejm was not expected to be extended to these territories);
- the attempts at becoming independent from Polish state funding through the establishment of commercial companies.

One should note the ZCZW's attempts at stimulating its own economic activity, aimed at providing sources of financing independent from the Treasury in Warsaw, namely by launching the operations of a wood company, a flax business, and granting a spirits monopoly. The most important achievement, though, was persuading the Polish community of Vilnius, so far opposed to the idea of the federation, of the need for an agreement with the Lithuanians.

In a letter to Tadeusz Wróblewski dated 7th April 1920, Stanisław Kognowicki wrote: "I am sending to you, Sir, a draft, prepared by the Commission appointed to elaborate a project of the federation of Poland and Lithuania. Since the Commission is not composed of lawyers, its work does not represent a definitive and exhaustive report. We have decided to put together a schematic outline and raise the most vital issues in order to provide the meeting with the groundwork for a systematic discussion. Once these main guidelines have been approved, a different body will likely be formed, consisting of people who are more competent to work out the federation act."¹⁵⁰ It cannot be ruled out that the sheet found

149 The preparatory work involved the participation of a social committee, of which Stanisław Kognowicki wrote in a letter of 7th April 1920 to Tadeusz Wróblewski: "[On 11th April, at the premises of the Society for the Promotion of Social Work,] a report of the second committee working on the agricultural reform proposal will be presented. I am not partaking in the latter commission, for I do not share its fundamental tendencies aiming at acknowledging the principle of expropriation." LMAB, f. 7-1144, lap. 6 (verso).

In all probability, the outcome of the works of this particular body was the memorandum (date and place unknown) prepared by a group of progressive landowners under the leadership of Aleksander Chomiński, which stated the necessity of carrying out colonisation or forced compaction of villages and allowing dwarf farms to acquire additional land by means of forced expropriation, for an appropriate compensation, taking into account the economic minimum, without ruining the manorial farms. It was proposed to set up a commission (headed by a representative of the judiciary) for the complete, planned, uniform, and simultaneous rectification of all defects in the condition of agricultural property and the forms of wielding thereof. It was also postulated that a State Land-Subdivision Bank be established in the Eastern Territories. LMAB, Fond 168-13, lap. 115-116.

150 LMAB, Fond 7-1144, lap. 6.

in Marian Świechowski's dossier (crumpled and torn, only to be then meticulously stretched out and glued together) is a trace of this very initiative. The text is short, with no date, no place and no author specified; its title speaks for itself: 'Draft Act of the Polish-Lithuanian Union',¹⁵¹ and it reads as follows:

Article I: "The Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania shall merge pursuant to the Act of the Union and to any supplementary provisions as may be adopted under the Act of the Union envisioned in the future."

Art. II: "The Act of the Union Act shall form part of the constitution of the two merging states."

Art. III: "The General Sejm is the supreme representative of the will of both nations for all those matters that are, or will be, common to Poland and Lithuania."

Art. IV: "The supreme governmental and executive power shall be exercised by the President, elected by both nations and in the manner provided for in a supplementary agreement forming an integral part of the Act of the Union and binding on an equal footing with the Act. The first General Sejm shall determine the authority and functions of the President in terms of statutory, governmental and executive power."

Art. V: "Legislative, administrative, and judicial matters not deemed to be common shall remain within the competencies – insofar as the Act of the Union does not provide otherwise – in Poland: of the General Sejm, operating without the participation of Lithuanian representatives (i.e. of the Polish Sejm)[,] to Polish offices and courts-of-law – and, in Lithuania: of the Lithuanian Sejm, and to the Lithuanian offices and courts-of-law."

Art. VI: "The Polish Sejm and Government, and the Lithuanian Sejm and Government, shall be responsible for the following matters:

- 1) defining and warranting civic liberties,
- 2) organising the authorities and offices, exclusive of the common ones;
- 3) internal administration and security police;
- 4) municipal and landed [i.e. rural] local government;
- 5) education;
- 6) religious denominations, exclusive of the Concordat with the Apostolic See;

151 Ibid., LMAB Fond 168–54, lap. 1.

- 7) state and fiscal assets which are the property of each of the states;
- 8) the political system and the promotion of agriculture, with the right to issue civil- and criminal-law regulations in this respect;
- 9) legislation and administration relating to waters, forestry, mining, roads, railroads and industrial railways;
- 10) construction and housing police [*resp.* inspectors];
- 11) care for the sick, poor and powerless [*illegible*],
- 12) insurance of all types, except for [*illegible*].¹⁵²

Sixth period (1st June 1920 to 9th September 1920)

The proposed union was not implemented. The order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army of 29th May 1920, 'to Mr Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories, on the responsibility of the Commissioner-General [of the] E.[astern] T.[erritories] before the Government of the Republic of Poland' subjected him, from 1st June 1920, to the authority of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, with a right to vote on matters relating to the Eastern Territories at the Council's meetings.¹⁵³ Another order issued, in parallel, by the Commander-in-Chief entitled the President of the Supreme Chamber of Control to extend state control over the ZCZW.¹⁵⁴

The ZCZW was still operating for over two months full of military action. In July 1920, the Lithuanian-Byelorussian territories were recaptured by the Red Army. The military failures were accompanied by political ones, as this is the only way to describe what occurred in Spa on 5th to 16th July 1920 as a consequence of the decision made by Prime Minister Władysław Grabski.

In view of the British ('England's') note of 5th April 1920¹⁵⁵ protesting the Polish mobilisation in the Suwałki region, submitted on behalf of the Conference of

152 Ibid.

153 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 42, 29th May 1920, Item 1057.

154 Ibid., Item 1059.

155 "The British Legation in Warsaw. Acceding to the request transmitted by the English Representative to the Conference of Ambassadors sitting at Paris, the English Minister has the honour to convey the following communication to the Government of the Republic of Poland, on behalf of the Conference: From the information received by the Conference of Ambassadors, it appears that Polish troops have entered Lithuanian territory again, crossing the line-of-demarcation between the armed forces of both countries, marked by the greater Enlarged [*sic*] and Befriended Powers, and communicated to the Polish State by Marshal Foch, via General Henrys, on 27th July 1919.

Ambassadors, the trust of the Polish government in the British authorities would come as a surprise, should one not be aware of the radical change in the political context.¹⁵⁶ As we know, faced with a critical situation on the front, Władysław Grabski, as envoy of the National Defence Council, accepted the British offer of mediation in the talks with Soviet Russia by way of Poland's acceptance of the boundary line of 8th December 1919, and agreed to a revision of the border with Lithuania, the whittling away of Poland's rights in Gdańsk, and the recognition of the Polish-Czech border on the Olza River. By doing so, he contented both Russia and the Germans, as well as the Czech Republic, which was having its five minutes of victory. As Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa rightly points out, Grabski's acceptance of David Lloyd George's conditions implied the relinquishment of the Polish Government's territorial claims in the East, Piłsudski's abandonment of the federationist concept, and a greater dependence of Poland's foreign policy on the Entente.¹⁵⁷ On 17th July, the Soviet Government rejected the British offer of mediation. Evacuation was the only option left.

By an Ordinance of the Commissioner-General of the ZCZW of 16th July 1920, a Department and Offices system designated with the name 'EWA' (abbr. from the Polish 'EWakuacja' = evacuation) was established, to act as a centre of command over the evacuation operation in the territory of Poland outside the Eastern Territories. The organisation of the department was entrusted to Wiktor Supiński, PhD, former head of the Administrative Section at the General Affairs

These incursions occurred, namely, in the counties south of Dźwinsk [Dyneburg]. In addition, the Polish General Staff is also conducting a mobilisation of the people of the Suwałki region, and this mobilisation seems to have caused justified concern in Lithuania. The Conference of Ambassadors is regrettably forced to bring these facts to the attention of the Polish Government once more. The Conference hereby declares again that it shall not consent to any offensive action on the part of Poland against Lithuania, and formally requires that the Polish incursions from that side cease immediately. At the same time, the Conference expresses its unwavering hope that, on account of the good relations between the two countries, the Polish Government will be able to find a way to cancel the mobilisation ordered in the Suwałki region. In the present circumstances, this mobilisation is understandably unacceptable to the Lithuanians, as it can only be seen as a menace targeted at them. 5th April 1920." Copy. LMAB, Fond 168–23, lap. 181.

156 For a more extensive discussion, see M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska – Wielka Brytania w latach 1918–1923*, Warsaw 1975, 211 ff.; eadem, 'Stanowisko brytyjskie wobec perspektywy kłęski i efektów zwycięstwa', in A. Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Rok 1920. Z perspektywy osiemdziesięciolecia*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 288–308.

157 M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska – Wielka Brytania ...*, 215 ff.

Department. On 23rd July 1920, the Commissioner-General of the ZCZW delegated authority to the Administrative Commission¹⁵⁸ appointed by himself for all matters related to offices, officials, and property of the Civil Administration evacuated from the Eastern Territories, as well as all matters concerning the Branch Office of the Commissariat-General in Warsaw.

On 31st July 1920, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Bolsheviks of Lithuania and Byelorussia proclaimed the establishment of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Military Revolutionary Committee (Milrevcom) acted as the Byelorussian Soviet government.¹⁵⁹ The declaration on the creation of an 'independent Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic' brought into being a rump state composed of 18 counties, deprived of the Vilnius and Grodno regions, granted by the Bolsheviks to Lithuania.¹⁶⁰ The commonly known military actions were described by the antagonists of the Commander-in-Chief as the 'miracle on the Vistula'.

Once the danger was averted, the Evacuation Department and Offices and the Administrative Commission were dissolved by another regulation of the Commissioner-General, dated 4th September 1920. The decisions of the Commander-in-Chief ultimately ended the domestic dispute. The order of 9th September 1920 abolished the Office of Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories and the Office of Commissioner-General of the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian front.¹⁶¹ On the same day, another order of the Supreme

158 The composition of the Administrative Commission was determined by Commissioner-General's ordinance of 27th July 1920. It was chaired by Jerzy Osmołowski, Commissioner-General of the ZCZW; his Deputy, Czesław Chorzelski, was Head of the Treasury Section; the other members were: Jan Klott, Head of the General Section; Mieczysław Porowski, Deputy Representative of the Commissioner-General in Warsaw; and Edmund Iwaskiewicz, Deputy Commissioner-General. Czesław Krupski acted as Secretary General. Zygmunt Zabierzowski was appointed the Commission's Plenipotentiary for the Voivodeship of Warsaw, seated in Włocławek; Tomasz Kujawski was Plenipotentiary for Pomeranian Voivodeship, seated in Toruń (former Head of the Commissariat-General' Administrative Department); and Władysław Jeśman (former Head of Brześć Litewski District) was Plenipotentiary for Poznań Voivodeship, seated in Poznań.

159 Composed of Alyaksandr Charvyakow, Vilhelms Knoriņš/Wilhelm Knorin, and Yazep Adamovich.

160 The handover of the Grodno region to Lithuania must have resulted from Lithuanian appetites but also came as a response to the likeliness of Poland achieving its political demands in western Byelorussia.

161 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 59 (103), 25th October 1920, I. 1630.

Commander released Jerzy Osmołowski from the post of the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories.¹⁶²

In the political and military situation depicted above, the ZCZW's activity during the war of 1920 can be described as the agony of Józef Piłsudski's Eastern concept. This outcome was due not only to the situation on the war front and the Lithuanian measures that prevented the implementation of the federationist concept. Equally important, and chronologically earlier, was the deprivation of the Commander-in-Chief of the instrument that he sought to employ in the implementation of his far-sighted plans. This is why I believe that the appearance of the Russians on the outskirts of Warsaw only consolidated the fiasco of the federationist concept that had failed sooner on account of internal Polish controversies – perhaps skilfully stimulated, and certainly skilfully exploited.

162 Ibid., I. 1631.

CHAPTER III: THE PERSONNEL OF THE TEMPORARY CIVIL ADMINISTRATION OF THE EASTERN TERRITORIES

A collective portrait of senior ZCZW staff employed at the Commissariat, Branch Office, and districts

To create a classic collective profile of the entire personnel would be impossible, since their personal files have not survived to the present day.¹ Jerzy Osmołowski described his team thus: “these officials were neither worse nor better than those in the territory of the former Congress Kingdom.”² I would add that they were essentially a cross-section of the Polish community of the Eastern Territories. According to an account by Czesław Krupski, head of Commissariat-General Department for Ethnic Affairs, the ZCZW apparatus employed around 10,000 people across 30 counties³ on its dissolution. Osmołowski, on the other hand, estimated this figure at 6,000 at that time.⁴ This is a significant discrepancy, given the loud criticisms regarding the alleged overstaffing of the Polish administration in the Eastern Lands. As many as 24,860 personnel files were liquidated in 1920 alone.⁵ Also noteworthy is the high turnover among the personnel of the ZCZW.

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- 1 I have already attempted to formulate such characteristic using unconventional methods; see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, ‘Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich – kadry i procesy decyzyjne’, in K. Jasiewicz (ed.), *Europa nie prowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina, wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) w latach 1772–1999*, Warszawa–Londyn [Warsaw–London] 1999, pp. 40–56.
 - 2 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/1, c. 218–219 (verso): ‘Note by C. Krupski’.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, Personal documents and records of J. Osmołowski, No. 1553/3, c. 8–9: ‘Letter by Jerzy Osmołowski to Mr. President of the [Council of] Ministers’.
 - 5 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1772/3, c. 9–11: ‘Pro memoria on the activities of Liquidation Committee’s Deputy Chairman Horszowski at the Liquidation Committee’.

It is reasonable to assume that such a significant number of resignations and dismissals was due to clashes of conflicting interests during the staffing process.

Józef Piłsudski was aware of the state of social and political awareness of the Poles from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He repeatedly referred to them as people from the mid-eighteenth, ultimately from the nineteenth century, but rarely from the twentieth. He also knew well that the Borderlands consisted in a proximity of distinct nations, cultures and upbringings; that the most important element of any policy involving this area should be to trigger respect for the subordinate community – the Polish one too, but not only – towards the authorities. He was aware that, with regard to the once-Grand Duchy's lands, Poland was “inevitably facing the laborious and arduous task of altering the views and notions; of pouring new views and thoughts into the hearts of people.”⁶

The Chief of State's eastern concept envisaged that the work on “altering the views and notions” would be fulfilled by the structures of the state civil administration apparatus, which in practice consisted for the most part of representatives of the very social group which, due to consistent German policies, had effectively clammed up and increasingly distanced itself from a position in which Thomas Woodrow Wilson's view would still be acceptable. The bitterness of the disappointments experienced in 1917–18 triggered a growing aversion among Lithuanian Poles towards the other national/ethnic groups that, from the Polish point-of-view, were favoured by the Germans: the groups with which the Poles were supposed to be ‘equal and free’, according to the Proclamation. The Polish public in the Borderlands was unaware that the perfidy of German policy consisted not in favouring other national groups, but in weakening the position of the Polish community as far as possible, whilst giving the illusion that the work of destruction was being done by fellow citizens of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The purpose of Germany's *special policy* was to drive social moods to a point where it would become impossible for Poles and Lithuanians in particular, but also for Byelorussians, to communicate with each other. And the Germans did succeed. Polish resentment towards Lithuanians because of Germany's ‘favouritism’ towards them was met with disregard from the Lithuanians. The latter played a separate game with the Germans, and the problem of the Poles, since their refusal to partake in the National Council was no longer their own. The Lithuanians avoided becoming embroiled in the matters of ‘Polish administration’, and ignored the ZCZW's authorities with admirable

6 J. Gierowska-Kałtaur, ‘Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego wygłoszony 24 sierpnia 1923 roku w Wilnie, cz. XV’, *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. V, 1999, fasc. 4(20), 783.

consistency⁷ – an approach expressly criticised by Polish public opinion, which, maintained by the Germans in a sense of uniqueness, did not remember, or did not want to remember, that the possibility for a natural reconciliation had already been squandered in the autumn of 1917. The situation was slightly different in Byelorussia, where Russian penetration overlapped with German policy, and the economic greed of Byelorussian individuals only made the picture worse. For the most part, Byelorussians needed to be taught how to read and write, in the first place – not only in Polish, but in Byelorussian, too.⁸

Enlightened Byelorussians were so few that they were forced to find enforcers of their cause in order to overtake the minds of the masses ‘of there’ (i.e. local ones). Poles were expected to play that role, but they soon realised that they would have to sacrifice themselves, and then spend their money on a cause that, after all costs were borne by the Poles, would be settled by the Byelorussians, who would have undoubtedly been strengthened by the inevitable weakening of their Polish partners. This scenario was profitable neither in political, nor in economic terms. The Polish community in the Borderlands regarded the Byelorussian strategy as an attempt to outsmart the Poles by an enemy force which, according to popular belief, was controlling the Byelorussians.⁹

7 In a strictly confidential note written in Kaunas on 10th June 1919, Plenipotentiary Minister Stanisław Staniszewski wrote of his conversation with Lt Col. Constantin Reboul, head of the French mission, who had been trying for two months to convince the Lithuanians of the need for a union with Poland. Reboul reportedly suggested “that it would be very desirable for Poles to ignore sometimes the various faux-passes of Lithuanians, and to avoid overly-strict regulations in their policies in Lithuania.” Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Archiwum PAN (hereinafter, APAN)], III-A, Marcei Handelsman’s dossier, 229, c. 10–21. On 20th November 1919, Kazimierz Świtalski wrote: “Lithuania’s obstruction is the main obstacle to the Eastern the policy, but with a little patience this can be changed, too.” K. Świtalski, *Diariusz 1919–1935*, Warsaw 1992.

8 Among any national group, including Poles, were those who needed to learn how to read and write, but at least they were not the dominant group in the Polish community. Andrzej Czarniakiewicz is indignant about this statement, alas unjustifiably. See ‘Polsko-białoruskie stosunki wzajemne w końcowym etapie wojny polsko-sowieckiej’, in A. Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Rok 1920 z perspektywy osiemdziesięciolecia*, Warsaw 2001.

9 Attention was drawn to the lack of any significant ‘Byelorussian surname’ i.e. of someone potentially able to consolidate this newly-emerging national group. This fact may have pushed the Poles to abandon the Byelorussian track; whether this was justified is a matter of separate inquiry.

The official apparatus tasked with enforcing the enlightened concept of federation was diverse, as was the Polish society from which it originated. The fact that it actually consisted only of Poles and Russians (Polonised or not) plus 'merely three Jews' was not so much a result of the ZCZW's personnel policy as of the attitude of Lithuanians and Byelorussians towards the ZCZW. Many Borderlander Poles were motivated by circumstances. They often sought quick compensation for their wartime losses, but they also proved to be strikingly honest at times. Balance sheets can be found bearing a handwritten column headed 'bribes'. They were undoubtedly involved in some past animosities within their 'small local communities'. In a ruined country, it was impossible to rely solely on outside officials who had not been subject to any special policies in the recent past: firstly, there were few such applicants, and secondly, they had to be provided not only with office space, but also with accommodation. Regardless of its varying level of education, the local Polish intelligentsia was mostly unemployed and willing to take up such duties in order to support their livelihoods without sacrificing their savings. Despite the widespread criticism of this institution, employment with the ZCZW machine brought not only money but also allowances in kind and other benefits. The ZCZW was, moreover, a place where one could fulfil an ambition to exercise authority; after all, people eager to wield power can be found in every place and in every generation.

There is no doubt that the society of the Borderlands as a whole represented a view on the 'Eastern issue' radically different from that of Piłsudski, also a native of this area. This fact undeniably had an impact on the pace of the ZCZW's work. Additionally, the efforts carried out in the entire area governed by the ZCZW were further constrained by a lack of cooperation between the large number of local communities inhabiting this extremely vast area with unstable borders. The region had suffered unimaginable war damage, particularly severe in the strip of constant frontline warfare.

In all the eastern lands except the Vilnius region, Polishness was equated with Catholicism. The Catholic Church was understandably dissatisfied with the proposed equality of all religious institutions. The otherwise justified policy of winning over the Orthodox priests, commonly associated with Russian statehood, by remunerating them from the ZCZW budget, had to meet with disapproval if the Catholic Church did not receive similar financial support,¹⁰ and had not even

10 Based on secret request No. 49680/IV NDWP of 17th October 1919 by General Staff's Col. Józef Haller, addressed to M. S. Kossakowski, J. Osmołowski passed the decision, on 27 November 1919, of paying salaries to the Orthodox clergy from ZCZW funds, as of 1st December 1919, for the entire duration of the occupation, in accordance with

obtained compensation for everything that the Russian authorities – protectors of the Orthodox Church – had stolen from it. The Polish officials were also Catholics.

The advancement of the Polish troops and the fact that the ZCZW was gradually stretching its control over the areas occupied by the Polish Army could lead to the assumption that the budding Polish administration should find strong support in the Army. This, however, was not the case,¹¹ and this fact also affected the attitude and the work of the officials, whose sons and cousins were often fighting on the front lines.

Three more elements complete this image: (i) the lack of widespread enthusiasm for the programme declared by the ZCZW, resulting from the recent past; (ii) the widely accepted assumption, dating back to the Partitions, that the lack of involvement in the performance of entrusted duties, while drawing the maximum benefits for one's compatriots, was a civic virtue; (iii) whoever believed in the ideas behind the formation of the ZCZW and fulfilled his duties conscientiously, was simply overburdened with them. It should be noted, however, that many officials remained faithful to the federationist concept.

In a letter to the editor-in-chief of the periodical *Naród* from September 1920, Władysław Studnicki stated that “he was decidedly not a supporter of the people constituting the ZCZW.”¹² Coming from him, this was the greatest compliment for a large group of the Administration's officials, who advocated for the political line represented by Piłsudski. In his ‘Memorial on the Byelorussian cause’ of 16th March 1920, Waclaw Iwanowski [Vaclaŭ Ivanouški] defined the ZCZW's personnel as people with caste-like and backward beliefs, for whom the methods of governing known from the tsarist era were something natural.¹³ In parallel, he noted that the dominance of intellectual forces on the Polish side and the Polish composition of the administrative staff had caused the authorities of the Vilnius

former Russian regulations (memo No. 1863/SGK). BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/1, c. 40–41.

- 11 For a broader discussion on this point, see Chapter IV.
- 12 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, J. Osmałowski's personal documents and records, No. 1553/2, c. 20–26: ‘Władysław Studnicki, Open letter to the editor of *Naród*. Reply to the article by Bronisław Krzyżanowski, published 28th July 1920 in issue 145 of the said paper, entitled “As regards the administration of the Eastern Territories.”’
- 13 *Ibid.*, c. 27–30: Waclaw Iwanowski, ‘Memorial on the Byelorussian cause of 16th March 1920’. The document is partly discussed in J. Turonek, *Waclaw Iwanowski i odrodzenie Białorusi*, Warsaw 1992, pp. 83, 84.

and Brześć Litewski Districts to defend Polish nationalist causes rather than the state's interests. Among the specific orders of the administrative personnel "harmful to the Byelorussian people as a non-Polish, non-noble-and-civic, and largely non-Catholic element", he quoted only two unsuitable examples, since they should have been targeted not at the ZCZW but at the Central Welfare Council [*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza* (RGO)] and the democratically elected local (self-government) authorities.

The first example was related to the RGO's activity, whose officials, in accordance with an agreement in force, were tasked with carrying out social welfare activities in the Borderlands in line with the guidelines of the ZCZW, while not being members of its staff. Everyday practice showed, however, that the Welfare Councils, which were founded in large numbers at the starosts and composed of Polish locals, remained beyond any control. The central authorities of the RGO considered this state of affairs normal, while refusing themselves to account for the obtained large allowances and subsidies. Additionally, in March 1920 the RGO used part of an allowance to support the Welfare Councils in Lesser Poland/Małopolska, without consulting the ZCZW.¹⁴ The latter could not simply break ties with a partner that was perhaps unreliable but also beneficial to the whole of the country: after all, the RGO had been active since 1916 and enjoyed the best possible reputation in Warsaw, where Borderlands-related affairs evoked hardly any interest, as the capital city was busy with its own problems. In order to express its disapproval, the Commissariat-General imposed the renegotiation of the agreement with the RGO on 21st May 1920 in Warsaw. Disillusionment suffused the ZCZW at the perspectives of loyal cooperation with this social organisation, which resulted in its loss of financial independence in favour of the Social Welfare Department.

Iwanowski's second complaint concerned supporting Russian schools to the detriment of Byelorussian ones. The issue was complex and varied from district to district. It is undeniable that further teaching in Russian stood in total contradiction not only to the Byelorussian but, above all, to the Polish *raison d'état*. Logic would have suggested rectifying all the imbalances caused by the former Russian Partition as best and as far as possible.

14 After 'Report of the Social Welfare Department, General Section of the Commissariat-General of the ZCZW for the period of 12th November 1919 to 10th December 1920, penned by Waclaw Mohl, Head of the Social Welfare Department'. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1748.

Part of the population of the Minsk or Grodno regions – mainly Jews – wished their children, educated for a few years by then, to complete their education in Russian, the language they had a command of. There were teachers who lived next to the numerous Russian primary schools where they had taught, and now remained unemployed. There were, on the other hand, no Byelorussian teachers. The ZCZW organised courses with its own money, but the education of the teaching staff required time, not just two months' worth of training. In the absence of other teaching staff, Russian schools were being set up, especially given that the population did not want Byelorussian schools. Russian schools were created by Poles against their own interest, but for the good of their students: it was better for the children to study at a Russian school than to attend no school at all. This being the case, Iwanowski's complaint against the ZCZW, regarding supporting Russian schools, appears wrongheaded and completely unjustified.

Money was the root of the disagreement. The local administration's coffers were empty, hence the popular belief that the Polish authorities should pay for everything. The schools with two-thirds of the pupils or students who were of the same ethnicity/nationality, received government aid *ex-officio*. This attitude of a permanent beneficiary was very characteristic of the Byelorussians, and Poland could not expect any privileges for this sponsorship. The district administration, wishing to subjugate the energetic Byelorussian School Council and direct its efforts towards the highly Russified city of Minsk, entrusted the Byelorussians with the education section at the city's municipal office. This far-sighted move was thwarted shortly after the local election. The new municipal office, elected *de-facto* by the Polish minority, entrusted this section to a Pole of nationalist convictions, who, according to Władysław Raczkiewicz, Head of the District of Minsk, caused many unnecessary conflicts with local Byelorussians.¹⁵ However, it must be clearly emphasised that the charges formulated by Iwanowski should have been directed not against the ZCZW but rather against the freely elected local government or the social organisation cooperating with the Administration.

As I have already mentioned, the personnel files of ZCZW employees have been lost. Luckily, a few applications for employment left unanswered have survived – possibly as an outcome of the mutual suppression of candidates by the two factions in the Selection Committee. This is the only rational explanation for the failure to take into account two excellent offers from September 1919. Stanisław

15 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1962, c. 103–104: 'Report on the activities of the School Inspectorate of the District of Minsk for the period of 10th August 1919 to 10th July 1920. A supplement'.

Mackiewicz was overlooked as a candidate for the Press Department. His name is listed in the register of employees of the National Defence Committee's [*Komitet Obrony Kraju* (KOK)] Administration and Press Department. In a letter of recommendation from Wiktor Noskowski, editor of the *Dziennik Powszechny* daily, we read that the candidate's articles published in *Głos Narodu* "drew attention by both their form and content." The reasons for Mackiewicz's rejection could probably be found in his biography, signed by him personally and containing facts unknown even to the author of his biography, but undoubtedly known to his contemporaries.¹⁶

A week later, a well-known painter called Dionizy Bojarunas submitted a job inquiry at the Department of Ethnic Affairs and Press in the Brześć Litewski District.¹⁷ Among other merits, Bojarunas had organised the Polish White Cross. He was jobless "due to ideological factors", as it was defined in that period. Tadeusz Gettel, the ZCZW official who supported Bojarunas's candidacy, described him as follows: "A talented, creative, tactful, politically experienced, and sincere democrat – he represents the political platform of the Chief of State."¹⁸ I suppose that this last piece of information determined the fate of Bojarunas's candidacy.

In its column entitled 'Officials [*resp.* Personnel]: appointments, vacancies, replacements', the Official Journal published a total of 1,435 nominations of commissaries, heads/chiefs, directors, ministerial advisors, as well as clerks, secretaries, etc.¹⁹ An analysis of this data leads to some interesting conclusions.

16 From February to 1st July 1918, Mackiewicz worked at the editorial office of *Głos Narodu* in Kraków, and from July 1918 became a civil servant: first with the Kraków branch of the Polish Royal Department of State, then with the Polish Mission at Vilnius as secretary to a deputy, and finally in Warsaw as secretary to Tytus Filipowicz, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. After the resignation of the latter, he left for Vilnius on behalf of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department. After his return, he worked at the Press Department of KOK, which he left on 17th March 1919 to join the 13th Vilnius Uhlan Regiment as a volunteer. He was granted leave from the regiment until 1st January 1920 to settle the formalities related to his release from military service. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1663/3, c. 7–8 (verso) [microfilm]: 'Application dated 12th November 1919'.

17 The application was supported by deputy Norbert Barlicki and Mr. Thor of the Ministry of Public Works.

18 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1663/3, c. 25–26 (verso): 'Application dated 29th September 1919'.

19 [Column:] 'Officials [*resp.* Personnel]: appointments, vacancies, replacements', in *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories – The Chief Command of the Polish Army* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem*

Vilnius was not only the seat of the District-of-Vilnius authorities (the *Official Journal* lists 397 nominations), but also, from October 1919, of the Commissariat-General, headed by the Commissioner-General. According to the announcements in the *Official Journal*, 439 employees were appointed to the Commissariat-General in Vilnius, 13 were employed under contract, two were promoted, and 49 dismissed. Ten were transferred to, and 15 from, district offices. Seven moved from one position to another, and one, an agrarian clerk, was assigned from the Commissariat to its Branch Office.

The Commissariat-General formally supervised work in all the districts,²⁰ hence its personal composition is more important compared to that of the other bodies. The staffing as at 31st December 1919 follows below.

After Ludwik Kolankowski's resignation, Jerzy Osmołowski was appointed Commissioner-General with Edmund Iwaszkiewicz acting as his deputy. The Commissioner-General's personal secretariat was administered by Jan Weyssenhoff.

The head of the General Section (I) was Jan Klott. His subordinates were Zdzisław Rodzynkiewicz, Head of the Human Resources Department; Michał Chlewiński, Head of the General Department; Zygmunt Żubr, Head of the Public Health Department, Waław Mohl, Head of the Social Welfare Department; and Stanisław Żarewicz, PhD, Head of the Archives Department.

Stanisław Downarowicz was Head of the Administrative Section (II), who at the same time was the Representative of the Commissioner-General to the Command of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front. As the Section head, he was superior to Tomasz Kujawski, Head of the General Administration Department; Jan Jontscher, Head of the Local Government Department; Stanisław Krzyżanowski, Head of the Public Security Service; and Władysław Studnicki, Head of the Statistics Department.

Kazimierz Świątecki was Head of the Economic Section (III). He was also Plenipotentiary of the Commissioner-General at the Committee for the Reconstruction of the Borderlands in Warsaw and Plenipotentiary for Agricultural Assistance, also based in Warsaw. Stanisław Świerzyński, Head of the Department of State Assets; Stefan Chodnikiewicz, Head of the

Wschodnich – Naczelne Dowództwo Wojska Polskiego (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW NDWP'), Yr. I, 1919, No. 9, 11, 13, 15–17, 20, 25, 27, 28; *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* [Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW')], Yr. I, 1919, No. 31, 33–38, 41–43; *ibid.*, Yr. II, 1920, No. 1, 2, 4, 7, 9–11, 15, 19, 20, 23, 25, 29, 31, 37, 57.

20 In practice, the districts enjoyed considerable autonomy.

Agriculture Department; Aleksander Trzciński, acting Head of the Industry and Trade Department; and, Stanisław Szczuka, Head of the Veterinary Services Department, all reported to him.

Czesław Chorzelski was Head of the Treasury Section (IV). He was superior to Karol Dembowski, Head of the General Department; Jan Lachowicz, Head of the Department of Budget, Accounting and Treasury; Gabriel Czechowicz, Head of the Direct Taxes Department; Władysław Oster, Head of the Indirect Taxes Department; and, Ludwik Maculewicz, Head of the Lending Department.

Feliks Dutkiewicz, brother at the Association of the Polish Youth 'Zet', was Head of the Justice Section (V) and superior to: Witold Raczkiewicz, Head of the Judicial Department; Aleksander Tallen-Wilczewski, head of the Penology Department; and Witold Abramowicz, Head of the Legislative Department.

Łucjan Zarzecki, known for his nationalist convictions, was Head of the Public Education [*resp.* Enlightenment] Section (VI). The following reported to him: Kazimierz Szlągowski, Head of the Department of Common [i.e. Elementary] Schools; Włodzimierz Gałęcki, Head of the Department of Secondary and Vocational Schools; and, Waclaw Jezierski, Head of the General Department.

The position of head of the Provisioning Section (VII) was vacant; Stanisław Kozakowski served as acting Head.

Ernst Fryzendorf was Head of the Technical Section (VIII), with the following reports: Strzeżysław Bowbelski, Head of the Construction and Reconstruction Department; Aleksander Zubelewicz, Head of the Roads and Bridges Department; and, Bogusław Bosiacki, Head of the Waterways and Shipping Department.

Czesław Krupski was Head of the Department for Ethnic and Religious Affairs. Zygmunt Połoński was appointed Head of the Inspection Department.

Wacław Studnicki, who undoubtedly shared the standpoint of KOK the on the Eastern issue, served as Curator of the Vilnian archives and, simultaneously, as Head of the ZCZW's Archives Department. Maria Obst also found employment at that department. It is worth recalling that the editor Jan Obst, known for his incorporationist views, was (as of March 1919) Head of the Press Section at KOK's Administration and Press Department. KOK's Mieczysław [or, Mirosław] Obieziński was made Head of the General Department at the Provisioning Section, established in January 1920.

Leon Wasserberger's role at the Commissariat is somewhat unclear. He formally held the position of consultant for financial and commercial matters, surprisingly classified at the high, fifth tier of remuneration. Ludwik Kolankowski presented him unflatteringly in his memoirs as a "Leopolitan [a man from Lwów], lawyer, and speculator", who allegedly had inveigled Osmołowski in a

timber company affair. (The memoirs' barely legible manuscript has recently been edited and published by Sylwia Grochowina.)²¹

The composition of the personnel of the strategically important Branch Office in Warsaw was stable. Fifty-four employees were appointed almost at the same time, and during Osmałowski's leave due to a severe illness, 19 people were hired, almost at once, on a contract basis. Throughout the entire period of activity, two persons were promoted, with 26 dismissed. Such a small turnover leads to the conclusion that the team was basically cohesive and unanimous.

Count Michał Kossakowski, the Commissioner-General's Representative in Warsaw, was superior to his assistant, Michał Jastrzębski, co-founder of the infamous enterprise Len Kresowy [Borderlands Flax Company]. His place was soon taken by Stanisław Kozakowski, and ultimately by Mieczysław Porowski. Jarosław Żaboklicki served as legal advisor at the Branch Office; Stanisław Wańkowicz (KOK) was its secretary, and Stanisław Suzin was the subcontracting officer. Olgierd Gordziałkowski (KOK) was Head of the of Provisions and Acquisitions Section, later renamed the Acquisitions and Supplies Department.

Mieczysław Porowski acted as Head of the Economic Department; Otton Węclawowicz and, later on, Walerian Lissowski, as Head of the Passport Department; Stefan Mączyński, PhD, as Head of the Public Health and Social Welfare Department; Jan Sołtykiewicz as Head of the Department for Treasury, Financial and Accounting Matters; and początkowo - Władysław Budzyński, a po nim Franciszek Bartnicki as Head of the Central Office. The position of Head of the Department for the Liquidation of War Losses was assumed after S. Kozakowski by Prince Hieronim Drucki-Lubecki, Chairman of the Association for the Defence of the Property of Poles victimised in the territory of the former Russian Empire, seated in Warsaw, and upon the latter's death, by Kazimierz Szarski. The Conscription-and-Enlistment Department was run by Zygmunt Zabierzowski, who later went on to make a stunning career during the Central Lithuania period. Senior Clerk [*starszy referent*] Feliks Jarmołowicz took control of the War Spoils Office. The Education Department was headed by Maria Poklewska-Koziełłowa, and the Press Department by Ksawery Glinka.

An analysis of the composition of the superior ZCZW authorities reveals the symptomatic fact that a large number of significant positions were in the hands of people associated with the Committee for the Defence of the Borderlands, an

21 APAN, Deposit 12, L. Kolankowski, *Pamiętniki*, 28; the complete edition: Ludwik Kolankowski [1882–1956], *Zapiski pamiętnikarskie*, ed. by S. Grochowina, series 'Homines et Historia' X, Toruń 2012, p. 280.

organisation declaring objectives that were fundamentally opposed to those promoted by the Commander-in-Chief. The team associated with the Warsaw Branch Office and KOK involved a large number of the entrepreneurs who were engaged in the major business ventures that stirred heated debates among the public in the winter of 1919/20. Of the five founding members of Len Kresowy, four were closely associated with the Committee for the Defence of the Borderlands, and three – namely Olgierd Gordziałkowski, Stanisław Wańkowicz, and Stanisław Mohl – were with the ZCZW Branch Office.

The situation looked somewhat different in the districts. Despite his surname, it was not until February 1920 that Jan Piłsudski, then-member of the Provisional Governing Commission in Lithuania, established on 22nd December 1918, was appointed deputy to the head of the Vilnius district, Konrad Niedziałkowski, who definitely did not share the socialist political views of his son, Mieczysław. The Press Department in Vilnius was headed by Ludwik Abramowicz, the Sanitary Department by Antoni Hołówko, the Veterinary Services Department by Stefan Malicki, the Schooling Department by Henryk Orliński, and the Agriculture Department by Stefan Weyse. The Labour Department in Vilnius District was headed by Józef Kudrewicz, the Industry and Trade Department by Waclaw Sławiński, and the Technical Department by Bolesław Stankiewicz. Bolesław Świątorzecki served as Head of the Administration of State Assets, and Waclaw Dokalski as its clerk in charge of law [*referent prawny*]. The position of county starost in Vilnius was filled by Józef Borowski, his deputy being Konstanty Mackiewicz. Antoni Piwocki was the ZCZW Commissioner based in Vilnius.

The aforementioned Władysław Jeśman was appointed head of the District of Brześć Litewski after Maciej Jamontt was transferred to Volhynia. The ravaged and depopulated Brześć District (the *Official Journal* lists 228 nominations), consisting to a large extent of wasteland, employed only a few more personnel than the easternmost – and last to have been organised – District of Minsk (187 nominations specified in the *Official Journal*), where the position of district head was taken by Władysław Raczkiwicz (then aged 33),²² head of the Military Department at KOK and member of the ‘Zet’, who had gone through all of the

22 As president of the Polish Chief Military Committee (‘Naczpol’), Raczkiwicz invested much effort into creating Polish military units in the Russian army, which would enter the country after the war as a Polish armed force. He organised the Polish Educational Society in Minsk and a self-defence militia in December 1918. He became a plenipotentiary of the Regency Council for Polish formations in Russia. On 16th May 1919, he was appointed Deputy Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, and, following the seizure of Minsk, he became Head of the District of Minsk. For more on

latter association's stages of initiation, including membership in the Fraternal Circle.²³ In the District of Volhynia, Maciej Jamontt served as District Head until the district's split in January 1920. During his term of office, a total of 130 nominations were recorded.

Personal characteristics

In order to understand the situation that prevailed in the area under the ZCZW's jurisdiction, one must consider not only what the people shaping the reality of the time really stood for, but also how they were perceived by those whom the ZCZW programme was supposed to help. The novelist and translator Wila [Wilhemina] Zyndram-Kościałkowska, a friend of Eliza Orzeszkowa, thus referred, at the beginning of 1920, to the Chief of the Polish State, who was 51 at the time: "What for? For what merits? We shall see how we can fare with him and with his ruling. He still looks like a fraud to me."²⁴

The 36-year-old Ludwik Kolankowski²⁵ served as General Civil Commissioner at the Administration of the Eastern Territories from 19th February to 5th May

W. Raczkiewicz's career, see the entry (by Waclaw Szyszkowski) in the *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish Biographical Dictionary (hereinafter, PSB)], Vol. XXIX, No. 4.

- 23 The organisation of the 'Zet' movement, which became the bastion of the Borderland Guard activists, is extensively dealt with in T. W. Nowacki (ed.), *ZET w walce o niepodległość i budowę państwa. Szkice i wspomnienia*, Warsaw 1996; also, see A. i A. Garliccy [A. Garlicka and A. Garlicki] (eds.), *Zarzewie 1909–1920. Wspomnienia i materiały*, Warsaw 1973.
- 24 Commentary to the information on an appeal for a gift for Piłsudski. LVIA, Fond 1135, inventory 13 B. 664, c. 280: Wila Zyndram-Kościałkowska, *Ludzie i rzeczy mego czasu. Lata 1919–1920* [People and things of my time in 1919–1920].
- 25 Aleksander Gieysztor reconstructs Kolankowski's career during this period in an extensive biography published as part of PSB. On 14th November 1918, he was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appointed Head of the Eastern Division on 17th November, made Head of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Section, and on 9th December 1918 he became head of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian sections. Together with Olgierd Górka and Janusz Gąsiorowski, he participated in the negotiations with the German Ober-Ost command; on 30th December 1918, the German party rejected the plan to evacuate German troops from the Eastern Territories (presented by Kolankowski on 25th December 1918). As chairman (from 2nd January 1919) of the Foreign Ministry's 'higher disciplinary committee', he examined and dropped the issue of the note presented by Deputy Minister Tytus Filipowicz to a German emissary, requesting the latter's departure. On 10th February, he participated in the signing of the arrangement in Białystok. For more on this subject, see PSB, Vol. XIII, fasc. 2.

1919. He can be considered as the one responsible for the framework of the Polish administration which during his tenure was provisional, transitional, and dependent on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kolankowski was officially in favour of settling the borders with the 'possible' Lithuanian state based upon the freely expressed will of the people inhabiting the disputed territories, yet throughout his diary he refers to the Borderlands as 'our lands'. He resigned at his own request, and it was certainly not due to difficulties with commuting to work in Vilnius: after all, in May 1919, he was appointed Plenipotentiary of the Chief of State for the newly-established University of Vilnius, collaborating with Rector Józef Ziemacki in bringing it into being. On 17th August 1919, Ziemacki requested the appointment of the former General Civil Commissioner as a full professor of Polish and Lithuanian history. Aleksander Gieysztor assumed, after Ludwik Kolankowski himself, that the harassment encountered by the latter from the ZCZW was a consequence of manipulations by Adam Wrzosek, Director of the Department of Higher Education at the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education [*resp.* Enlightenment], who had disapproved of Kolankowski's restriction of the Ministry's role in the establishment of the Stefan Batory University.²⁶

Apparently, it was not merely personal animosity between Wrzosek and Kolankowski, but a more profound conflict. Regardless of his personal beliefs, whatever they were, Kolankowski was loyally implementing the programme in force in the ZCZW-administered territory, and therefore did not allow Warsaw to intervene. Warsaw's political circles, which held significantly different views, simply took revenge on him. On 18th October 1919, the ZCZW appointed Kolankowski as a deputy professor and deputy director of the university's library, which stood in absolute contradiction not only to his value as an employee, but also to his merits for the University. It was great negligence on the part of Osmołowski in that he failed to show sufficient attention, and eventually even this nomination did not come into effect. Let us clearly state that the nature of Kolankowski's administrative activities during his term-of-office with the ZCZW was fundamentally different from that established in the 1919 Proclamation. It is likely that the ideas that guided Piłsudski were the actual reason for Kolankowski's resignation from being part of the ZCZW.

With regard to Kolankowski's successor, the then-46-year-old Jerzy Marcin Osmołowski,²⁷ the abovementioned Wila Zyndram-Kościąłowska held the

26 Such practice proves that L. Kolankowski strictly observed the ZCZW's regulations.

27 For an exhaustive biographical note (by L. Hass), see PSB, fasc. 101, 375–9.

worst possible opinion: “A most blatant profiteer, he gave a monopoly to his brother-in-law Gordziałkowski, who had recently been dismissed from the position of Head of the Provisioning Section.”²⁸ Apparently favourable to Stanisław Mohl, this female author commented briefly and eloquently on his involvement in the company Len Kresowy: “Why on earth did that stupid Staś engage in such a mess!”²⁹

Zyndram-Kościałkowska’s opinions reflect the climate of the Polish Borderlands in the years 1919–20. As Stanisław Cywiński wrote in *Dziennik Wileński*, Vilnius

strikes everyone who does not know it, or returns there following a long absence – with its intimateness and familiarness. Everyone knows each other in Vilnius: they know whose teeth are aching and who has won the lottery; they feel sorry for one, and rejoice with another, and are jealous for a third. Vilnius thrives on feeling, inspiration, zeal, philanthropy, and ‘sacrifice’. The Vilnians are really convinced that everything they care for carries some cosmic value, that the entire world reflects on their well-being, on their personal harmlessness.³⁰

Such was the atmosphere in which Osmołowski held his office. He was in office as Commissioner-General from the announcement of the ZCZW programme on 22nd April 1919 until the end of the ZCZW on 9th September 1920. His previous activity³¹ was the reason for which his candidacy, submitted by Minister

28 LVIA, Fond. 1135, inventory 13 B. 664, c. 145 (as in fn. 24).

29 Ibid.

30 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1760, c. 577: *Dziennik Wileński*, No. 31, after Borderland Press report No.147 of 12th February 1920. The highlights by a contemporaneous reader are characteristic.

31 Osmołowski was born in 1872 into a landed-gentry family (Siedliszcze estate). He graduated from the Faculty of Agriculture at the Riga Polytechnical Institute. He was politically, socially, and economically active in the Pińsk region, perceived as a radical. In 1912–14, he was involved in the Masonic lodge ‘Wyzwolenie’ (‘Liberation’) based in Warsaw. He spent the years 1914–17 with the 401st Minsk squad. From March to September 1917, he served as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kishinev Council of Worker-and-Soldier Deputies and Chairman of the Gubernatorial Executive Committee. From December 1918, he was a member of the Polish Council of the Minsk Land, and in February 1918 he was one of a three-member delegation of the Council and of Polish Supreme Military Committee (‘*Naczpól*’) in Brest-Litovsk, which negotiated the entry of the 1st Polish Corps into territory controlled by the command of the German troops in the East with representatives of the Ober-Ost. Later on, he was employed in the Educational Department of the Polish Council of the Byelorussian Land, and then in the Regency Council’s Ministry of the Interior. From July 1918, he worked as a department head at the Ministry of Agriculture, and

of Agriculture Stanisław Janickiego,³² was chosen by J. Piłsudski from among four others. Osmołowski had lost his estate of Siedliszcze in the war. His first marriage was breaking down. He had to take into consideration the need to find a permanent source of income at the level required to remain in his social group. He was committed not only to staying in this group but also to playing an eye-catching role, since he was a man that knew not how to remain in the shadows.³³ On 15th April 1919, he was appointed Commissioner-General with the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories.³⁴

Ludwik Kolankowski, however, characterised him as a rather peculiar ‘Fellow Countryman’ [*krajowiec*]. Osmołowski seemed to seek to consolidate his position on the political firmament not only with a view to the success of his mission, but also bearing in mind the development of his own career, especially if the ‘experiment’ in which he was forced by circumstances to take part, would end in a fiasco.

The Proclamation of 22nd April 1919 entailed a restructuring of the Administration, altering the environment in which Jerzy Osmołowski was to fulfil his duties as new Commissioner-General. Formally, he was vested with the highest legislative, executive, and judiciary authority in the area under his control. Unfortunately, these powers were contested by the Polish public of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Wila Zyndram-Kościałkowska unwittingly captured this climate in the most brilliant manner: “Does he [Osmołowski] have the right to establish monopolies? Does the Commissioner, be it the General one, and clean as a diamond of pure water, personify the state? How in his solitude is he so strictly informed? Did he arrange that regulation for himself, or does he identify that much with the Borderlands? It’s not about opinions, it’s about the law.”³⁵

from October 1918 as Head of the Asset Donations Section of the same Ministry’s Department of State Assets. In December 1918, he served as commissioner of Constituency No. 16 (Warsaw).

32 APAN, Deposit 12, L. Kolankowski, *Pamiętniki* [Memoirs], pp. 1–30.

33 A succinct, yet seemingly accurate, description of his personality is provided by Irena Krzywicka in her *Wspomnienia gorszycielki*, Warsaw 1998.

34 Ludwik Hass provides more information on Jerzy Osmołowski in the latter’s extensive biographical note comprised in PSB. To add just one thing, Osmołowski co-founded the company ‘Jastgór’ in Jastrzębia Góra during the interwar period. According to I. Krzywicka, he served as Director of the Institute of Rural Economy and Forestry in Puławy after World War Two.

35 LVIA, Fond. 1135, inventory 13 B. 664, c. 160 ff. (as in fn. 24 & 28).

Osmołowski's true views are difficult to determine, even though he has left extensive diaries written at the end of his life. He was certainly not a statesman. He was brisk, enterprising and energetic, a hothead by nature, engaging with passion in the execution of orders. Endowed by the Chief of State with freedom of action and with trust, he committed unforgivable mistakes³⁶ – which he either did not understand or refused to admit. Undoubtedly, he was haunted by conflicts of competence with the Supreme Command, the ambivalent attitude of the Catholic Church toward the ZCZW, and, finally, by the boycott on the part of the Vilnian society. After all, 30 members of Vilnius's City Council elected in September were in favour of incorporation, versus merely one advocate of federationism. The opinion of 14 Jews and two socialists could not have altered the moods in the city that had become the seat of the Commissariat in October. Osmołowski's former attempts to locate the Commissariat in the smaller city of Grodno were not unfounded.

Perhaps, the secret of the ZCZW programme's failure lies in Jerzy Osmołowski's mental structure. Contrary to popular opinion, he was a mentally weak man, overwhelmed by the enormity of the issues that had fallen upon him as he accepted the title of Commissioner-General; while he had no vision of his work, he did like the honours that came with it, and was most interested in material wealth. Osmołowski enjoyed high-society politics. It appears that he was shaping his self-image intentionally. Did the spiteful nickname of 'Borderlands cacique', conferred on him by the journalists of the day, not contain a grain of truth? After moving to Vilnius, he would report to Piłsudski in Warsaw quite often, and was susceptible to suggestions. Unfortunately, there are many indications that he was the type of person to acquire the opinions of anyone who was the last to convince him on a given matter. Many of his decisions had to be taken without consultation at the Belweder palace.

Osmołowski thus found himself in a situation where he was held responsible for the widely unpopular federationist policy of the Chief of State. Initially, he attempted to promote it and tailor it to the expectations of the antagonists. This approach was doomed to failure, and to make matters worse, it did much damage. Osmołowski was nonetheless a clever individual and apparently realised that, as Commissioner-General, he was able to take care of his future also in a situation where the concept implemented by the ZCZW would fail. This supposition is corroborated by the memoirs of Pole Edward Woyńilłowicz (Edvard Vaynilovich): "The tendency that he [Osmołowski] is giving in to is not

36 In relation to Byelorussians, for instance; see subsequent chapters.

recommended for the sake of the Polish cause in the Borderlands, but unfortunately, it is probably the tendency of the milieu currently in power, so the governor cannot really do otherwise.” Woyniłłowicz went on to recall the old strategy used in the Borderlands in tsarist times, stating that “when one got a bad governor, everybody wanted him to remain as long as possible, for some way of influencing him, in order to render him less harmful, had always been found with time.” He also expressed the conviction that “people can find a way to influence Osmołowski as well.”³⁷ And they probably did, which was not a factor that would strengthen the ZCZW’s reputation.

After his first period of political activity, and one fraught with errors, Osmołowski would eschew his prerogatives and delve into purely administrative and executive matters. His associates were unanimous in their opinion that he was impulsive and took up matters on which he should not have wasted time, while neglecting important issues. Coincidences also played a disadvantageous role. It was not until June 1920 that Piłsudski himself instructed Osmołowski to propose an amendment to the agrarian law for the Eastern Borderlands.³⁸

The Commissioner-General was entitled to a legislative initiative by virtue of the order of 12th May 1919. It must be openly admitted that Osmołowski was no help but more of a hindrance to Piłsudski. The Chief of State, having endowed his ‘governor’ with such extensive powers, could legitimately expect more resourcefulness from him. Unfortunately, he had chosen the wrong man for the task. Osmołowski’s private correspondence with Władysław Jeśman, a man soon to turn 60 at the time,³⁹ also calls into question the credibility of the Commissioner-General as the main executor of Józef Piłsudski’s concepts. According to Jeśman, Piłsudski enjoyed strong support only from a part of the army and in certain social spheres, and was not one of those ‘quite universally respected’ heads of state. Jeśman literally wrote: “And if Piłsudski, or yourself, Sir, had declared today

37 E. Woyniłłowicz, *Wspomnienia*, Wilno 1931, p. 283.

38 *Ibid.*

39 According to the findings of Aleksander Śniezko, Jeśman, a former deputy to the Third Duma (and candidate to the First), was a well-known landowner activist of conservative convictions. He was a member of the ‘Fellow Countrymen’ movement. He founded an Agricultural Society and a cooperative in Słonim County. During World War 1, he returned to the countryside and was appointed to the position of Commissioner for the Brześć Litewski District. During the peace negotiations in Riga, he wrote an extensive memorandum about the past and the then-current condition of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which he then submitted to W. Witos and L. Skulski. See biographical note in PSB, fasc 49, p. 196.

that you wish for a federation with an autonomous Byelorussia, it would immediately trigger a civil war and a coup d'état.⁴⁰ The adherents of this political orientation were not powerless. Jeśman remarked: "I am positive that the Supreme Command, with the exception of the Commander-in-Chief himself [*sic*], are very hostile towards you." He foresaw the developments if the current policy of the Administration were still to be pursued; namely, he predicted the resignation of representatives of the Polish intelligentsia from their offices as soon as they found out that they were working in favour of a federation with the Eastern Lands, instead of their annexation. He expressed a strong conviction that the Polish 'statesman' (Osmołowski) could rely solely on Poles, as relying on Jews or Byelorussians would be equivalent to declaring war on the whole of Polish society. Moreover, he wrote: "the attitude of the masses of officials towards you is not a matter of minor importance, as it might seem at first glance. The point is that the bureaucratic machine in general is a force that statesmen have to reckon with to some extent even under normal conditions."⁴¹

In an extensive letter, Jeśman revealed his critical stance towards the ZCZW's policies. He claimed that he himself had chosen to work for an institution that was supposed to defend the Polish cause and establish a great, powerful and independent Poland, which could not be imagined without the Eastern Territories. He reminded Osmołowski of his assurances that his objective was, "as is the case with every nationally-minded Pole, the annexation of these lands by Poland." Osmołowski declared to Jeśman that, in his efforts towards incorporation, the Commissioner-General only differed from the others in his methods and measures [*sic*].⁴² The credibility of Jeśman's account is confirmed by the fact that, after receiving this letter, Osmołowski not only did not dismiss him but appointed him, on 8th November 1919, Head of the District of Brześć Litewski.⁴³

Osmołowski was represented in Warsaw by 36-year-old Count Michał Stanisław Kossakowski,⁴⁴ his former superior at the Regency Council's Ministry

40 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, Personal documents and records of J. Osmołowski, No. 1553/2, c. 11–19: 'Letter by 'Servant' Władysław Jeśman to J. Osmołowski of 16th August, written in Brześć Litewski'.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 27, 8th November 1919, V.287.C.

44 According to Tadeusz Cieślak's findings, Michał Stanisław Korwin-Kossakowski, having abandoned his studies in agronomy in Riga and in law in Freiburg, settled in his father's estate in the Kaunas region, where he exercised numerous social functions. He donated 50 ha of land from his Nidoki estate, County of Wilkomierz, and a small fund to the Kovnian Agricultural Society with a view to running an

of Internal Affairs, now Head of the ZCZW Branch Office, a man of high political culture, associated with the Committee for Defence of the Borderlands. As he was submitting his resignation from the post with the ZCZW, having volunteered for the front, he wrote: "I devoted myself to work on instating Polish authority in the country's eastern lands."⁴⁵ In a letter to the Chief of State, he spoke straightforwardly of "concepts for the resolution of the complex problem of the Eastern Territories" which had been "overshadowed by a year-and-a-half of debating."⁴⁶ He used in this letter the phrase 'the burden of errors', which painfully hurt Osmołowski, already harassed by the new defamatory campaign in the press.⁴⁷ Kossakowski considered it imperative to distance himself from the campaign. In the next letter from the front line, he wrote: "I only had in mind the sphere of fundamental politics; I believed, and still do, that it is not possible to follow two paths at the same time for too long, especially when these

exemplary experimental farm. During the Great War, he first served as a plenipotentiary of the Russian Red Cross Society for Kiev and Minsk Districts, then of the Polish Committee for Sanitary Aid and the Central Civic Committee in Kiev and Minsk. He moreover founded and chaired the Society of Friends of the Polish Soldier in Minsk and Kiev, a member of the Polish Council of the Land of Minsk and of the Provisional Polish Council of the Land of Minsk. On behalf of the Regency Council, he organised and headed a re-emigration office in Minsk. From 1918 on, he became active in Vilnius, where he engaged in the organisation of the all-Polish congress. He headed the Committee for Defence of the Borderlands. Furthermore, he chaired the Committee of Polish Landowners of the Land of Kowno [Kaunas], was a delegate of the Polish National Council in Lithuania and a member of the United Delegations of Polish National Councils in Lithuania and Byelorussia. Together with A. Więckowski, he participated in confidential negotiations with the plenipotentiary of the Soviet Red Cross Society and presided over the delegation of the Polish Red Cross Society in negotiations with the Soviet delegation in Mikaszewicze on mutual handling and repatriation of prisoners-of-war, which lasted from October to December 1919. During the offensive of the Red Army, he was sent to Riga to hold confidential peace negotiations with the Soviet delegation. See biographical note on M.S. Kossakowski (by T. Cieślak) in PSB, fasc. 61, p. 282

45 Ibid.

46 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, Personal documents and records of J. Osmołowski, No. 1554, c. 7: 'M. S. Kossakowski to the Chief of State and Chief Commander of the Polish Army, letter of 27th August 1920 signed 'M. St. K.' - private with 1st Battery, 216th F.[ield] A.[rtillery] R.[egiment]. Copy sent to the attention of J. Osmołowski, along with the letter dated 10th September 1920.'

47 The action was sparked by Witold Abramowicz, a District of Vilnius employee, and Krzyżanowski, Mayor (*prezydent*) of Vilnius.

paths are clearly divergent; and this exactly was the political condition in which the ZCZW has been placed, which would not be able to alter its political track without reorganising and renaming itself, while choosing one definite path to follow is now, betimes, of utmost importance.”⁴⁸ The contents of both letters leave no doubt that the Commissioner-General’s representative in Warsaw was not quite interested in the federationist concept.

Undoubtedly, the most prominent person at that time was the 53-year-old Władysław Studnicki, Head of the ZCZW’s Statistical Office, a professed Germanophile, Chairman of the Polish Statehooders’ Club, and a leading Polish activist. His study *On Poland’s attitude towards its Eastern Territories [W sprawie stosunku Polski do jej Ziemi Wschodnich]*, published in 1919,⁴⁹ leaves no doubt of his views. He claimed that a possible federation of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (he deemed the Duchy to have been ‘artificially instituted’) would not allow Poland to make proper use of the political forces and skills of Poles from the Eastern Territories, either in the parliament or in the government. Meanwhile, mastering the sparsely populated Polish Eastern Territories was an economic necessity for Poland, which otherwise would be deprived of areas for colonial expansion that might solve the agrarian challenge of the overpopulated Polish countryside. The idea of colonisation is generally not identifiable with that of the federation. Studnicki argued that allowing another state to emerge in these territories, even if bound by union with Poland, would pose the threat of hindering Polish colonisation, “since any self-reliant state system must hold complete competence in its own agrarian policy.”⁵⁰

I cannot determine whether Studnicki stalled the preparation of the election in the Eastern Territories in agreement with any party, or acted on his own. Time was working against the federationist idea. The plebiscite announced in the Proclamation had to be preceded by a census; according to his own words, Studnicki added to the census a count of cattle, livestock, horses, and land owned.⁵¹ This provided a wealth of statistical material, which in turn resulted

48 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, Personal documents and records of J. Osmałowski, No. 1554, c. 6: ‘M. S. Kossakowski to J. Osmałowski, Letter from the front dated 10th September 1920.’

49 W. Studnicki, *W sprawie stosunku politycznego Polski do jej Ziemi Wschodnich*, Warsaw 1919, p. 14.

50 *Ibid.*, 4.

51 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 12–21: Shorthand minutes of the session of the Bureau of Congress Works in Vilnius, 25th October 1919. Attendees: Prof. J. Fedorowicz, session chairman; Messrs. Bańkowski, Wańkiewicz, Umiastowski, Wł.[adysław] Studnicki. W.[acław] Studnicki, Ms. Studnicka, Messrs.

later in a number of studies and elaborations, but, undoubtedly, prolonged overall the preparations for the election. The reactions of the peasants were not without significance, either; they saw no problem in giving out information regarding the size of their families or their faith, but were extremely distrustful towards noting down their possessions and livestock for a purpose unknown to them. This move by Studnicki and his refutation on 8th December 1918 (at a rally held by the Committee for Eastern Affairs) of the resolution on the formation of a Lithuanian state based on the lands detached from Russia, which enforced the equal position of all nations,⁵² compel one to reflect on the actual role that this remarkable individual played in the Eastern issue. I regard him as at least a leading ideological figure for the groups opposed to the idea of a federation. One crucial factor of the climate affecting political action in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the performance of the Provisioning Section staff. A 56-page report on the activities of the Branch Office⁵³ devotes one succinct page to the activities of this particular section.⁵⁴

The section was tasked with acquiring and distributing products necessary to feed the population of the Eastern Territories. The products were purchased or obtained from an allocation designated by the Ministry of Provisioning. Funds were always scarce, so the Ministry of the Treasury thus gained extensive informal authority over the theoretically independent ZCZW. The founder, and first head, of the section was Olgierd Gordziałkowski, Director of the Supplying and Provisioning Department at KOK. Mieczysław Obiezierski was appointed Director (and from April 1920 onwards, Head) of the Provisioning Section's General Department. He occupied two posts at KOK: Assistant to the Head of the Supplying and Provisioning Department, and Chief of the Administration and Press Department.⁵⁵ Gordziałkowski resigned in December 1919, when the section was de-facto subordinated to the Commissariat. He was driven by the idea of extracting goods from the Eastern Territories, rather than taking them

Zawadzki, Meysztowicz, Brenstein, and Prof. Siedlecki, Rector of the University of Vilnius.

52 APAN, III-10, 'Maurycy Handelsman's file. As per a handwritten note signed by Kazimierz Keller, Secretary of the Committee for Eastern Affairs'.

53 *Zarys działalności Ekspozytury Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich w Warszawie w r. 1919*, Warsaw [1920], p. 56.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

55 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (LCVA), Fond 1269, Ap. 3, B. 39, c. 16 (verso), 13, 3, 4: 'Letters of members of the staff of the Committee for Defence of the Eastern Borderlands of March 1919'.

in. This could have been facilitated by the malfunctioning of the Provisioning Department.

It can be stated with certainty that the supplies provided to the Eastern Territories were insufficient, although answering the question as to where supplies should have been sourced would exceed the scope of this study. The goods arriving in the Eastern Territories were distributed by the Branch Office via the provisioning inspectorates, beyond the control of the Commissariat and district heads, which practically situated the Provisioning Department outside all supervision by the Commissariat-General. At the time the Commissariat was able to take care of supply issues, for the sake of the federationist concept – which occurred after 25th November and 19th December 1919 – both Gordziałkowski and Obieziński put their interest in the company Len Kresowy operating in the Borderlands. The difference was that, unlike Gordziałkowski (who was associated with KOK), the *Official Journal* did not announce Obieziński's resignation from the ZCZW. Among the personnel losses of the Branch, one noticeable name is that of Prince Hieronim Drucki-Lubecki, Head of the Department for the Liquidation of War Losses, known for his activity with KOK, who passed away in March 1920. The Provisioning Section was also active in Vilnius from November 1919. Its inspector, and later controller and bookkeeper, Bronisław (Bolesław) Wielhorski, employed as a Branch Office official since 25th August 1919, also died in March 1920.

In a situation where both persons holding major positions left almost simultaneously (resignation of section chief Gordziałkowski, illness of inspector Wielhorski), it is extremely puzzling why a month's leave was granted around the same time to Vilnius's deputy district provisioning inspector, in a period of drastic supply shortages in this city. The custom of allowing long vacations to people holding important positions in ZCZW departments that were considered critical and, worse still, defective, arouses wonder. A five-week holiday was awarded to the School Inspector, immediately after the mass resignation of teachers seeking better careers in the Administration. The Chief Inspector of the unreliable War Spoils Office took six weeks' leave. Out of 44 registered periods of leave, the *Official Journal* reported as many as 30 at the Commissariat, including one permanent leave at its Agriculture Department (from 2nd December on). Given that this all occurred during preparation for the spring campaign, these decisions cannot be reasonably explained without, at least, accusing those responsible of incompetence. Such leave policy was tantamount to incapacitation, and full responsibility rests with the Head of the Personnel Administration Office personally, Zdzisław Rodzyńkiewicz, who had been transferred to the Commissariat from Volhynia.

In conclusion, only one question remains: Did these decisions result from a lack of a broader perspective or farsightedness, of thoughtlessness, or, of sabotage? It seems that the absolute opposition of the interests of ZCZW officials representing the viewpoint of the Committee for Defence of the Borderlands, which a significant share of Poles coming from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania identified with, to the premises of Józef Piłsudski's federationist policy, was the decisive factor in the inevitable failure of the concept that had brought about the creation of the ZCZW. It comes as a saddening paradox that the part of the Administration's personnel that was loyal to the ideals of the Chief of State's April Proclamation did not enjoy support from enlightened Byelorussians and representatives of the Lithuanian nation, for whose benefit the federationists were working, or at least they believed so.

The advocates of federation did not capitulate without a fierce fight. It was waged not only against Lithuanians and Byelorussians, but primarily with Poles holding different views on the future of these territories. Indeed, the superior cadre of the ZCZW consisted of people with a specific political and social history. The modern and honest approach to the Borderlands lost against the activists of the Association for the Defence of the Property of Poles and the Committee for Defence of the Eastern Borderlands, who were struggling to maintain the social status of their families.

The intertwining of economic, social, and political challenges made a significant group of the ZCZW executive personnel believe that the only chance for the success of the Polish *raison d'état* lay in the implementation of the incorporationist policy – equated, by the way, with their own personal interests. It seems that the absolute conflict between the interests of ZCZW officials representing the viewpoint of the Committee for Defence of the Borderlands, and the premises behind Józef Piłsudski's federationist policy, was the decisive factor in the inevitable failure of that concept, which had led to the creation of the ZCZW.

The arrival of Bolsheviks in the outskirts of Warsaw in August 1920 only sealed the long process of extinguishment of Józef Piłsudski's far-sighted policies.

CHAPTER IV: THE ATTITUDE OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE POLISH ARMED FORCES TO THE TEMPORARY CIVIL ADMINISTRATION OF THE EASTERN TERRITORIES

From 8th February to 22nd April 1919, in accordance with Section 2, indent 2 of the Resolution of the Legislative Sejm dated 20th February 1919, the Commander-in-Chief held the highest executive power in military matters, which he exerted in the war zone via the Supreme Command (Chief of General Staff, Quartermaster General, and General Adjutant's Office), or within the country via the Minister of Military Affairs. The war zone comprised all areas of direct warfare with a strip of land necessary for the arrangement of staging areas [*etap* or *okręg etapowy* = lit., 'staging district'].¹

Item 3 of the resolution stipulated that the Commander-in-Chief would also exercise, alongside the supreme military authorities, the highest political and administrative authority over the territory covered by direct warfare and the staging areas (districts) beyond the borders of the former Congress Kingdom, enforced via the Civil Commissioner (a position established on 19th February), with the proviso that such Commissioner would be directly subordinate to the Quartermaster General, operating under the Supreme Command.²

Before the inauguration of the Legislative Sejm, the Military Administration in Lithuania and Byelorussia was established, on 8 February 1919;³ and along with it, the General Civil Commissioner affiliated to the Military Administration was

1 Central Military Archives [Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe], hereinafter 'CAW', Teki Laudąńskiego [Laudąński's dossier], 440.12/2-3, Vol. 0225, c. 334.

2 Ibid.

3 *Official Journal of the General Civil Commissioner – the Supreme Command of the P[olish] A.[rmy] – Military Administration of the Eastern Territories* [Dziennik Urzędowy Generalnego Komisarza Cywilnego – Naczelne Dowództwo W.P. – Zarząd Wojskowy Ziem Wschodnich], hereinafter 'D. U. Gen. Kom. Cyw. NDWPZWZW'), R. I, No. 1, 10th Apr. 1919, I. 1.

established on 19th February. Very soon, on 22nd February, the 'Organisational Chart of the Administration of the Eastern Borderlands' was approved by the General Staff.⁴ The county was administered by a county Commissioner appointed, on behalf of the Supreme Command, by the Commissioner General representing the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department.

District commissaries were assigned to individual armies, appointed by the Commissioner-General, but on behalf of the Supreme Command. Commissioner-General (actually called the General Civil Commissioner) Ludwik Kolankowski functioned, at the same time, as the supreme civil governing and executive authority, as he also supervised the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department, made up of eight departments reporting to him.

Order No. 97 of the General Staff dated 8th March 1919 regulated matters of military administration over war zones. Staging area commands [abbr. DOE] were formed, one for each of the army groups, with their headquarters: in Zamość (General Jan Romer), Chełm (General Edward Rydz-Śmigły), Brześć Litewski [Brest] (General Antoni Listowski), and Białystok (General Waclaw Iwaszkiewicz).⁵ The territorial extent of individual operational groups [abbr. GO] had been defined earlier.⁶

Subordinate to DOE commanders were all units, factories and hospitals; munition, food-supply and technical warehouses; intermediate stations, and finally the gendarmerie in the given district. The staging areas stretching to the east were to provide quartermaster services for operational groups and were subordinate to the Chief Quartermaster's Office.⁷

It must be conceded that Order No. 97 interfered with the competences of the Civil Commissioner. A response followed soon enough. As a consequence of Kolankowski's complaints, on 14th March 1919 Colonel Juliusz Malczewski signed an order warning against the army meddling in civil matters, highlighting that the 'Organisational Chart of the Administration of the Eastern Borderlands' as of 22nd February 1919' had been approved by the Supreme Command of the Polish Army.⁸

4 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section [Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów], ZCZW, No. 1773, ln. 5, p. 4.

5 CAW, Teki Ludańskiego, 440.12/2-3, Vol. 0225, c. 404.

6 As stated in the appendix to Order of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army No. 6232/1 of 2nd March 1919.

7 CAW, Teki Ludańskiego, 440.12/2-3, Vol. 0225, c. 404.

8 Ibid., c. 407.

Before Vilnius was reclaimed, the Department for Polish Affairs of the Eastern Territories prepared a detailed staffing diagram for the Civil Administration,⁹ which covered matters of territorial allocations and scopes of responsibilities. Professor Ludwik Kolankowski, as General Civil Commissioner (and Director of the Department for Polish Affairs of the Eastern Territories within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the same time), was superior to district commissaries affiliated to the armies in Lithuania, Byelorussia and Ukraine. Maciej Jamontt was District Commissioner to the Command of the Polish Armed Forces' Group of General Count Stanisław Szeptycki (Wołkowysk), Antoni Wojewódzki to that of General Antoni Listowski (Brześć Litewski), and Zdzisław Rodzynkiewicz to that of General Edward Rydz-Śmigły (Kowel).¹⁰

A separate structure was devised for economic inspectors independent of the Civil Commissioner, responsible for supervising national and individual economic activities. These functions were to be performed by: Henryk Piotrowicz (in the counties of Białystok, Biała Podlaska, and Sokółka), Józef Bańkowski (in the counties of Brześć Litewski, Prużana, Kobryń, and Słonim), Paweł Tarasowicz (in the counties of Grodno and Wołkowysk), and Józef Jeziorański (in the counties of Włodzimierz, Kowel, and Łuck).¹¹

22nd April to 10th October 1919

On 22 April 1919, Józef Piłsudski addressed the population of the Borderlands with his Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which constituted the core of the ZCZW's programme. This declaration entailed a restructuring of the Administration, altering the reality in which Jerzy Osmałowski was to fulfil his duties as new Commissioner-General. The Commander-in-Chief approved the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 12th May 1919 and, on the same day, issued an order regarding the organisation of the Civil Administration in the eastern areas seized by the Polish Army.¹²

Until the standardisation, 'in the appropriate way', of a genuine administrative system in the eastern areas, civil administration was to be exercised by the

9 Ibid., c. 253–254.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., c. 252.

12 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories – Supreme Command of the Polish Army* [Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich Naczelne Dowództwo Wojska Polskiego] (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW NDWP'), Yr. I, No. 3, 14th June 1919, 1. 12 & 15.

Commissioner-General affiliated to the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces, appointed and dismissed by the Commander-in-Chief at the request of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland (Article 1). The Commissioner-General, responsible for his actions before the Supreme Command (Art. 3), was granted the right to issue legally binding interim regulations in all spheres of civil administration, except for military matters (Art. 2a). He exercised executive power and oversaw the country's administration (Art. 2c), and was tasked with nominating and supervising all judicial officers (Art. 2d). He also established expenditure and revenue estimates (Art. 2b), ordered elections for local administrative institutions (Art. 2e), and represented the Supreme Command in matters of the country's civil administration before the central authorities (Art. 2f). A special representative acted on behalf of the Commissioner-General before the Council of Ministers in Warsaw, responsible in particular for ensuring supplies for the areas under the Administration's jurisdiction (Art. 10). The Commissioner-General would perform all of his tasks via the directly subordinate Commissariat-General and the district commissioners, to whom in turn were subordinate the county and city commissioners (Arts. 4 & 5). In order to reconcile the activities of the military and civil authorities in the field of administration, the Commissioner-General appointed his representatives to the commands of all operational groups (Art. 11).¹³

The schema of 'Organisation and dependencies of authorities in war zones' found at the Main Archive in Brest, most probably developed at the Supreme Command in May 1919, leaves little doubt as to the marginal role of the General Civil Commissioner envisioned by the Supreme Command of the Polish Army.¹⁴

Although the Commissary was directly subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief, he was also directly subordinate to the Chief Quartermaster's Office. He was moreover expected to liaise with the Ministry of Military Affairs. Thereby, both the Quartermaster's Office and the Ministry of the Interior emphasised their right to influence the Commissioner-General's decisions. In addition, this interpretation stripped the Commissioner-General of exclusive authority over the structure for which he was responsible. He thus lost the benefit of sole

13 Ibid., I. 15.

14 The title descriptions: 'The Civil General Commissioner' and 'the existing Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department of MSZ [= Ministry of Foreign Affairs]' suggest that the schema was compiled in May 1919. (The document was found by Andrzej Czarniakiewicz from Grodno.) Cf. Annexes.

superior. Possibilities of appealing against his decisions were now limitless, at all possible levels.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 'existing' Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department, subordinate to the Commissioner, was obliged, under this organisational plan, to cooperate with the Fourth Quartermaster Department, which reported not only to the Chief Quartermaster's Office but also liaised with the Chief of General Staff, to whom the Chief Quartermaster's Office, in turn, was subordinate. District commissioners were forced to cooperate with the Fourth Quartermaster Department, and were directly subordinate to the commanders of GOs and DOEs. The mayors of towns in the staging areas were expected to act in agreement with the commanders of strongholds, the Government commissaries of cities – with the commandants in place, the commune heads [*wójt*s] – with the commanders of nodal staging areas, and the village heads [*sołtys*es] – with the staging area officers.

In anticipation of disputes over competencies, on 13th May 1919 – the day after the order on the organisation of the Civil Administration was issued – the Commander-in-Chief issued another order delimiting the spheres of control of the military authorities and the ZCZW.¹⁵

The exclusive competence of the Civil Administration was to include the following matters:

- a) any administrative or police matters concerning the civilian population,
- b) fiscal matters; normalisation of industry, trade and agriculture; together with this, the normalisation of the shipping traffic of goods and foods,
- c) the management of state assets and estates abandoned by their owners, and property left by the German and Bolshevik authorities with the exception of war materials, as well as settling cases involving losses of property and woodland,
- d) provisioning for the civilian population,
- e) the judiciary relating to the civilian population, save for matters falling within the competence of military courts-of-law,
- f) any requisitions and performances-in-kind,
- g) regulation of the movement of civilians (issuance of passes).¹⁶

The Commander-in-Chief also recommended that all military authorities subordinate to him avoid encroaching on the competence of civil authorities, and

15 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 3, 14th June 1919, I. 16.

16 Ibid.

ordered that “all the regulations hitherto issued by the military authority in respect of matters covered by the above order be abolished.”¹⁷

According to Piłsudski’s political opponents, his order of 12th May 1919 on the organisation of the Civil Administration in the Eastern Territories did not define strictly enough the relationships of the Commissioner-General.¹⁸

This lack of precision was exploited by the adversaries of the Chief of State’s political platform, who wished to deprive the ZCZW of the potential and autonomy with which Piłsudski wanted to empower it. Interestingly, Jerzy Osmołowski himself issued a ‘Report to the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland’ on this issue, on 15th August 1919.¹⁹ As he stated:

Under Article 1, it can be concluded that the Commissioner-General is accountable to the Council of Ministers. Practice to date has shown that he reports to the Commander-in-Chief. At the same time, Article ‘3’ clearly points to dependency on the Supreme Command, which, by virtue of this article, has been constantly interfering with the prerogatives of the Civil Administration in recent times, and thus, the duality of regulations by the Commissioner-General and the Quartermaster’s Office generates confusion and disorganisation in administering the country.²⁰

What is astonishing is that Osmołowski publicly brought this ambiguity to the attention of the Council of Ministers only four months into his office. I believe that this imprecision in the specification of the Commissioner-General’s position and responsibility was more a method than an error on the part of Józef Piłsudski. He attempted to force an effect through practice. The order of the Commander-in-Chief of 13th May 1919, separating the spheres of competence of the military authorities and the Civil Administration, came as a clear confirmation of Józef Piłsudski’s intentions.²¹

Under this order, matters which had thus far belonged to the domain of the military were included in the framework of the ZCZW. The founder of the ZCZW wished to do everything possible, within applicable law, to ensure the autonomy of the Commissioner-General. The wording of the order of 12th May 1919 was not an omission. Piłsudski could not overlook the Council of Ministers if he intended to be the leader of a democratic state. Osmołowski’s intervention was of little benefit to Piłsudski, who had been enforcing his plan with perseverance.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., Order No. 15.

19 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1669/2, c. 3–3 (verso).

20 Ibid.

21 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 3, 14th June 1919, Order No. 16.

In the legal structure as Piłsudski designed it, Osmołowski had the possibility of manoeuvring between the government and the Chief of State owing to the fact that his threefold dependency was only formal. It is somewhat strange that the *faits-accomplis* policy, apparently introduced on purpose by his own superior, was disturbed by the Commissioner-General himself.

Among the many social divisions that persisted in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, one more should not be forgotten: there were those who believed that the war had ended, and those who thought otherwise. The active military gradually lost their influence on everyday life. The exhausted Polish soldiers, whose blood had been shed to liberate this land, were witnessing an ethnically and religiously mixed population, exhausted from warfare, initiate a peaceful existence, albeit showing no overt gratefulness towards their liberators, if not distancing themselves from the latter. Worse, these soldiers were not able to make a new, desired beginning for themselves in this peaceful reality. Item (c) of the Order of 13th May, entrusting the Civil Administration with management over state assets, estates abandoned by the owners, and property left by the German and Bolshevik authorities, must have raised controversy in military circles.

War has its own rights. War booty is one form of 'reparation' for the bloodshed in battle. According to the state prosecutor's office, all property left over from the previous authorities and governments in the areas taken over by the Polish Army was treated as war booty or trophies. Therefore, these could have belonged to Russians, Austrians, Germans, Ukrainians or Bolsheviks, whether stored in warehouses or remaining in private hands.

The nature of the materials stored in warehouses varied from district to district. In fact, military materials could only be found in the District of Volhynia. In the Brześć Litewski District, huge technical resources had been seized. A report from the War Spoils Office reads:

The District of Brześć Litewski represented an area abounding in war booty ... the stronghold, protective ramparts near Brześć, ferroconcrete covers, manicle's [i.e., foodstuff] stocks in Brześć, woodland resources (Białowieża), the industrialised Pińsk region with waterborne transport lines – all of this enticed the Germans. Everything that had not been destroyed by the retreating Russian troops was exploited by the Germans. They laid out a large number of narrow-gauge lines from forests to railway stations, built numerous saw-mills in forests, set up power plants in towns and villages, built barracks in lieu of burnt-down railway buildings, built cannery factories and fruit drying facilities near-by, and finally set up camps for soldiers and prisoners of war. The Bolshevik gangs managed to loot only a part of the goods before the Polish troops arrived.²²

22 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1674/1, c. 14 (verso): Report Section G. War Booty. District of Brześć Litewski.

The Bolshevik economy had left an indelible mark on the resources of the Minsk and Vilnius Districts. In principle, the only assets available there were gained by taking over private property. Based on an agreement reached with the then ZCZW Commissioner L. Kolankowski, the Chief Quartermaster's Office established a commission in Brześć Litewski tasked with managing the war booty in its entirety, named the War Spoils Commission, on as early as 25th April 1919. This body was composed of members of the then-Department for Eastern Affairs and the Chief Quartermaster's Office for the entirety of the Eastern Territories, and was chaired by Engineer Henryk Piotrowicz in his capacity as representative of the Commissioner-General. The scope of the Commission's activities included sorting and inventorying seized items and materials.

The opinion on the military nature of a given item was to be issued by the military officers present in the Commission, while the civilian members could only appeal against these decisions to the Supreme Command. In matters not related to military assets, only representatives of the Eastern Affairs Department had the decisive say.²³

The ZCZW believed that all war-related acquisitions should be registered with the War Spoils Commission, whereas war and non-war booty should be sorted out with the participation of a joint military-and-civilian commission²⁴ – the ZCZW being the only manager of non-war material. Paying no attention to the discontent in military circles, the Commissioner-General established a Liquidation Commission in Vilnius, once the city was seized.

In his order of 13th May, Piłsudski had left a side-door open. He could not have done otherwise, though, as matters of management over military materials remained within the competence of the military authorities. This side-door was soon exploited by the military authorities. As early as on 2nd June 1919, Order No. 149 of the Supreme Command (Michał Kossakowski attributes its issuance to the Commander-in-Chief) stipulated clearly that “war booty has come under the exclusive disposal of the S[upreme] C[ommand of the] P[olish] A[rmy].” As

23 Ibid., No. 1773/7/IV, c. 47–49: Address by M. Kossakowski, Representative of the Commissioner-General, to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 14th July 1919, No. 743/E.

24 It is most likely that Colonel Niewiadomski, representing the Ministry of War, joined the Commission at the order of Piłsudski, who thereby wanted to pacify the activities of the Ministry of War and the Chief Quartermaster's Office. Unfortunately, Niewiadomski ‘in permanence’ neglected the Commission's activities, failing to join its meetings and efforts. According to H. Piotrowicz, he would stay in Warsaw and arrange projects targeted against the War Spoils Commission.

a result, only a negligible part of the seized materials and items passed under management of the Commission in Brześć Litewski; its role and importance were systematically restricted by the individual military authorities, ultimately being reduced to none.²⁵

Order No. 149 of 2nd June triggered an avalanche of overt disagreements over what exactly qualified as war booty. The clashes resulted in very tangible consequences, such as destabilisation of ‘industrial life’, which was struggling in the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Chief Quartermaster’s Office seized, among others, 25 million cigarettes, which led to the closure of the tobacco factory. When intervening, Osmołowski was lectured about the necessity of satisfying the soldiers’ needs. The same scenario occurred in other places. Various items were requisitioned: steam boilers, which rendered a factory in Uściąg inoperative, and sawmill equipment (Białowieża, Muchawiec, Stebel, and Przyborów). In Brześć Litewski, the military authorities seized the agricultural machinery repair workshops set up by the civilian authorities; and so on and so forth.

In retrospect, it is apparent that the Ministry of Military Affairs, and even more so the Chief Quartermaster’s Office, might have been dissatisfied with the emergence of a new centre of power in the area, which had until then been exclusively under military authority. After all, from the very first moments following the capture of the warehouses in Brześć Litewski by Polish troops, the Chief Quartermaster’s Office had been overseeing, on behalf of the Supreme Command, the entire local economic management and liquidation of war booty as the supreme authority. It had both civilian and military material at its disposal and was not bound by any restrictions or regulations of the local administration. The order of the Commander-in-Chief of 13th May 1919 on the delimitation of competencies and the arrangement with the General Commissariat of 25th April were therefore constantly breached.

The Chief Quartermaster’s Office clashed directly with the ZCZW in the eastern lands, striving to expand its authority at the expense of the civilian and economic authority. The position of the Quartermaster’s Office also determined the attitude of the local military authorities (Staging Area Command) towards the War Spoils Commission in Brześć Litewski.

The DOE, which in the opinion of H. Piotrowicz was “overtaken by a thirst for possession and greatness”, addressed the order of the Quartermaster General’s

25 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/IV, c. 47–49 (as in fn. 23).

Office to the War Spoils Commission, to which the latter, for formal and substantial reasons, had to respond negatively. Consequently, the Chief of Staff, “as was customary in these cases, travelled to Warsaw and returned with Order 13413–IV, which accepted the DOE’s demands rejected by the Commission regarding the vetting of the depots and the removal of all selected items from them, omitting the Commission and its military members.”²⁶

In turn, the Ministry of Military Affairs convened a special commission in Warsaw, which, according to Piotrowicz’s account, was to discuss the overthrow of the Brześć-based Commission. The entire operation was planned to be handed over only to the representatives of the military authorities, under the leadership of the Ministry of War.

As Chairman of the War Spoils Commission under the Military [*sic*] Administration [!] of the Eastern Territories, under the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, Piotrowicz predicted that the General Staff would accept such a scenario and fight to preserve its role in this agreement. In his report intended for the Commissioner-General, he wrote of the military authorities’ attempts at the scope of his authority – one that “constituted an object of irresistible temptation for most of the staging-area and staff officers ... the Quartermaster’s Office deals more with the claims of various commandant offices in Brześć and reveals a tendency towards the most non-military occupations that have nothing to do with the tasks of the General Staff, than with the order of the Commander-in-Chief on the competences of civil authority.”²⁷

Each message sent to the War Spoils Commission brought numerous regulations from the Chief Quartermaster’s Office in matters which were the exclusive competence of the Commissioner-General.²⁸

26 Ibid., No. 1669/2, c. 40–42: Report by H. Piotrowicz, Eng., to the Commissioner-General, 3rd June 1919.

27 Ibid.

28 Those enumerated by H. Piotrowicz included the cases of Ms Połozowska and Mr Merzyński, along with the Ordinance of the Supreme General Staff No. 12460-IV, of 22nd May 1919, re. the demand of the Kraków Board of the State Railways, following which a telegram was sent (omitting the protesting War Spoils Commission) to the DOE with the order to lend to a company named Azor the entire small-gauge train equipment for three years. By Order N. 13302-1V of 24th May, the Commission was ordered to take into account the claims made by Engineer Goldman of Nurzec, in a matter the Commission was not quite familiar with. As of the same date, Order N. 13302-1V imposed on the Commission the duty to issue diverse materials of the Ministry of Public Works. The most important of these steps was the aforementioned

The Chief of State was well aware of the importance of the proper use of raw materials and the inventory in the liberated territories for the land to recover from its post-war state whilst also creating new jobs. He was equally well aware that the captured land policy conducted by his political opponents (including in the Polish Army's Supreme Command), undermined all chances for the implementation of his own concept of Eastern policy.²⁹ As early as 3rd June 1919, in his report from Brześć to the Commissioner-General, Piotrowicz wrote: "The greatest obstacle to the Commission's work is the impossibly hostile attitude towards it by various local actors, mainly military. Our Commission has been boycotted and persecuted in every way since it was founded. Currently, they are waging a war against us and pursuing a fierce offensive against three offices: the Staging Area Command, the Ministry of War, and the General Staff."³⁰

Piotrowicz assured that he was able to contain the situation in Brześć Litewski by means of personal interventions, agreements and resistance. "In any case, however, we will not be able to withstand all the attacks and experiments for long if we do not put an end to this in Warsaw. The obsessive possessiveness of the insatiable ambitions of the parvenus has taken over the whole of Poland and is tearing her viscera. Everyone wants to do everything, and everyone else's job, except for that which they have been assigned."³¹

The situation was very much the same later on. One interesting point of view on the relations at that time is contained in the "Extract from press releases No. 30, prepared for the Personal Secretariat of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories."³² In summary, the War Spoils Commission, and later the War Spoils Office, were located at the Warsaw Branch under Count Kossakowski, who, instead of organising a proper exhibition branch, attempted to create a second general commissariat aspiring to autonomy. Kossakowski appointed his neighbour, Kozakowski, to the role of Head of the War Spoils Office, and the position of Chief Inspector for War Spoils was entrusted to Engineer Henryk Piotrowicz (who was devoted, let us add, to the ZCZW rather than the Polish

Order 13413-IV sent to the Commission, thoroughly altering the body's instruction and competencies, and entirely removing the Commissioner-General's power.

BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1669/2, c. 40–42.

29 Referring to Piłsudski's 'own policy (concept)', I mean the duration of the ZCZW. Stage two, enforced by the circumstances, was the one of 'Central Lithuania' (of which Piłsudski said, "It is not me who has conceived the name 'Central Lithuania').

30 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1669/2, c. 40–42 (as in fn. 26).

31 Ibid.

32 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 463–463 (verso).

Army's Chief Command). According to the rapporteur, Piotrowicz showed a total lack of administrative skills, displaying instead an unequalled ambition and a severe lack of tact in contacts with people. In effect, his relations with the military authorities in his registered office became very inflamed, which created the completely wrong impression that the military authorities were deliberately acting against the Civil Administration. "The treasury of war trophy in Brześć", we can read further on, "is a place of abuse, disorder, and lack of organisation, which offer a fertile ground for all sorts of sleights-of-hand and embezzlements, and in the entire area of the Eastern Territories, social pests and 'private' individuals try to control and appropriate the wealth torn from the hands of the occupiers, while the subordinates of Mr. Piotrowicz are being caught light-fingered."³³

Therefore, the assessment of the situation described by Piotrowicz was not disputed, but other reasons for the existing state of affairs were sought. The confusion and chaos were in fact brought about by the Chief Quartermaster's Office, which, without the knowledge or permission of the Commissioner-General, granted special powers to dispose of the contents of the depots to a representative of a local district Commissary, i.e. a plenipotentiary of an office which no longer existed.

This practice enflamed the situation effectively. The applicants were not interested in who was giving the goods, but in whether they were getting what they wanted. And they wanted quite a lot in the name of the prosperity of private enterprises started up for both their own good and that of the Polish state. They would support anyone who met their expectations.

Returning to Piotrowicz's account of June 1919: "The General Staff has devoted so much attention and energy to the company Przewóz, the companies of [Ms] Połozowska, [Mr] Goldman and many others, that it may not have sufficient time and power to carry out its primary tasks, which are so important today. In an effort as vital and grand as securing and using the assets gained with Polish blood and hunger for the needs of the State, the state of chaos is being maintained only due to the clash of factors called for the purpose of closest cooperation, rather than split and feud."³⁴

In his report of 3rd June 1919, Piotrowicz proposed taking measures to resolve the confusion. He believed that, in the absence of a new order on the competencies and organisation of the Commission, the current rules of procedure should

33 Ibid.

34 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1669/2, c. 40–42 (as in fn. 26 & 30).

be submitted to the Commander-in-Chief for approval, even if stipulating their temporary nature. It follows from this that the original Commission did not obtain the approval of the authorities concerned and therefore could not act.

According to Piotrowicz, the competent handling of liquidation matters required the immediate establishment, pursuant to the regulations mentioned above, of a Central Commission as a managerial body. Until its creation, with the cast of members as provided for in these regulations, the General Staff could place orders or instructions to the Commission in Brześć, but only in agreement with the Commissioner-General.

In parallel, the Commander-in-Chief should categorically prohibit the Chief Quartermaster's Office from accepting non-military cases for consideration and force it to refer such cases to the Commissariat-General. It can be concluded, then, that it was a practice adopted by the Central Quartermaster's Office.

Piotrowicz expected that the Commission in Brześć would receive the order (was it to come from the Commander-in-Chief?) to issue all regulations concerning the management of non-military property in accordance with the order of the Commander-in-Chief and following the instructions of the Commissioner-General only.³⁵

According to Piotrowicz, during negotiations a theoretical, tactical compromise was arrived at,³⁶ which, however, did not change the important relations – described as ‘abnormal and pathological’ – between the ZCZW and the military authorities.

In a state of permanent arbitrariness, which is confirmed by numerous examples contained in Michał Kossakowski's letter to the Council of Ministers of 14th July 1919, and in the face of the military authorities ignoring the Commission's rights, the Commissioner-General's representative concluded that the Commissioner could not be held responsible for what had been happening to the enormous wealth acquired [*sic*] through the dedication and heroism of the soldiers.

However, crucial to understanding Kossakowski's true beliefs is the last paragraph of his speech to the Council of Ministers (a letter sent to Osmałowski for information only). Kossakowski urged the Council of Ministers, which he considered to be the highest authority in the state, to issue a clear statement

35 Ibid.

36 The outcome was a contract executed with one transport company and, thereafter, the setting up of a commission as a body to exercise control over the said company. Piotrowicz described both institutions as ‘caricatural’.

that the acquired possessions were the property of the Polish state. He wanted a single military or civil authority to be responsible for their registration. He recalled a statement just given by Osmałowski on the basis of Report No. 436/SKG submitted to the Commander-in-Chief on 3rd July 1919 regarding releasing the ZCZW from the obligation to carry out the registration of war trophies and the transfer of this task to the Chief Quartermaster's Office, or to an ad-hoc office dependent on the Council of Ministers.³⁷

The established facts suggest the conclusion that Józef Piłsudski found no support or understanding in the Commissioner-General. In the matter of military booty, the ZCZW enjoyed more loyalty from Kossakowski, the Representative of the Commissioner-General in Warsaw – a man with incomparably broader horizons who understood the point of the Chief of State and who in reality did not support the political platform that constituted the programme of the institution in which he held such a high position.

Kossakowski demanded a response to his request made on 14th July 1919 during the 96th session of the Council of Ministers regarding the amendment of the Commander-in-Chief's Order of 12th May 1919. However, the matter was not included on the agenda due to the absence of a representative of the Supreme Command.³⁸

It was removed from the agenda again on 16th July 1919, in response to the statement by Colonel Stanisław Haller, Acting Chief of General Staff. He stated that in terms of the essence of the issue, many points of the project were unacceptable to the Supreme Command. In this context, the speaker pointed out that the current state of affairs enjoyed the support of Minister Stanisław Wojciechowski, which is reflected in the close cooperation in the field of war booty between military and civil authorities that had continued from the very beginning. The only problem was that “the cooperation was not properly regulated [between the ZCZW and the military authorities] and there was no strict delineation of competencies and, consequently, no division of responsibilities.”³⁹

An insufficiently clear definition of the legal position of the Commissioner-General, caused most probably by the method rather than by an oversight on the

37 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/IV, c. 47–49: Address by M. Kossakowski, Representative of the Commissioner-General, to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 14th July 1919, No. 743/E.

38 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/IV, c. 47–49 (as in fn. 37).

39 *Ibid.*, c. 87, Extract from Minutes No. 97 of the Session of the Council of Ministers, item 1.

part of Józef Piłsudski, an error by the author (I doubt whether it was Piłsudski, as Kossakowski suggests) of Order No. 149 of 2nd June 1919, the mistakes by the Commissioner-General and, finally, suggestions made by the representative of the latter in his letter to the Council of Ministers of 14th July: all of these elements were used by the opponents of the founder of the ZCZW.

The position of the Supreme Command was backed by the Council of Ministers. Article 1 of the Council's Regulation of 18th July 1919 stated that "the war spoils in the Eastern Territories and the Circuit of Białystok shall be transferred to the administration of the military authorities."⁴⁰

Under this regulation, the Commission for the management of the entire 'War Spoils' (War Spoils Commission), as well as the Liquidation Commission, were dissolved. From then on, three parallel entities had decision-making powers: (i) the military authorities administering the spoils; (ii) the Commissioner-General who exercised control over only the part of the booty which the military transferred to him and, in addition, exercised nominal control over all activities of the military and civil authorities; and, (iii) the Inter-ministerial Commission administering distribution and liquidation.

However, Article 17 reserved for the Commissioner-General the right to settle claims raised by private individuals and government institutions in cases of acquired 'trophy' property.⁴¹ The new provisions also granted him the privilege of representation. Perhaps that is why the Commissioner-General, on his own initiative, did not resign at that time. In September 1919, he did his best to defer the problem and cede it to the Chief Quartermaster's Office, leaving for himself the prerogatives granted.

On 25th July 1919, Osmołowski issued an ordinance concerning the formation of the War Spoils Office [*Urząd do Spraw Zdobyczy Wojennych*; abbr. UdSZW], pursuant to the Council of Ministers' Ordinance of 18th July 1919. The Office was established as subordinate to his Representative in Warsaw and the latter was entrusted with the task of deputising for the Polish Government as a mandatary in all functions in the ZCZW covered by the above-mentioned regulation of the Council of Ministers.⁴²

Delegating responsibility for matters of war booty to the Representative of the Commissary General, while freeing Osmołowski from the onerous problem and

40 Quoted after *Nasz Kraj*, 27th January 1920.

41 After BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/VIII, c. 70: Jerzy Osmołowski's letter to the Chief of the General Staff, 22nd June 1920.

42 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 9, 31st July 1919, III. 81.

at the same time guaranteeing all the honours and the position, deprived him of any possibility to influence decisions on the most vital matter, which constituted the foundation of the possible reconstruction of the territory entrusted to him. In truth, it demoted him to the role of puppet, one that was additionally held responsible for matters over which he had no control, merely exercising representative functions.

The aforementioned Ordinance of 18th July 1919 marked the beginning of a new phase of mutual relations between the military and civil authorities. It was also a significant step on the path to unification with the Motherland for not only the Białystok region, already incorporated into Poland, but also for the Eastern Territories. This objective was also achieved by limiting the powers of the Commissioner-General, previously so generously empowered by Piłsudski. The significance of the Inter-Ministerial Commission proved negligible; such a body appeared redundant, as its functions were performed by the Representation of (formally) the Commissioner-General.

In fact, two parallel structures were established: (i) the War Spoils Section, affiliated to the Quartermaster General's Office (the military); and, (ii) the UdSZW, affiliated to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories. In disregard for the territorial division of the ZCZW, the area of the former Grand Duchy was divided into six districts: Białystok, Brześć Litewski, Minsk, Wołkowysk, Vilnius, and Volhynia (see Table 1). What stands out the most in this list is the abundance of UdSZW warehouses in the Brześć Litewski District, located relatively close to Warsaw. The Brześć District appeared to be a treasury of all kinds of goods, attracting the attention of both supporters of the Chief of State and the fraction of society with national convictions.

The very composition of the War Spoils Office raises far-reaching doubts as to whether this entity was capable of representing the interests of the ZCZW. The seven-person core of the Office consisted of representatives of the Ministry of the Treasury, the Ministry of Military Affairs, the Quartermaster General's Office of the Polish Army, the Ministry of Railroads, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Agriculture and State Goods, and one representative of the ZCZW. The last of these could therefore always be outvoted. The position of Chairman would be assumed by the Commissioner-General or his deputy. Kossakowski, Representative of the Commissioner-General, entrusted the management of the Office to Stanisław Kozakowski. The presence of the Chief Inspector for War Spoils, Henryk Piotrowicz, Eng., could not change much in this arrangement.

It was clear that the majority of the representatives of the Polish authorities, out of loyalty to their employers, would seek to unify the Eastern Territories with Poland; in a situation where the eastern borders were not-yet defined,

Table 1. War Spoils Office districts

District	Counties	Number of depots	Estimated value (Marks)
Białystok	Białystok, Bielsk Podlaski, Sokółka	3	147,998
Brześć Litewski	Prużana, Kobryń, Pińsk, Polesian Front	28	22,019,956
Volhynia	Kowel, Włodzimierz Wołyński, Łuck, Równe, Dubno, Volhynian Front	36	17,186,502
Wołkowysk	Wołkowysk, Grodno, Slonim, Nowogródek	10	6,837,779
Vilnius	Vilnius, Oszmiana, Święciany, Lida, Wilejka (with the adjacent front)	6	1,820,000
Minsk	Minsk, Borysów, Bobrujsk, Ihumeń, Sluck, Baranowicze (with the adjacent front)	6	4,091,335
Total:		89	52,103,570

Source: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/16, c. 1–2, 2a, Annexes Nos. 1 & 2 to Report by H. Piotrowicz.

they would be guided by the interest of the lands of the once-Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, whose ties with the restored Poland could not be questioned. Perhaps some of the representatives were guided by the idea that the rapid development of ‘Poland proper’ would encourage the population of these lands to join the Motherland? Strengthening the position of Warsaw or Lesser Poland (Małopolska), even at the expense of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, stemmed from the strictest definition of Polish patriotism – on a local and not on a European scale, we should add.

From the viewpoint of the Council of Ministers, the ZCZW’s stance was defined by the ‘Memorial on the legal position of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories’ attached to the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers (which I have not been able to unearth so far).⁴³ From a legal point of view, however, this memorandum could not alter the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, making it

43 After BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/16/8, c. 1–15: An outline of the operations of the War Spoils Office affiliated to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories. Signed by Henryk Piotrowicz, Eng., 1st December 1919.

solely a demonstration of the divergent viewpoint of the army and the Council of Ministers.

The effects of the decision of the Council of Ministers of 18th July 1919 did not take long to come to fruition. From that moment on, the sole and almost exclusive recipient of wartime booty had become the Chief Quartermaster's Office, which by 30th November 1919 had shipped 3,000 wagons out of the Eastern Territories. The share ratio of the army and the ZCZW in the division of war trophies changed dramatically after the enforcement of the provisions of 18th July, having to that point equalled 52 % and 48 % for the military and the ZCZW, respectively. The corresponding figures for from 18th July to 30th November 1919 were 97.76 % and 2.5 %.⁴⁴ Considering that all the warehouses, except for those of the UdsZW's District of Volhynia, contained materials that could be used to revive the Eastern Territories, this practice had to, and did, provoke heated protests from the ZCZW. Thus began a period of conflict for the goods that were to remain in the Eastern Territories.

The defeat of the ZCZW was determined by the lack of its own executive apparatus. The gendarmerie, which they could theoretically have used, was subordinated not only to them but also to their opponents. The field gendarmerie, established to maintain public order and security, reported to the ZCZW's county commissioners only in disciplinary terms, and in military terms to the staging-area military authorities.⁴⁵ This made it independent from both superiors, which only changed in February 1920.

Much controversy arose around defining a 'war object'. Almost everything was considered to be 'war material'. On 1st August 1919, referring to Supreme Command's Order No. 149 of 3rd June 1919, Captain Kwaśniewski (replacing the Head of Section IV of the Polish Army's Chief Command) sent a letter to the General Civil Commissioner [*sic*] of the Eastern Territories as to the superior of the head of the District of State-owned Estates in Brześć, regarding construction timber from the Białowieża Primeval Forest sawmills. A low-ranking Supreme Command official instructed the Commissioner-General: "As regards

44 As at 15th November 1919, a breakdown of the distribution of war spoils between the military and the civil authorities was compiled for two districts only. In the District of Volhynia, the ratio was 4 to 1 (specifically, 16,598,554 Marks and 429,014 Marks for the military and the ZCZW, respectively; in Brześć Litewski District, 11 to 1 (2,295,534 Marks and 280,432). BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/16, c. 7. Also, see *ibid.*, No. 1773/16/8, c. 1–15 (as in fn. 43).

45 See CAW, Teki Laudańskiego, 440.12/2–3, Vol. 0225, c. 407: Order No. 3 of S[upreme] C[ommand of the] P[olish] A[rmy] of 14th March 1919, signed by Col. J. Malczewski.

the determination whether a given material is war material or not, this matter is the exclusive competency of the military authorities ... Any trophy material that the military are in need of is, to be sure, war material. ... The demand that the objects acquired in the bloody struggles by the Army be sold to the Army – at inflated prices, exceeding the private profiteering prices – is void of any legal basis.”⁴⁶

The letter from the General Staff from 24th June 1919 reads: “The monthly demand of the Lithuanian-Belarusian front amounts to 25 million soldiers’ cigarettes and 800,000 officers’ cigarettes, it being stipulated that soldiers’ cigarettes are considered part of the daily food ration.”⁴⁷ As a result, the military authorities seized 25 million cigarettes at once, preventing the ZCZW from fulfilling its agreements with the Ministry of Provisions concerning these cigarettes and leading to the closure of the Szereszewski factory in Grodno. It was probably this and other similar actions that Osmołowski wrote of in his detailed (and still also yet to be found) report on the state of the ‘War Spoils’, “where the duality of edicts yields the worst results.”⁴⁸ The ZCZW had been demanding an urgent revision of the resolution of the Council of Ministers’ resolution of 18th July 1919 since August. Unfortunately, the factors described here, which undermined the existence of the ZCZW and, in the long run, the concept of the federation, were – in the words of Henryk Piotrowicz, Chief Inspector for War Spoils – “not the result of coincidence or temporary necessities, but they should be treated as the result of particular decisions made by the military authorities.”⁴⁹

The military authorities systematically implemented their own policies in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Everything that would be of use in central Poland was shipped out of the liberated area, irrespective of the official state policy declared by the Commander-in-Chief or the needs of the areas being stripped bare. The military command of the city of Brześć Litewski caused widespread resentment, including among Poles: the military authorities seized various furniture from Brześć, such as chairs, armchairs and grand pianos, and took it to Pińsk, where a ‘Kościuszkó’ cabaret was due to open.⁵⁰

46 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/1, c. 75.

47 Ibid., No. 1669/2, c. 106–107.

48 Ibid., No. 1669/2, c. 3–3 (verso): After Osmołowski’s Report to the Council of Ministers, 15th August 1919.

49 Ibid., No. 1773/16/8, c. 1–15 (as in fn. 43 & 44).

50 Ibid., No. 1773/8, c. 38–38 (verso): Minutes of the Meeting of the Convention of County Commissioners of the District of Brześć Litewski, 17th June 1919.

Table 2. Shipments of war spoils recorded at border and control stations by Commissioner-General's inspection

Month	Brześć Litewski	Czeremcha	Białystok	Kowel	Total:
June	591	–	–	–	591
July	751	–	–	–	751
August	433	–	–	–	433
September	512	25	–	139	676
October	417	74	31	706	1,228
November (–15 th)	312	36	21	527	896

Source: Author's compilation, based on BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/16, c. 14.

The Commissary General lacked the executive power to put an end to these dealings. He meticulously registered transports of war trophies at border stations, and therefore we can confirm with certainty that the plundering policy was conducted primarily in the UdsZW's Brześć Litewski District, where transports began to be dispatched three months earlier than in other districts, and where the largest number of them were shipped. The transports peaked in October and November 1919 (see Table 2).

The Brześć Litewski district of the UdsZW was also burdened with the most severe sequestration, imposed on war booty held by private owners (see Table 3).

These findings may explain the source of the worst relations prevailing in the Brześć Litewski District of the ZCZW. The district's territory overlapped in five counties with the Brześć Litewski District of the UdsZW, additionally including the Wołkowysk and Słonim Counties of the Wołkowysk District. It should be added that the network of inspectorates and branches of the ZCZW's Conscription-and-Enlistment Department was basically the same as the network of the UdsZW districts. The data obtained during the query allow us to establish that it was the UdsZW's Brześć District, the most heavily pillaged by the military authorities, that provided the largest number of volunteers known as Byelorussians.⁵¹

51 Between 1st June and 15th November 1919, the registered volunteers totalled 13,023, of which 5,774 came from the Inspectorate of Vilnius, 2,050 from the Brześć Litewski Inspectorate, 1,546 from the Minsk Inspectorate, 1,931 from the Branch, 667 from

Table 3. Sequesters imposed on war spoils held by private persons

District	Number of sequesters	Amount total (Marks)
Minsk	85	9,538,786
Brześć Litewski	150	7,811,678
Wołkowysk	112	2,186,786
Volhynia	66	2,036,423
Białystok	89	1,642,350
Vilnius	55	665,786

Source: Author's compilation, based on BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/16, c. 9.

It is equally characteristic that, in November 1919, a shift occurred in the proportions of ethnicities among volunteers in the Brześć inspectorate. There was a marked decline in the number of Byelorussians registering. It seems that there is a causal link between the policy of the military authorities in the area concerned and the recorded practice.⁵²

However, it cannot be ignored that a new opportunity was opening up for Byelorussian volunteers. On 22nd October 1919, Piłsudski, despite the attitude of the local Poles, signed a decree on the organisation of a Byelorussian army.

The apparent reluctance of local Polish society towards the creation of Byelorussian military formations with Poland's support was deeply motivated by the Byelorussian-Polish clashes in the early spring of 1919 in Grodno. The Polish military authorities, while conducting their essentially anti-Byelorussian policy in the Brześć region of the War Spoils Office, found a faithful ally in the local Polish population, among whom anti-Byelorussian sentiments persisted, skilfully evoked during German domination. Needless to say, the policy of the Polish military authorities interfered in a fundamental way with the political line of the Commander-in-Chief.

As a result of the decision of 18th July 1919, the Council of Ministers joined the group of institutions and actors (military authorities and local Polish society) which in fact were not interested in implementing Józef Piłsudski's Eastern agenda. In the Council of Ministers' view, once an autonomous implementer

the (wound-up) Inspectorate of Kobryń-and-Pińsk, and 433 from the Białystok Inspectorate (wound up).

52 The new volunteers (not recorded before) included 43 Poles, 13 Byelorussians, 9 Jews, and 28 Ukrainians.

of the Commander-in-Chief's Eastern policy in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania lands, the Commissioner-General was meant to become the Polish Government's mandatary and administrator of a certain type of war booty, to be inventoried by the military authorities. From a legal point of view, this had not happened yet in July 1919, and yet something had changed.

As of 15th August 1919, Osmołowski should have understood the role Piłsudski had assigned to him. But did he? On that particular day, he once again forwarded his report to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, most clearly considering him to be his superior. He warned again that he could not achieve the desired result due to the discrepancies between the orders of the Supreme Command and the Quartermaster's Office, and those of the Commissary General. In order to prevent irreversible damage to Poland's interests, he asked for a strict definition of his competences and the scope of his responsibilities, as "two authorities are in power at present" and nothing good would come out of it for the Polish state.⁵³ There is no annotation on the report's copy that it was sent to the Commander-in-Chief for insight. In a normal situation, Osmołowski would have been right; but in the year 1919, the situation was far from normal.

Why did the Commissary General not defend the position he had been given by the Commander-in-Chief and Chief of State (in one), by virtue of his orders of 12th and 13th May? Why did he not stress his independence as the governor of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania?

Equally surprising were the addresses of the Commissary General to the Council of Ministers of 15th August and 15th September 1919. These were certainly not aimed at strengthening the position of the Chief of State, to whom he had indicated the problem in the report of 3rd July 1919. Michał Kossakowski did not fail to refer to this report in his speech to the Council of Ministers of 14th July 1919. If the political situation had overwhelmed anyone, they should have resigned. That did not happen. Both the Commissioner and his Representative performed their functions until the dissolution of the ZCZW, which, as we know, occurred on 9th September 1920, in a completely different political and military situation.

In conclusion, as a consequence of Osmołowski's policy exploited by his Representative in Warsaw, the Commander-in-Chief faced even more difficulties in political action. Perhaps the Commissary General's overstatement of his own value played a role? Perhaps, deep inside, he simply regarded the lands of the former Grand Duchy as the Polish Eastern Borderlands and considered his

53 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1669/2, c. 2-3.

subordination to the Council of Ministers natural?⁵⁴ Perhaps those who knew him were aware that skilful suggestions would make him a convenient tool in the great game with the Chief of State? Or, perhaps Piłsudski did not have a candidate to take his place and overestimated the effects of his own suggestions?

Regardless of Jerzy Osmołowski's character traits, the role of his office was systematically disavowed as a result of extensive interference by the military authorities in the matters of the Civilian Administration. The military authorities waged a war with potential implementers of the policy of the Commander-in-Chief. Numerous conflicts arose, as many subordinates of the Commissary General understood the essence of the ZCZW's programme and tried to implement it. Many examples can be given. The starost of Krzemieniec battled for the retention of properties from the former landed estates [*ziemstwo*], and the local civil authorities in Bobrujsk opposed (unsuccessfully) the removal of scientific and technical inventories from the local technology college. A 22nd October 1919 report by Strynkiewicz, delegate to the County of Nowogródek, complained about Engineer Rzewuski, a Supreme Command delegate, who issued orders contradicting the UdSZW's instructions and, in the opinion of the UdSZW delegate, pursued actions against the Administration of the Eastern Territories.⁵⁵

A majority of such disputes were nonetheless resolved to the disadvantage of the ZCZW. The most glaring example of the unjustified incursion of a representative of the military power into the competences of the Commissioner-General was the introduction of a state of emergency in Kowel and the suspension of the Commissioner in Słonim.⁵⁶

54 For the correspondence with W. Jeśman, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich – kadra i procesy decyzyjne', in K. Jasiewicz (ed.), *Europa nie prowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) w latach 1772–1999*, Warszawa–Londyn [Warsaw–London] 1999, pp. 40–56.

55 'List of selected conflicts and impediments in administering the War Spoils.'

56 On 1st September 1919, General S. Szeptycki, Commander of the Byelorussian Front, had Mr Hłasko, ZCZW Commissioner for the County of Słonim, suspended and put at the Commissioner-General's disposal. He imposed military administration in the county, run by Colonel Borodzicz, staging-area county commander. These steps were taken under the pretext of muggings of military troops, never before reported to the ZCZW. Szeptycki decided that the manner in which administration was practiced in the County of Słonim posed a threat to the rears of his army. The military authorities' stance was de-facto supported by the Council of Ministers. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/IV, c. 25: Letter of the President of the Council of Ministers to the Chief Command [of the] P[olish] A[rmy] on the subject

Politics occasionally involves provocation, and always includes exploiting social moods. It was easy to foresee that a change in the mood of the people subordinate to the ZCZW would occur, who, aware of the contents of the emptied warehouses on its territory,⁵⁷ proved unable to obtain any genuine aid in their reconstruction efforts. The fact that the pillaged warehouses contained building materials such as wire and sheet metal caused discontent, which is hardly surprising. A major part of these materials were classified as items indispensable to the military. This was agreed in the instructions from the Chief Quartermaster's Office to its executive bodies. When one also considers that the Board of State Properties was slow to distribute wood, it becomes clear why reconstruction in the areas subordinate to the ZCZW did not start.

An analysis of the policies of the military authorities and of the Board of State Properties revealed – already at that time with a high degree of probability – a self-defence reflex in the affected population. It was equally predictable that the aggression of these people would not turn against some unknown policymakers in Warsaw – party activists busy with the reconstruction effort in this distant city, but against the directly known local ZCZW officials, many of whom could have initially been sincere proponents of the policies of the Chief of State.

However, each action generates a reaction, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for these people to defend a cause about which they themselves had doubts. The Council of Ministers, the recipient of the Commissioner-General's and his Representative's reports, failed to address the question of the dichotomy of power in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Commander-in-Chief, on the other hand, did react: his order of 10th October 1919 concerning changes in the organisation of the Civil Administration in the eastern areas seized by the Polish Army troops was published 12 days before the signing of the decree on

of the abolishment by General Szeptycki of the civil administration in the County of Słonim and the imposition, in lieu of the same, of a military administration, dated 12th September 1919.

57 Sixty-seven transports dispatched by the War Spoils Commission between 1st June and 15th November consisted of 2,213 carriages. Some of the destinations included: Tools & Materials Park No. 2 in Jabłonna (328 railway carriages); IV Section of Railroad Construction in Kutno, Eng. Stolcman (222); Ministry of Industry and Trade (90); Ministry of Public Works, Waterways Section (105); Ministry of Public Works, Łódź Fabryczna (82); County Office of Łowicz (27); Oikos Factory in Piotrków (6); Ministry of the Reconstruction of the Country, in Kalisz, Ozdowski, Eng. (5) and in Lublin, Siekański, Eng. (1); 152 carriages were dispatched to Brześć for military construction purposes. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/16, c. 11–13.

the organisation of Byelorussian troops. It rendered the Commissioner-General accountable not to the Supreme Command, as before, but to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces.⁵⁸

The issue of war spoils was also ultimately resolved. The tardiness of the Commissariat-General in the adoption of the decision much demanded by the ZCZW may come as a surprise. The inspectors were taking long vacations. There is much to suggest that until February 1920, a stalling tactic was in place. The period of delay, from September 1919 to February 1920, simply allowed the depots to be emptied. The property in private hands remained so.

The chronology of the Commissioner-General's actions was as follows: firstly, the edict signed by the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories on 12th September 1919 on the securing, stocktaking and transferring objects specified in the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 18th July 1919 to the civil authorities by the War Spoils Office⁵⁹ was cancelled. Secondly, on 6th November 1919, pursuant to the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 18th July 1918, Osmołowski signed an edict on the takeover of state property and assets by the Department of State Property.⁶⁰ Thirdly, Commissioner-General personally issued an edict⁶¹ concordant with the ZCZW's interest, the body he managed, only as of 5th February 1920. The ZCZW bodies unconditionally took control of the state property and facilities abandoned by the occupiers with the exception of war material, whereas the contentious issues were to be settled by the Commissioner-General, again based upon the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 18th July 1919. It is a pity that the ordinance had not been published on 12th September 1919: after all, the legal basis was exactly the same.

However, it is worth noting that all these ordinances were signed by Osmołowski, who for this very reason should be blamed for the confusion and the delay. Perhaps his sluggishness was intentional? After the explicit subordination of the Commissioner-General to the Commander-in-Chief, Osmołowski was no longer able to navigate between the government and Piłsudski by exploiting the unclear definition of his dependency, but he could still attempt to stall. His previous position, however, admittedly created more favourable prospects for a personal career, including financial ones. Piłsudski's order of 10th

58 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 22, 24th October 1919, I. 225.

59 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. II, No. 19, 23rd September 1919, III. 179.

60 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. I, No. 32, 20th November 1919, III. 348.

61 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich*] (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW'), Yr. II, No. 9 (53), 9th February 1920, II. 153.

October 1919 removing the Commissioner-General from under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army concluded this stage. Thus began Piłsudski's battle to prevent the submission of the Commissioner-General to the Council of Ministers. Was the beginning of the press campaign aimed at Jerzy Osmołowski, at that very time, really just a coincidence?

After 10th October 1919

In line with the orders of the Commander-in-Chief of 10th October and 13th November, a regulation was issued by the Commissioner-General altering the official name of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories [ZCZW].⁶² The words 'Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces' were removed from both the title of the *Official Journal* issued by the ZCZW and from the names of all offices and bureaus. This was not just a cosmetic change. Piłsudski managed to preserve the autonomy of the post of Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, against the wishes of the military authorities, the local Polish society and the Council of Ministers – and, finally, contrary to the private political preferences of the Commissioner-General and of his Representative at the head of the Warsaw Branch. However, tensions kept rising despite the legal regulation of relations between the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces and the ZCZW, owing to the order of 10th October 1919.

On 15th January 1920, the Supreme Command sent a letter to the ZCZW, leaving no doubt as to its negative attitude towards Russian periodicals. It was pointed out that a Russian magazine standing on a legal-and-state position desirable from the Polish point of view was already being issued in Warsaw. The Supreme Command therefore demanded that the Administration consult every case of granting new licences for Russian periodicals, while declaring in advance the unfavourable position of the military authorities on the matter. This measure undermined the principle of the inhabitants' right to self-determination.⁶³

The Supreme Command introduced adjustments to the borders not only in contravention of the interests of the ZCZW, but without informing the Commissariat. The most drastic case that was reported to the Chief of State, the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Representative of the Commissioner-General in Warsaw, occurred in Butrymańce. The parish of

62 D.U. ZCZW NDWP, Yr. 1, No. 30, 15 November 1919 III. 325.

63 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3, c. 199: Memo from the Supreme Command [of the] P[olish] A[rmy] – General Staff, B.W. No. 2215/II to ZCZW, Warsaw, 15th January 1920.

Butrymańce, inhabited by Christians and Muslims, was seized by the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Legions. The administrative authorities established a local demarcation line eight versts away from the town. As a result, the populations of six villages came under the jurisdiction of the ZCZW, and the Polish army and gendarmerie would guard the area against assaults. The population displayed a positive attitude towards 'Polish rule'. At the beginning of 1920, the army was given new orders. The outposts were moved back to the town itself, exposing the inhabitants of the villages of Kiedańce, Guściany, Trokienniki, Płasownik, Mostołtowicze and Dwór not only to the Lithuanian authority but also to unavoidable repressions for their previous favouritism towards Poland.⁶⁴

The trust in the Polish authorities (i.e. the ZCZW) was thus damaged, not only among the population of the region, but everywhere else where news of this incomprehensible event reached. The peasants could understand the loss of a territory through combat, but they could not grasp why they should give land to the Lithuanians without military pressure. Confusion and unrest in the County of Święciany – which, incidentally, had suffered the severest damage by warfare in 1915–19, and therefore was most in need of help – was caused by the fact that Committee for the Defence of the Borderlands [*Komitet Obrony Kresów*, KOK] had provided Vilnius Land with several thousand horses sent from Warsaw, none of which was sent to this particular county. As it was established, the General Staff had imposed a ban on importing horses into Święciany County in 1919, and a KOK official called Uniechowski simply complied with it in March 1920.⁶⁵

The order of the Commander-in-Chief of 15th February 1920 made it clear that the army could only conduct requisitions for its own needs, and not for the purpose of commercial contracts.⁶⁶ Regardless of the Commander-in-Chief's order, on 20th February the command of the Polish Army's 9th Infantry Division concluded an agreement worth 1 million Marks with the Woodworkers' Industry Union in Lwów for the delivery of timber from the Postoły sawmill in the County of Mozyrz.⁶⁷ This was not an isolated case. A handwritten note from the inspection of the ZCZW's Brześć Litewski District carried out at the end

64 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3, c. 6: Letter from the Rev. S. Wierzbowski, Parson of the Parish of Butrymańce, to the Starost in Troki, 9th March 1920.

65 Ibid., No. 1667, c. 13: Weekly political report No. 1. Command of 7th Army – Dept. II, Political and Press Section, 8th April 1920.

66 After BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/VIII, c. 70: Jerzy Osmołowski's letter to the Chief of General Staff, 22nd June 1920.

67 Ibid.

of April and beginning of May 1920 is entitled 'Matters to be settled with the military authorities' and leaves not the slightest doubt as to the persistence of the trends in the army that came to light in the first six months of the ZCZW's activity. All telephones were seized in Kobryń; in Mozyrz (and other places) the army, contrary to the orders of the Commissioner-General, reclaimed churches. In Pińsk, all nails were confiscated and sent to Warsaw, rendering any reconstruction impossible, whereas the local Front Provisioning Office would also keep agricultural tools at its sole disposal; and so on, and so forth.⁶⁸

It was not until 5th May 1920 that officials could appear at the Front Inspection Stations,⁶⁹ previously under the exclusive jurisdiction of the 7th Army Command, to "receive reports on the civilians' affairs." The last part of the legal situation of the problem of war conquests was the order of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories of 26th February 1920, which contained instructions for the liquidation of the property seized by ZCZW bodies under the ordinance of 5th February.⁷⁰ The remaining recorded property was valued and auctions were recommended with a right of pre-emption stipulated for users. If an auction did not take place, offhand selling was planned. Individual transactions at amounts up to 100,000 Marks were approved by the head of the ZCZW's Economic Section; those exceeding 10,000 Marks were approved by commissions acting under the district heads.

Once again, practice prevailed over arrangements. The head of Brześć Litewski District, Władysław Jeśman, immediately after receiving the order to hand over war booty to either the Board of State Properties or the starosts, appointed the commissions by his own order in the autumn of 1919. The Ordinance of 5th February 1920 therefore resulted only in the co-opting of the treasury representatives to the existing commissions. However, the commissions were so unsuccessful in carrying out their duties that Jeśman was forced to remind the subordinate starosts of their professional and material responsibility for meeting their statutory obligations. One logical explanation for the lack of interest in auctions is the fact that the most sought-after goods would no longer be eligible for auctioning.

68 This is probably a memo from Stanisław Downarowicz, Head of the ZCZW's Administrative Section. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/8, c. 153.

69 Słobódka, Suwałki, Sejny, Sopoćkinie, Druskienniki, Daugi/Daugai, Jewje/Vievis, Szyrwinty/Širvintos, Malaty/Molėtai, Dukszty, and Kałuny.

70 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, nr 20(64), 12th March 1920, III. 534.

Leaving practice aside, it should be noted that the relations between the military authorities and the ZCZW were settled by law. Until then, the Commissioner-General at the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front Command was represented by his representative. On 22nd April 1920, the Commissioner-General of the ZCZW abolished this office, replacing it with representatives of the Commissariat-General of the ZCZW affiliated to each of the armies operating in the territory of the former Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front Command.⁷¹ Occasionally, bizarre situations occurred. The ZCZW had its own legislative department. Why, then, in May and June 1920, did the Supreme Command ask the ZCZW to appoint the local population and landowners to do the road duty on the basis of the pre-war Russian law?

The emerging structure of the ZCZW was initially meeting its task only halfway, contrary to the legislator's intentions. Creating structures responsible for supplies, health care and education requires far more than a single decision. Only requisitions and obligations are enforceable on the spot. The army operating in the war zone had to leverage requisitions and obligations in kind; this particular unpopular activity was to be managed by the ZCZW. The legislator's intention was to protect civilians, for whom it would better, at least in theory, if requisitions were ordained by the ZCZW, which would ensure that in-kind contributions were adequate not only to the needs of the troops but also to the economic capacity of the areas liberated by them. Alas, the public reacted differently, widely perceiving the ZCZW as an institution that was arriving merely to confiscate. The situation varied from each army group, district and county, to another, resulting from a variety of local factors. Overall, all the Poznań regiments were notorious, while others were remembered more fondly.

The obligation to provide transportation by horse-drawn carriage in times of a severe shortage of horses and during urgent field work, the requisitioning of fur coats in severe frosts, when the villagers had nothing to warm their homes with, and the requirement to feed the uhlans' horses with the oat destined for sowing – whether in accordance with the law or not – were extremely troublesome for residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, tired of the turmoil of war and wishing to secure whatever they still possessed. The ZCZW made an effort to conduct requisitions fairly. One example of such an approach was the system of handing over cattle to the army, introduced in 1920. Each county was required to contribute 12 % of its stock. Laborious calculations were made to determine how many horses a county was supposed to supply in a way so

71 Ibid., No. 39 (83), 31st May 1920, II. 982.

as not to overburden anyone above their economic capabilities. The County of Borysów in the District of Minsk was not expected to provide a single 'piece', but the County of Ihumeń, for a change, was to deliver 21 'pieces', Nowogródek County in Vilnius District 12, and the Counties of Lida and Oszmiana were to deliver 23 'pieces' each. In total, 25 counties (including 450 communes) of three ZCZW districts, with a total area of 156,379 sq. km and a population totalling 3,924,610, were to provide 450 horses.⁷²

However, the ZCZW officials did not always handle their duties in a reasonable manner. Occasionally, they ignorantly imposed obligations that a given area would not be able to fulfil. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that many military commanders – either due to shortages, to the ineptitude of local authorities, or in the name of their own policies – committed arbitrary acts for the sake of the cause. Essentially, the ZCZW adopted the principle of issuing written consent to military claims, which, however, took time. The document had to be written down (paper was lacking and typewriters were rare), submitted, reviewed, approved, and returned. "By causing delays in the provision of material for the army", this procedure could have heavily impacted the frontline manoeuvres and caused catastrophic consequences.⁷³ In the name of the greater good, more or less severe unscheduled requisitions were carried out and the peasants subjected to these would lose all confidence in the ZCZW officials, to whom, albeit reluctantly, they had already surrendered their share of contributions, and now they were in no way protected against violence.

Two requisitions in a short period of time is too much even in peacetime. And the greater good is always a relative matter. Many a commander committed acts of lawlessness in order to, declaratively, ensure the conditions for the implementation of the tasks for which they were responsible before the Supreme Command. Every such situation calls for a separate judgement, since any generalisation would distort the actual picture. The account of General Antoni Listowski from 22nd May 1919 is startling indeed. In the area of operation of the Podlachian [Podlasie] Group, the civilians "have seen no bread since Christmas", feeding themselves with nettles and sorrel boiled on water. With all the awareness of how tragic the situation was, "the troops who temporarily settled in those devastated villages were all the same forced to use the civil horses, as no other horses were available, thus depriving the locals of the possibility to work their

72 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1667/2/II, p. V, c. 27.

73 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/1, c. 75.

own fields.⁷⁴ Moved by the dramatic fate of the civilians from whom he was taking the horses, General Listowski infringed the competencies of the civil authorities as laid down by Piłsudski's order of 13th May 1919. Should he be to blame? He took under the military administration two civil epidemic hospitals, in Brześć Litewski and Pińsk, recommending that the patients be, as far as possible, taken care of by the military physicians.⁷⁵

Arbitrary and illegitimate requisitions could only be eliminated, in most cases, through the discipline of the military troops, which, in turn, largely depended on their commanders. From 10th October 1919 onwards, the reprehensible practices of troops in the field intensified rather than lessened. In the small town of Mir, every Sunday men wearing military uniforms stood on street corners and charged every single cart driver 3 to 5 Roubles as a town entry fee.⁷⁶ This practice caused higher prices of the products they brought whilst at the same time efficiently discouraging the peasants from travelling with their supplies into the town; this, in turn, caused provisioning problems. The gendarmerie – suspended, as it were, between the ZCZW and the military – was in no hurry to eradicate these shady dealings and, indeed, actively joined them. The transportation (by horse-drawn cart or carriage) duty was a scourge. This very performance, and requisitions overall, were payable. A peasant going with his cart to the town had to seriously take into account that he would not be back home on time: his cart would often not be released at the nearest stop; at times, it would serve at the trench line where the horse could get killed, and he might return home without the cart and the horse, holding a worthless bill in his pocket. At a time of dramatic inflation, even if the authenticity of the bill was not challenged, the carter would receive not a new horse but a fiscal equivalent that could not buy one. Deprived of his horse, or horses, he was unable to till the field. In his report, the Borysów starost mentions a village where, during one month, all the horses were away 28 days handling transports with carriages in the spring sowing season.⁷⁷

74 CAW, Teki Laudąńskiego, 440.12/2–3, c. 505–505 (verso): Letter by Gen. Listowski to the Supreme Command in Warsaw, Military mail No. 24, re. the situation of the civilian people, 22nd May 1919.

75 Ibid.

76 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 251 (verso): Dispatch No. 59. Material sent by the Conscription and Enlistment Department, Inspectorate of Minsk, from the Counties of Nowogródek and Sluck (based on an inspection tour of 31 localities), 28th October 1919.

77 Ibid., No. 1692, c. 24: Report of the Head of the District of Minsk for the entire period of [its] existence, 8th August 1919 to 10th July 1920. The relation[s] with the civil offices.

Dramatic situations in Borderland areas multiplied. Once account by an agent of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department's Minsk Inspectorate, from late October 1919, tells us that "Dąbrowski's uhlans, on 2nd June in the village of Ikrzyca, Commune of Kleck, took the horses from Palczyk [brothers], Paweł and Dawid, without paying for them – who have thus been completely ruined. The same ones also took the horses from J. Linkowiec and the Teodorowski brothers – those are better-off, though."⁷⁸

The cost – economic as well as psychological – of the arbitrary requisition of four horses without compensation must have been enormous, if such an action was borne in mind five months later. Did it not exceed the potential benefit of such a requisition? The General Staff had forbidden arbitrary requisitioning since March 1919, but there was no-one to enforce this ban in practice; it was the commanders who had the final say. The fact that the Ministry of Military Affairs ordered that coerced horse-drawn transport facilities be used only in the case of actual need after the Administration was subordinated to the Council of Ministers, is thought-provoking indeed.⁷⁹

In view of the personal policy pursued by the Commissioner-General during the first six months of its activity, i.e. until the order of 10th October 1919, the ZCZW was essentially deprived of the possibility to defend itself. The period of the struggle initiated by the military authorities enabled the consolidation of all those who shared a perspective on the state's Eastern policy different from that of Józef Piłsudski. The strategy of *faits accomplis* employed by the military authorities turned the other ethnicities and groups inhabiting these areas with the Poles – i.e., the people to whom the words of Piłsudski's Proclamation were addressed – against Poland. These sentiments considerably delayed the reactions of the Byelorussians that Piłsudski expected. There is much to suggest that they largely contributed to the downfall of Piłsudski's Eastern policy.

The formal normalisation of relations between the military authorities and the ZCZW in line with Józef Piłsudski's wishes proved to be a Pyrrhic victory for the Chief of State – one that was achieved in complete isolation and, as evidenced by the unchanged conduct of the military authorities after 10th October 1919, a problematic one. In the long run, can one govern a democratic state by oneself, in defiance of all the other state bodies? The worst of all for the policies of the state

78 Ibid., No. 1773/14, c. 251 (verso) (as in fn. 76).

79 Ibid., No. 1773/3/II, c. 106. The order was issued in response to the endeavours of the Ministry of Agriculture. The news was published by *Dziennik Miński* No. 36 of 17th June 1920.

of which he was the Chief was that, as he had cut, as Commander-in-Chief, the Gordian knot of a diarchy power structure that he had unwittingly established, he lost invaluable time in the fight against the Supreme Command – namely, the crucial summer of 1919.

The efforts and labours of the ZCZW's Conscription-and-Enlistment Department in the Districts of Vilnius, Brześć Litewski, and Minsk

The Conscription (Conscription-and-Enlistment) Department of the ZCZW was set up on 1st April 1919 under a regulation of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories,⁸⁰ with Zygmunt Zabierzowski appointed its head. His task was to carry out a canvassing campaign in the areas being liberated and to recruit volunteers for the Polish Army from the Lithuanian-Byelorussian lands of what had once been the Commonwealth of the Two Nations. The field inspectorates were subordinate, in parallel, to the chief of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department and to the district commissaries. The inspectorate's branches (County Enlistment Offices)⁸¹ reported to inspectors as well as county commissaries. This double dependency within the ZCZW generated chaos. Thus, by Order 1203/1 of the Front Command, the inspectorates were released from subordination to the commissariats.⁸²

By order of the Commissioner-General, Zabierzowski visited the Eastern Territories between 22nd and 27th July 1919 in the capacity of Delegate of the Commissariat-General at the Sejm Commission. This was evidence of his high position in the ZCZW hierarchy, and of the trust placed in him by Jerzy Osmołowski.

The scope of activity of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department employees, as outlined in late July 1919, clearly stated that all activities were grounded in the April Proclamation of the Chief of State to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and that their objective was to alleviate

80 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14/1, c. 2: Report of the ZCZW's Conscription Department, signed by Zygmunt Zabierzowski. In reality, the ordinance must have been issued by the Civil Commissioner; that is, Ludwik Kolankowski.

81 In Vilnius, Troki, Oszmiana, Święciany, Grodno, Lida, Wilejka, and Dzisna for the District of Vilnius; in Minsk, Borysów, Ihumeń, Bobrujsk, Stuck, and Nowogródek for the District of Minsk.

82 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, p. II, c. 64–70.

national antagonisms, to win the people over for the Chief of State and the Sejm, and to explain “the basic principles of Polish statehood to the inhabitants of the neglected Borderland countryside deprived of news from the world”⁸³ – without specifying what principles. The lack of a consistent reference to Piłsudski’s Proclamation of Vilnius can be explained by the conformism of people who avoided express declarations in times of political instability. The unwillingness to become involved and the concern about one’s own political career being threatened when another political party may assume power is understandable. The control over the Department’s work is likely to have been the subject of a competence dispute between the military and civil authorities. Zabierzowski was dependent on the latter.

Both parties were unanimous in recommending that the emissaries “do not philosophise too much about the future system of historical Lithuania”, and popularise the idea of a union instead. It should be stressed, however, that the word ‘union’ meant something different to each of the parties. The meaning of this word became the source of a dispute over the future political form of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. For incorporationists, the ‘union’ consisted in Lithuania-and-Poland merged into one; for federationists, it meant a blend of Lithuania and Byelorussia, followed by their association (federation) with Poland. The emissaries were also instructed to “exploit agricultural reform skilfully.” The ‘union’ with Poland would automatically extend the statute on agricultural reform adopted by the Sejm to the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The fact that the term ‘union’ was interpreted differently led to complications and turmoil.

The existence of the Department⁸⁴ was welcomed with reluctance by the Borderland Guard, which considered itself the only authority predisposed to the role of animator of social, cultural, and economic life in the Eastern Borderlands. It also had good reasons to attempt to eliminate an essentially hostile institution from its subordinate area. This might explain the mass replacement of Borderland Guard personnel in Vilnius District at the turn of 1919–1920. As part of an intelligence operation, the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department emissaries were tasked with identifying the deficiencies and shortcomings of

83 Ibid., No. 1773/14, p. I, c. 2.

84 According to Z. Zabierzowski, who compiled the Department’s liquidation report in 1920, the Department was only planning to create social associations, cultural and educational institutions, cooperatives, youth clubs, farmers’ circles, and education unions in a number of the Borderland’s small towns and villages.

social and political life and with determining the attitude of the population towards Poland, anti-Polish agitation, and the attitude towards non-Polish clergy of both denominations. They performed their duties diligently, paying attention to details whose analysis would be invaluable for a reliable assessment of the situation.⁸⁵

The emissaries took an active part in the local-government election. A three-item instruction for the agents regarding the election is a moving testimony (fortunately, we have a record of it, though unsigned). It reads as follows:

1. Politically reliable and popular people to be elected to Communal Boards, primarily small-farmer peasants. In the Orthodox communes, federalist Byelorussians associated with Poland through their relatives serving in the military or as public servants. Excessive numbers of candidacies from intelligent [i.e. intellectual/intelligentsia] spheres to be avoided.
2. The welfare of the State, rather than of individual political parties, to be borne in mind.
3. Canvassing to be carried out via the trusted men rather than in a direct fashion.⁸⁶

It stems from the above that, while formally staying apolitical, the Administration was meant to canvass for Poland in state terms. The existence of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department, somehow independent of the Army, was one more source of conflicts between the ZCZW and the Chief Command; the battle for this Department was finally won by the military, seemingly with a considerable contribution of inert conduct by Zygmunt Zabierzowski as the Department's head. By virtue of Order No. 11036/IV P of the Ministry of Military Affairs, the enlistment was transferred to the District Command of the Garrison of Grodno.⁸⁷

Admittedly, under normal conditions and with appropriate relations between the military and the civil power, such a solution would have been logical. In the territory under the ZCZW's jurisdiction, the situation was anything but regular, though. The Chief of State believed that the Polish political elite in the

85 However, it was recommended that "excessive zealotness" in the tracing of Bolshevik canvassers be restrained, for such conduct "might completely discredit the agent in the eyes of the local people, who would come to treat him as a man who has been sent to do the spying." This recommendation describes in a lapidary manner the relations prevailing at that time in the Borderlands. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, p. 11, c. 64-70.

86 *Ibid.*, c. 69 (verso).

87 *Ibid.*, c. 17: Organisation Order No. 59, given at Vilnius on 26th November 1919.

Borderlands, who aspired to Polish citizenship, would appear mature enough to accept his political method. The inhabitants of the Eastern Territories expected their requirements to be fulfilled. The destabilisation was largely owed by the military authorities, who apparently were not capable of grasping the Commander-in-Chief's purposes and remained under the influence of the national camp's propaganda instead. An analysis of the reasons behind such an attitude of the Polish Army's Supreme Command is beyond the scope of this study. It has to be stated, however, that the policy pursued by the Ministry of Military Affairs inhibited recruitment in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, since resulting from a cardinal negligence the families of the volunteers from the ZCZW-ruled areas were provided with no livelihood. The army was joined by the poorest peasants, tempted not by political slogans but by a hope to get a uniform, a pair of boots, and to be fed. Their families were left destitute given the social realities of the time, although this was not seen by those who had not yet enlisted. In the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department's archive (which survives almost complete), I have found not a single trace of an initiative aimed at securing the volunteers' families. Between April 1919 and January 1920, a total sum of 2,150,914 Marks and 22 Pfennigs were expended on the Department's works, of which the Committee for the Defence of the Borderlands paid only 150,000 Marks, ZCZW's Central Coffers contributed 1,950,506 Marks and 4 Pfennigs, and the Branch Coffers in Warsaw gave 20,000 Marks.

These sums were considerable indeed. It is regrettable that not even a small part was used to secure and protect those who were in such urgent need; namely, the families of volunteer soldiers, left unsecured and unprotected. Only the abnormality of the overall situation might explain the fact that the Commissioner-General approved the aforementioned order of the Ministry of Military Affairs of 26th November 1919 but did not put it into effect. His Organisational Order No. 1 of 1st December renamed the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department as the Conscription Department, rendering conscription inspectorates subordinate to it, with county conscription sections reporting to the latter.⁸⁸

88 The Conscription Inspectorate of Vilnius encompassed ten county inspectorates (Vilnius, Troki, Oszmiana, Święciany, Grodno, Lida, Wilejka, Dzisna, Braślów, and Nowogródek) and six county inspectorates (Brześć Litewski, Kobryń, Pińsk, Prużana, Słonim, and Wołkowysk) reporting to the Conscription Inspectorate of Brześć Litewski. The Conscription Inspectorate of Minsk had five county inspectorates (Mińsk, Borysów, Bobrujsk, Słuck, and Ihumeń). BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, p. II, c. 60–63.

However, the numbers of volunteers reaching these sections were very small after 1st December, as those who wanted to join the army would simply report at the military offices. The Conscription Department was formally wound up under an ordinance of the Commissioner-General of 25th January 1920; hence, no further dispatches were received (the most recent emissaries' dispatches available today are dated December 1919). However, it continued to function for some time: section manager [*referent*] Kazimierz Chyliński completed the liquidation of the institution he managed in this interim period only on 25th April 1920.

The emissaries sent a total of 1,120 inspection-tour and information reports. The several dozen preserved excerpts from conscription-and-enlistment agents' reports⁸⁹ tell us about the atmosphere of those days, their rhythm, anxiety, bursts of enthusiasm, and tides of discouragement. The authors of the reports were obliged to determine the area within which the data was collected, discuss the ethnic and denominational composition of the local population, and the needs of those people – in terms of reconstruction and agricultural affairs as well as sanitary and educational problems. In addition, they provided the characteristics of the outstanding residents. Instances of abuse, whether perpetrated by the military authorities, the clergy or the civil administration, often inspired by the local 'landed citizens', were described in detail.

From these dispatches, filled with the spirit of the time, an image emerges of an enormous number of local communities. Several documents included in the aforementioned collection allows one to conclude that the exchange of population in the Eastern Territories could not have generated a sense of ties between the localities and regions concerned. They were not organically associated or tied to one another, although they formed neighbourhood areas. This made all the processes taking place in those areas local. The reports of Conscription-and-Enlistment Department emissaries, juxtaposed with the extremely exhaustive dispatches of the Borderland Guard emissaries from all of the three districts under the ZCZW's jurisdiction in 1920 and with the reports by ZCZW officials, are sufficient to draw a fascinating panorama of everyday life in the former

89 The earliest dispatch excerpt that has been found refers to dispatch No. 15 from the County of Brześć Litewski, dated 2nd August 1919; the last is No. 99, for the Counties of Minsk and Sluck, dated 20th January 1920. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 500. These documents are mentioned by J. J. Milewski in his interesting article 'Stosunek wojsk polskich do ludności oraz władz cywilnych na ziemiach północno-wschodnich w latach 1919–1920', in *Wojsko – Społeczeństwo – Historia. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Mieczysławowi Wrzosekowi w sześćdziesiątą piątą rocznicę urodzin*, Białystok 1995.

Table 4. Numbers and ethnic/national identification of the volunteers enlisted by the ZCZW's Conscription-and-Enlistment Department (June to October 1919)

Ethnicity/ nationality	Inspectorate of Vilnius	Inspectorate of Brześć Litewski*	Inspectorate of Minsk	Branch of Warsaw
Poles	4 602	644	1,117	1,793
Byelorussians	874	1,115	473	8
Tatars	–	–	8	1
Lithuanians	14	–	–	–
Jews	67	180	11	11

* The statistics for the Inspectorate of Brześć Litewski for June to November 1919 is: 687 Poles, 1,128 Byelorussians, 28 Ukrainians, and 189 Jews.

Source: J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Zespół Akt „Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich” w zbiorach Biblioteki Publicznej m.st. Warszawy*, Warsaw 1999, pp. 115–116.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania territory. This, however, could be a focus of a separate study. As a herald, and in order to complement the context in which the events discussed herein were taking place, I present in the Annex (at the end of the book) an extract of the most characteristic dispatches compiled by Conscription-and-Enlistment Department agents in 1919, the period in which the Polish cause in the former Grand Duchy lands became irreversibly forfeited. A hundred of the more-than-one-thousand agents' dispatches give a thorough representation of the daily atmosphere in the field during ZCZW's time, whilst also enabling one to identify certain disturbingly agreeing opinions on the behaviours of the Polish landed gentry from the lands of the former Grand Duchy. These landowners had doubtlessly been severely affected by the policy of the Warsaw-based Ministry of the Treasury. The Department's cultural and educational activities featured as many as: 3,000 rallies held; 148,000 proclamations, appeals and posters distributed; and 500,000 weeklies, other periodicals and 55,641 books published; and 6,654 postcards sent.

The numbers and ethnic/national mix of volunteers enlisted by the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department form a *sui generis* measure of the real attitude towards Poland, which prevailed in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the autumn of 1919 (see Table 4).

The balance sheet of the recruitment campaign, signed by Zabierzowski, finally amounted to 11,493 people, although meticulous counting of data from the ZCZW team increases this sum by 1,530. In total, between 1st June and 15th November 1919, there were 13,063 volunteers, including 5,774 from

the Inspectorate of Vilnius, 2,050 from the Brześć Litewski Inspectorate, 1,546 from the Minsk inspectorate, 1,931 from the Branch in Warsaw, 662 from the Wołkowysk Inspectorate (wound up in autumn 1919), 667 from the (wound up) Kobryń-and-Pińsk Inspectorate, and 433 from the (wound up) Białystok Inspectorate.⁹⁰

This led to the belief, confirmed by a cursory reading of the reports, that the activity of the Polish gendarmerie was, to say the least, of no benefit to the Polish cause in the Eastern Territories. Without justifying any excesses, it seems that it would be necessary to enquire why the entity established with the aim of maintaining order contributed greatly to its deterioration. The gendarmes had families, too. The personnel of the gendarmerie consisted of people who were active and well-informed of the situation prevailing in their area of activity. They were best aware of the conduct of Polish 'landed citizens' contrary to the programme slogans of the April Proclamation, who, for the most part, showed not even a shadow of solidarity with other inhabitants of this land, and not a shadow of human decency towards groups of people who were lower in the social and economic hierarchy.

The religious diversity of the lands which constituted a common homeland meant that in their unchristian behaviour towards the farmhands, the landowners was supported by the ordinary Catholic clergy, who did not always display an approach to their responsibilities in the spirit of 'love for thy neighbour' – especially in dealing with the 'infidel'. In turn, the initiative of the immediate reclamation of churches, carried out in contravention of the official circulars of the General Commissariat, enjoyed the approval of the Polish landed gentry, who reflected their patriotic sentiments in this way, thus undermining the well-considered policy of the Chief of State. But above all, the citizens struggled hard for the social and economic status of their families. The tragic aspect is that everyone should have had the right to fight for their own good, but also the duty of caring for people dependent on them. And in this period, the standard of living of family members depended solely on the resourcefulness of the householders and the income from the estates. The right of evicted farmhands, deprived of a fair wage, to fight for the livelihood of their families, cannot be denied, either. The struggle was on, after all.

And inevitably, the nature of the struggle not only drove the people of the Eastern Territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to recoil from the idea of Polish statehood, but also radicalised social moods and made

90 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, p. I & II.

this community open to Bolshevik agitation, and aroused nostalgia for ‘good tsarist times,’ directing longings towards Anton Denikin. The Polish landowners’ policy was suicidal and short-sighted. It precluded the only possibility to survive; namely, coexistence with the peoples of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania on the principle “The equal with the equal, the free with the free.”

From the former Grand Duchy lands, unrealistic postulates were sent to the Polish National Committee [KNP] based in Paris. The national camp proposed that the social system be maintained in exchange for renunciation of some of the lands, which aroused bitterness among those who, due to the location of their lands, were simply rejected by the Poland-to-come, in Roman Dmowski’s concept.

The uncertainty of tomorrow made one ‘rescue for themselves’ whatever was possible to save and to evacuate oneself westwards in search for an enclave of the old order. Hence the mass and fast sell-outs, of which the Jews instantly took advantage – the only affluent ethnic group in the former Grand Duchy’s lands. Taught by several centuries’ experience, they knew how to maintain their monopoly in trade in the lands they populated; this monopoly undercut Polish action. Although many a Jew would decorate their household to celebrate the Third of May and treated Poland with sincere sympathy, economy played the first fiddle in these lands, telling the Jews to take care of their own interests, rather than that of the Polish state. The gendarmerie, *en globe*, were aware that the situation was far from stable. Immoral individuals, whom one can meet at any time and in any system, were amassing maximum resources with which to potentially survive. Morally upright individuals obeyed the lower-tier authorities, whose instructions often contradicted the platform of the Chief of State. Resourceful individuals ducked and weaved as they could, taking advantage of the vagueness of formal subordination and dependency, since – as has been mentioned – the gendarmerie was subordinate to both the civilian and military authorities, which by no means cooperated with each other.⁹¹

91 For a broader discussion, see J. Gierowska-Kałuż, ‘Organizacja służby bezpieczeństwa na ziemiach podległych Zarządowi Cywilnemu Ziem Wschodnich (luty 1919–wrzesień 1920)’, in A. Koryn and P. Łossowski (eds.), *Europa Środkowa i Wschodnia w XX wieku. Studia ofiarowane Wiesławowi Balcerakowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Warsaw–Łowicz 2004, pp. 139–72.

CHAPTER V: THE LEGISLATIVE SEJM FACING THE FUTURE OF THE LANDS UNDER THE ZCZW'S JURISDICTION

Background

Józef Piłsudski was one of the founders and architects of the Sejm and of the parliamentary system of the Second Polish Republic. The convening of the Sejm was proposed in the Proclamation of the Regency Council to the Polish nation, issued on 7th October 1918.¹ The idea was mentioned again on 7th November, in the Manifesto of the Interim People's Government of the Republic of Poland in Lublin.² Piłsudski's decree of 14th November was faithful to this idea, stressing that only a parliament can act as a legitimate source of a nation's rights.³

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- 1 “... The Sejm to be convened forthwith afterwards, and the further arrangement of the State's supreme Authority to be subjected to its decision, into the hands of which the Regency Council is supposed to pass its power, in accordance with the oath taken.” Cf. H. Janowska and T. Jędruszczak (eds.), *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów 1866–1925* [The emergence of the Second Republic of Poland. A selection of documents, 1866–1925], Warsaw 1981, doc. 204.
 - 2 “The Legislative Sejm shall be convened by us before the present year comes to an end, based on a common, regardless-of- -gender, equal, direct, secret, and proportional vote. The Electoral regulations shall be publicised within the coming days. Franchise and eligibility to stand for election shall be vested in every citizen, male and female, aged twenty-one as a minimum.” Cf. Janowska and Jędruszczak (eds.), *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej ...*, doc. 214. The manifesto called upon the Poles inhabiting the former territory of the Grand-Duchy-of-Lithuania to bring support to the Lithuanians and Byelorussians in the reconstruction of the Lithuanian state within its historical borders, and upon those living in Ukraine and Eastern Galicia to peacefully resolve the disputed matters with the Ukrainian nation. The peoples neighbouring Poland – i.e. Lithuanians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Czechs, and Slovaks – were encouraged to “co-exist concordantly with us and mutually support one another in the great project of creating an association of free and equal nations.” For a broader discussion, see *Manifest Tymczasowego Rządu Ludowego Republiki Polskiej* [Manifesto of the Interim People's Government of the Republic of Poland], ed. by J. Lewandowski, Lublin 1978, 37 ff.
 - 3 “By the nature of Poland's situation, its government remains of an interim character until the Legislative Sejm is convoked, and so this prevents the carrying-out of any

The instruction of the Chief of State to his delegates heading for Paris with a view to reaching an agreement with the Polish National Committee [KNP] outlined explicitly and transparently Piłsudski's plans and intentions. It read, among other things: "The Constituent Assembly shall bestow upon the country the first experience accomplished without the participation of strangers. Only such an Assembly can weigh against [i.e. stand up to] Bolshevism, which is nothing more than the dictatorship of a minority, and is therefore impossible wherever a legally constituted majority is in power."⁴

The Constitutional Sejm existed from 10th February 1919 to 27th November 1922, altogether 47 months in operation, a total of 342 plenary sessions held. Out of 21 lists of candidates, 348 deputies were selected who formed, altogether, ten parliamentary clubs of the unicameral Sejm, commonly known as the 'Legislative Sejm'.⁵ Before the inception of the Sejm, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, doubling as the Chief of State, exercised dictatorial authority. From the moment it was convened, its period of power began. The Legislative Sejm, essentially the Constitutional Sejm, was intended to shape the state's political/constitutional system and to adopt a constitution. "The Constituent Assembly was meant as a form of unification of the [once-partitioned] provinces into one, of evening out the differences between the provinces; the actual unification of Poland."⁶

The Sejm's attitude towards the future of the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania fluctuated considerably in 1919. It was convergent, let us note, with the Assembly's attitude towards the Eastern policy of the Chief of State. No lasting majority emerged in the Sejm. As clearly illustrated by the data presented below, there were numerous transfers between the parliamentary clubs, but sometimes agreements were reached. A breakdown prepared

deep social change, which may otherwise be adopted by the Sejm alone. Believing that only the Sejm can be the maker of the rights of the nation, I have demanded that it be convened at a possibly close date, within a few months." Cf. Janowski and Jędruszcak (eds.), *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej...*, doc. 223.

- 4 A print of Piłsudski's instruction for the delegation to Paris is kept at the Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C.; quoted after A. Ajnenkiel, *Polskie konstytucje*, Warsaw 1991, p. 208.
- 5 S. Krukowski, 'Sejm Ustawodawczy (1919–1922). Komunikat na konferencję Muzeum Sejmu Polskiego', in *Dzieje parlamentaryzmu polskiego w okresie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Materiały konferencji naukowej Warszawa 5–6 maja 1983*, Warsaw 1985, pp. 176–192. For more on the Constituent Assembly, see Andrzej Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Historia sejmu polskiego*, Warsaw 1989; A. Ajnenkiel, the editor, is the author of Vol. II, part 2, dealing with the history of the Second Republic's parliament; the Legislative Sejm is covered in chap. I (pp. 1–64).
- 6 Quoted after the Chief of State's Instruction, after Ajnenkiel, op. cit., 208.

before 13th August 1919 at the Information Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁷ (see Table 5) offers an insight into the power relations between the various factions and the direction in which the Sejm was heading from February to August 1919.

The areas abandoned by the Ober-Ost authorities in the winter of 1918 were taken over by the Red Army without conflict. As the Germans were leaving the Vilnius area, a region inhabited by a Polish majority, Polish institutions assumed power in the city, while the Lithuanian Government, faced with the Bolshevik threat, left Vilnius together with the Germans on the last German evacuation train.⁸ At the beginning of January, Vilnius was seized by the Red Army. A large portion of Poles involved in the activities of the Polish Congress in December and in the structures of Self-Defence left the city. On 27th February 1919, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania and Byelorussia was proclaimed in Vilnius. Józef Piłsudski was preparing for the reconquest of the city and on 6th April, these preparations accelerated with the objective to take Vilnius back.

Piłsudski sent to the Lida region his larger forces (up to 3,000 bayonets and sabres), against which the Soviet command proved unable to bring about an efficient counteraction on the spot. On 16th April, the Poles attacked Lida; due to strong resistance from the Bolsheviks, the town was seized only on the following day, which delayed the advance on Vilnius. The action was executed on 19th April by infantry troops under the orders of General Edward Rydz-Śmigły, transferred there by train, and the cavalry troop of Lieutenant Colonel Władysław Belina-Prażmowski. The campaign was completed on 20th April, upon the arrival of the main forces. On Easter Day 1919, Vilnius was liberated from Bolshevik hands by the Polish Army.

Meanwhile, the Legislative Sejm had already been in session in Warsaw for six weeks. Four months later, Ignacy Daszyński would describe this parliament as follows: “The meekest parliament in the world, never having the Government before its sight, where piles of interpellations produce no answers; a parliament where, to everybody’s amazement, one can go in one way or another, where the direction alters thrice within a day; a political wind; a parliament full of surprises, an inexperienced parliament, and a young one, a parliament elected by a nation

7 According to W. Michowicz, it was the Information Department; see *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, Vol. IV, Warsaw 1995, p. 15.

8 For a broader discussion, see P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 25–31.

Table 5. The Sejm: its structure and development lines

Name of Club	Number of deputies between Sejm's inception and arrival of deputies from Greater Poland and two eastern districts	Number of deputies from the arrival of deputies from Greater Poland and from Białą Podlaska and Białystok	Number of deputies until the last week of Sejm session*	Changes at the very end of session, undermining the previous balance of forces
Sejm's Popular National Association**	109	132	121	79
Popular National Union	–	–	–	63
Polish Peasants' Party [PSL] ('Wyzwolenie' group)	57	57	57	57
Polish Peasants' Party [PSL] ('Piaśt' group)	44	42	42	54
Polish Socialist Party [PPS]	35	35	35	35
National-Christian Workers' Club	–	–	30	30
Polish Peasants' Union	31	34	27	–
Constitutional Work Club	17	17	17	17
National Workers' Association	1	32	5	15
Polish Peasants' Party [PSL] (the Stapiński group)	–	12	12	12
Independent Peasant Activists	–	7	12	–
Deputies without party membership	7	12	12	12
Free Union of Jewish Deputies	10	10	10	10
German Peasants' Party	2	2	2	2
Polish Peasants' Union secessionists	–	–	–	6

Table 5. Continued

* The only change that took place in the period concerned was the secession of the Christian Democracy group from the Popular National Association [Związek Ludowo-Narodowy], the leaving of the National Workers' Association by the Greater-Poland [Wielkopolska] group of the National Workers' Party, and the formation by these groups of one club called the 'National-Christian Workers' Club'.

** As in the source quoted.

Source: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/13/1, c. 108–117: 'The Sejm. Structure and development lines', Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Information Section, typescript No. 3644'.

which for the most part has never elected a parliament – a dilettante.⁹⁹ On 11th February, during the second session of the Legislative Sejm, reverend Kazimierz Lutosławski and his companions from the People's National Union submitted an urgent motion for a law on complementing the Sejm with representatives of the Polish people of the Eastern Borderlands. The motion was addressed to the Constitutional Commission with a recommendation to present it to the Chamber for the adoption of a draft law supplementing the composition of the Legislative Sejm.¹⁰ Thereby, the motion submitted by Mr. Daszyński and his companions from the PPS Club concerning the statutory regulation by the Sejm of the representation of lands inhabited by Poles in the Western and Eastern Borderlands – which contained the clear remark, "if the population aspires to unification" – was invalidated.¹¹

10th February to 23rd May 1919

The period from 10th February to 23rd May 1919 was a time of changes relatively beneficial to the federationist camp. Initially, the deputies were expressly pro-incorporation.¹² The report of the Foreign Affairs Commission on the Polish Borderlands and on Poland's correspondence with the Soviet authorities was the subject of heated discussion.¹³ The dispute continued on 3rd April 1919 and ended with the passing of Jan Dębski's resolution: "The Sejm calls upon the Government and the Supreme Command to intensify all efforts towards the most haste

9 'Stenogramy Sejmu–Sprawozdanie stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego' [Stenographic records of the Sejm: A stenographic report of the Legislative Sejm (hereinafter, SSSU)], 102, 21st November 1919, ł. 37.

10 SSSU, 2, 11 II 1919, ł. 43–44; Sejm Paper [parliamentary printed issue] No. 5.

11 Ibid., ł. 37–38; Sejm Paper No. 2.

12 As attested by the passing of Kazimierz Lutosławski's motion on 11th February 1919.

13 SSSU, 24, 3 IV 1919, ł. 6–49.

liberation of the north-eastern provinces, with their capital of Vilnius, from the Bolshevik invasion and their durable merger with the Republic of Poland.”¹⁴ The resolution of the Polish Socialist Party [PPS]: “The Sejm recognises the importance of free expression of all the residents of Lithuania and Byelorussia on the lot and state affiliation of their country”¹⁵ was rejected. On 8th April 1919, the Constitutional Commission delivered a report regarding the parliamentary representation of the Polish people in the eastern lands, postulating that “by the end of April at the latest, in agreement with the representatives of the Polish society in Lithuania and Ruthenia, a proposal for the personal composition of the provisional parliamentary representation of the Polish people from the eastern lands, numbering 16 representatives, be submitted to the Sejm for approval.” After a heated discussion, the issue was remitted back to the Commission.¹⁶

On 29th April 1919, the motion of PSL ‘Piaśt’ to carry out the resolution of the Sejm of 4th April 1919 concerning the unification of the liberated north-eastern Polish lands with their capital, Vilnius, was passed, with the remark that the Commander-in-Chief’s Proclamation addressed to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania could not change this.¹⁷ At the same session, a motion of the Popular National Association [ZLN], Polish Peasant Union and other parties was passed, urging the Sejm to take the necessary steps to ensure that, in accordance with the resolution of 4th April 1919, the lands liberated from the Bolsheviks be reunited as one entity with the Republic of Poland.¹⁸ The motion submitted by PSL ‘Wyzwolenie’ for the Sejm to declare that Poland rejects any thought of incorporating the population of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania by means of violence was rejected.¹⁹

On 15 May 1919, two motions were declared urgent: one, proposed by Daszyński and his companions, dealt with the attitude of the Republic of Poland to the former Grand Duchy’s lands; the other, by ZLN, sought to secure the right of the inhabitants of the Polish part of Lithuania and Byelorussia to be united with the Republic of Poland and to elect members of the Legislative Sejm. Both proposals were passed on to the Foreign Affairs Commission.²⁰ Finally, on 23rd May 1919, the deputies expressed their support for the federation programme

14 SSSU, 25, 4 IV 1919, ł. 27

15 Ibid., ł. 27.

16 SSSU, 28, 8 IV 1919, ł. 20–43.

17 SSSU, 31, 29 IV 1919, ł. 55.

18 Ibid., ł. 55–56.

19 Ibid., ł. 56.

20 SSSU, 38, 15 V 1919, 1. 31, ł. 37.

by adopting, in a resolution, the principles of recognition of the right of nations to self-determination.²¹ Incidentally, it should be noted that the adoption of this principle was beneficial from the perspective of the KNP with regard to future Polish-Russian relations, while in the perception of nationalist politicians it remained in fundamental contradiction to the relations between the reborn Polish state and the young and small state of Lithuania, struggling for recognition in the international arena of its identity, created with support of the Germans. However, it should be borne in mind that Lithuanian diplomats searched for information other than official. They must have considered extremely valuable the statement by Stanisław Grabski, Chairman of the Sejm's Foreign Affairs Commission, transmitted to Jurgis Šaulys, co-founder and Secretary of the Taryba in the presence of Foreign Minister Władysław Wróblewski at the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 24th April 1919 (almost immediately after the Vilnius Proclamation), in which "the Constitutional Sejm has declared itself in favour of Vilnius belonging to Poland."²²

This move, previously discussed in the studies by Piotr Łossowski,²³ essentially disavowed the later parliamentary successes of the supporters of Piłsudski's Eastern policy. As regards the atmosphere of the Sejm session, the following words of Jan Dąbski of PSL 'Piast' are exquisitely characteristic: "Poland has been following Wilson's slogans throughout its history! Even back when wild buffalos still roamed freely on the Washingtonian steppes, Poland already had its Horodło, its Lublin [referring to the union treaties with Lithuania], Poland had its own associations of nations, its own federations and the freedom of peoples, equal rights and human freedom, up to their degraded form of the *liberum veto*."²⁴ Applauded by the Right and the Centre, Dąbski formulated the definition

21 SSSU, 41, 23 V 1919, ł. 83; Sejm Paper No. 531.

22 "Since Szaulis [i.e. Šaulys] has been ordered by his government to bargain with the Government of Poland, under the condition that Vilnius be recognised by our Government as the capital city of an independent Lithuania, Mr Grabski's response has hindered further negotiations. Szaulis had a courier sent to Kaunas to carry Grabski's reply and request for further guidance." 'Letter from Waclaw [surname unknown] to [recipient unknown], written in Warsaw, at 33 Marszałkowska St., on 25th April 1919. Incipit: My Beloved Friend! ... Shaking your hand cordially. Waclaw?' Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., General Adjutancy of the Chief Command, Group IIB: Ukraine–Russia–Poland, Vol. 16, 711/5 [material presently owned by Dorota Cisowskiej-Hydzyk].

23 Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*, 38–9,

24 SSSU, 41, 23 V 1919, ł. 35.

of Poland's mission in the East: "To bring other peoples' Western ideals of culture, work, creativity, civilisation, an active factor in life; moreover, the extermination of laziness, inertia, and the lack of mental creativity."²⁵ In a word, it was a counter-programme to what Bolshevism offered. Why did this programme, so open to people rather than to representatives of individual nations, provoke such a half-hearted reception among the Socialists? Characteristically, this rhetoric aroused mocking shouts only on the PPS benches, and Daszyński referred to Polish politics as 'maladroit imperialism'. The criticism coming from this veteran among the Galician socialists and frequent visitor to the Congresses of the International, editor of the socialist magazine *Naprzód*, a deputy from Vienna and former Prime Minister of the Lublin-based Government, known for enchanting audiences with a convincing voice – as far as being called a hypnotist on stage – was much more significant than a statement by anyone else from the group of 348 deputies. This consummate politician would attract the attention of the entire room, where everybody followed every firm gesture of his refined hand with bated breath, every curvature of his narrow lips, every instantaneous look. In recognition of his unquestionable merits, each of his opinions could have been uncritically accepted by less experienced deputies, even from groups other than the PPS.

At the same session, another Socialist deputy, the young Mieczysław Niedziałkowski (son of Konrad Niedziałkowski from Vilnius, let us note) retracted his statement from two months earlier, in which he expressed his conviction that the fate of the lands of the former Duchy should be decided by the assemblies of Vilnius, Kaunas/Kowno, and Minsk. Recognising the superiority of representative democracy over direct democracy, he acknowledged this time that Poland "has been given an immeasurable treasure." The change in his attitude was prompted by the observation that the then-current situation in Lithuania appeared as a state of general rising by the population in favour of Poland.²⁶ Filled with a sense of responsibility for what was going on in the east of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, he presented his observations of the shocking images of the gendarmerie's arbitrary behaviour in the area under the ZCZW's jurisdiction.

25 Ibid., t. 36.

26 Ibid., t. 36–45.

23rd May 1919 to 25th November 1919

The second stage of the evolution of the Legislative Sejm's attitude towards the issue of the Eastern Territories (of the former Commonwealth), lasting from 23rd May to 25th November 1919, was marked by a gradual, albeit radical, change in the Sejm's views towards the question of the future of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This process was undoubtedly noted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which remained under the influence of the Chief of State – as evidenced by the tabular breakdown quoted above. The ZLN launched an offensive aimed at abolishing the adopted policy towards Lithuania. On 1st July, a proposal was made to elect representatives of the Lands of Grodno and Vilnius in order for them to express an opinion on their future affiliation in state-law terms.²⁷ As he was discussing the problem of the Suwałki region during the session of 9th July 1919, the Reverend Stanisław Szczęsnowicz remarked with pain that when the Suwałki populace was fighting in defence of Lithuania, “the Lithuanian troops were entering [the town of] Suwałki to the rhythm of German music.”²⁸

On 19th July 1919, at the 73rd session of the Legislative Sejm, a motion was made to repeal the government tax on livestock in the Borderlands. The request was referred back to the Treasury-and-Budget Commission, with no response whatsoever from parliament.²⁹ After all, can a tax be waived in a land that had been granted self-determination less than two months before? It must be admitted that the lack of reaction to the ZLN's request of 19th July could have been a planned move by the national camp or could have resulted from the dilletantism of the deputies. Daszyński, present at the session, raised no protest. In politics, which is an art of camouflage and manipulation, not only what is said, and how it is said, matters: always and everywhere, it is no less important who is saying things and what he or she intends to achieve. It is unacceptable to believe that supporting the ZLN was a deliberate intention of the PPS leader. Was it merely a coincidence, or a carefully directed fact that it was not until 30th and 31st July 1919, at the last sessions of the Sejm before the summer recess, with almost empty parliamentary benches and in the face of changes in the balance of power that would rebuild the existing image of the Sejm (see Table 5), that the debate on the Constitutional Commission's report on the elections in Lithuania was held? Who attended the session at the time, apart from the speakers Kazimierz

27 SSSU, 60, 1 VII 1919, ł. 77; Sejm Print 746.

28 SSSU, 66, 9 VII 1919, ł. 47.

29 SSSU, 73, 19 VII, ł. 73.

Lutosławski, Mieczysław Niedziałkowski, Witold Kamieniecki, Isaak Grünbaum, and Fr. Stanisław Maciejewicz?³⁰ Why was a matter already determined by the parliamentary resolution of 23rd May brought back to light? As a result, the motion of the constitutional majority, with amendments “on the indigenous population” proposed by Maciejewicz, and with the option of partial election, was accepted. The same session saw the establishment of the Sejm Commission for the examination of administrative relations in the East. It was tantamount to an attempt at subordinating the ZCZW to the Polish governmental agencies, whereas Piłsudski had intended to keep the Administration outside parliamentary and governmental control.³¹

Let us clearly state that ruining the homogeneous reputation of the Polish Constituent Assembly, and of the Chief of State himself, was a step contrary to the interests of Poland, and was otherwise in the interests of both Germany and Russia. The words of Jan Zamorski, a deputy from Eastern Galicia and representative of the ZLN, turned out to be prophetic: “I must admit that to me, both of these countries are equally dangerous, and I could not choose whichever of these two enemies is better or worse, which is why I would also like to urge the Polish nation to always look with caution both to the East and to the West, so that it always guards both borders. I would desire the Polish nation’s awareness not to be desensitised with a fake presumption that the enemy had ceased being a threat in one of the places.”³² This thought was supplemented by Ludwik Waszkiewicz of

30 SSSU, 81, 30th July 1919, ł. 82; SSSU, 82, 31st July 1919, Daily Agenda, item 8, ł. 102–128; SSSU, 83, 1st August 1919, ł. 6–13.

31 Until the system in the eastern areas could be settled ‘in the appropriate way’, the civil administration was supposed to be exercised by the Commissioner-General affiliated to the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces, to be appointed and dismissed by the Commander-in-Chief. The Commissioner-General, responsible for his actions before the Supreme Command, was bestowed with the right to issue temporary legislative ordinances across the fields of civil administration, save for military affairs. The Commissioner wielded executive power and supervised the country’s administration, appointed all the judiciary officials and oversaw them, determined estimates of expenditure and revenue, ordained elections for local-government institutions, and represented the Supreme Command before the central authorities in the matters of civil administration. See ‘Order of the Supreme Commander of the Polish Army re. civil administration in the eastern areas seized by the Polish troops. Warsaw, 13th May 1919’, *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories – the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces* (Warsaw), Yr. I, No. 3, 14th June 1919. Section I, item 16.

32 SSSU, 82, 31st July 1919, ł. 16.

the National Workers' Association: "Lenin and Trotsky, and the German socialist government on the other side, are combating Poland with the same hatred and fierceness as all the Nicholases and Alexanders [the tsars of Russia], Fredericks and Wilhelms [the emperors of Prussia/Germany] of yesteryear."³³

In terms of international relations, the trade-off between Poland and Lithuania was in the interests of both countries involved. Otherwise, the aggravation and festering of Polish-Lithuanian relations was in the interests of both Germany and Russia. The Germans sought to build a German-Lithuanian-Russian bridge in the Baltic region – not only to expand political influence but, above all, to extend the range of the German economy. The Russians, both the Whites and the Soviets, wanted to pursue their agenda of grand imperialism. In driving towards the West,³⁴ they preferred to oppose two conflicting countries rather than a united Commonwealth of the Two Nations.

At this point it is worth recalling one important remark by Professor Juliusz Bardach.³⁵ Poland's Constitution of March 1921 uses the word 'nation' [*naród*] in line with the Constitution of 3rd of May 1791. As we know, in the late eighteenth century this term was synonymous with the sum of all citizens, and this is how many deputies of the Legislative Sejm understood this noun. But for the activists of the national camp, it conveys the concept of an ethnic nation. They perceived the Polish nation in a different way to the other nations of the previous Poland-Lithuania.³⁶ This unspecified meaning of 'nation' proved in 1919 to be an additional complication – far more than just an interpretative subtlety. The majority of the members of the Legislative Sejm considered Vilnius Land, which leaned so strongly towards Poland, to be a part of the latter. In October 1919,

33 SSSU, 82, 31st July 1919, ł. 25.

34 'Drive' or 'urge' for/towards something/somewhere has so far been used in literature solely in relation to the East direction (the German *Drang nach Osten*). As it seems, it would be recommended to consider whether the Russian strife for "supporting a Bolshevik-style revolution in Germany and creating there a springboard to the worldwide revolution" was perhaps, essentially, a modern tool of Russian imperialism meant to bring about the objective proper; that is, extending control as far westwards as possible.

35 A contribution to the 'Discussion', in *Dzieje parlamentaryzmu ...*

36 In his paper on the Vilnius cause, Piłsudski remarked: "I would have never even supposed that there are such among Poles who are holding this exquisite tradition [of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations] in contempt, who are afraid of this past; that the *Pogoń* [emblem], which has always been featured on our standards, has become a disgusting sign [for some]." "The paper delivered by Marshal Piłsudski in Vilnius, Part XIX, *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. V, 1999, fasc. 4 (20), 784.

M. Niedziałkowski, in his request for (the ultimately adopted) urgency of the motion regarding the appointment of a parliamentary commission to examine the condition of prisons and concentration camps (at the time, the latter name denoted a camp situated at the concentric point of a given area), without specifying their location, used numerous examples of prisons located within the ZCZW area as examples.³⁷ – the same ZCZW which Józef Piłsudski had placed outside the jurisdiction of the Sejm. By means of this speech, Niedziałkowski achieved his direct goal: he managed to submit to the commission a matter of importance to his party, which boosted PPS's ratings among voters. At this time of defining and fine-tuning the future shape of the country's political system, each party sought the strongest possible public support. After all, the work on a constitution for Poland was still in progress. The stronger a party's public support, the stronger the guarantee of influence on the final shape of the law.

Niedziałkowski also postulated that a dedicated Sejm Commission (parallel to the Government Commission for Jewish Affairs) be sent to the Borderlands. The 11 members of this body were to include five deputies, one delegate of the ZCZW, and a delegate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.³⁸ Given that Niedziałkowski, who had studied law, was not only the co-author of the electoral law but also of the Constitution, he was not therefore a man to be accused of legal incompetence. As can be seen from the above, the PPS deputy sought in practice to limit the independence of the ZCZW and to emphasise the annexation trend in relation to the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania through the inclusion of a delegate of the Interior Ministry in the Commission. Such a stance contributed to another disavowal of the parliamentary resolution of 23rd May, which, together with the Vilnius Proclamation, constituted the core of the ZCZW programme.³⁹

Witold Kamieniecki, a ZLN deputy known in the previous period for his federationist views, was a rather poor choice as a defender of the Administration. He may have described the ZCZW as 'a momentous Polish experiment' (on 7th November), but at the same time he remarked that the Administration was composed of local people, 'dilettanti animated by goodwill'.⁴⁰ While criticising the

37 SSSU, 91, 24th October 1919, ł. 18–20.

38 SSSU, 96, 7th November 1919, ł. 14–15.

39 Such declaration was made by J. Osmołowski during his talk with Mr Rdułtowski, Commissioner. For a record of the talk, see BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section [Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów], ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 98, ms [date and place unspecified].

40 SSSU, 96, 7th November 1919, ł. 17–28.

deficiencies in the ZCZW's organisation, he emphasised that in political terms, this institution epitomised an immeasurable simplicity and straightforwardness. He perceived the impatience of the local population as an issue, and during his stay in the Borderlands he met with all but the Lithuanians. According to the speaker, the fervent anticipation of a merger with Poland led to "a certain fanaticism, and particularism. These people considered the plebiscite a superfluous endeavour, and this deep conviction prevented them from properly evaluating of the regulations of the authorities," in a situation when: "behind-the-scenes, under the guise of Lithuania, we saw someone else's hand there, which must have caused us the greatest anxiety – a foreign soldier on the other side of the cordon." In conclusion, he expressed the conviction that "combining the two points of view, annexationist and federalist, is not that infeasible."⁴¹

In a fiery speech delivered on 12th November, Ignacy Paderewski, the world-famous pianist and composer, enchanting crowds of music lovers in both hemispheres, who for the previous nine months had been the Prime Minister, in the name of a patriotic duty to his homeland, stated: "No change has occurred in our feelings for Lithuania. We do not condemn the entire Lithuanian people for the atrocities recently committed in the Suwałki region by criminal individuals. We know by whose hand this happened [*voices from the audience*: 'German!', 'Prussian!']. We love our sister [Lithuania] just as before, we wish her all the good luck and happiness most warmly. Nevertheless, as long as some foreign troops, for which no-one wants to take responsibility, remain in Lithuania; as long as some strange, mysterious and confusing relationship between these troops and the current Lithuanian government persists, no agreement will be possible whatsoever."⁴²

On 14th November, an urgent motion by Kamieniecki and his companions from the ZLN Club on the introduction of the Polish Mark [*marka polska*] as the official currency in the areas subordinate to the ZCZW was sent to the Budget Commission.⁴³ This was yet another departure of the Legislative Sejm from its own resolution of 23rd May on the right of nations to self-determination. That the motion was substantively legitimate is a deferent thing. A report by the Constitutional Commission on the urgent motion submitted by the ZLN regarding the election of representatives of the Eastern Borderlands was expected at one of the subsequent meetings.⁴⁴ Importantly, it was preceded by a

41 Ibid.

42 SSSU, 97, 12th November 1919, l. 10–32.

43 SSSU, 99, 14th November 1919, l. 76.

44 Sejm Papers. Paper No. 1126.

debate on the eight-hour workday, from Monday to Saturday. The Jewish deputies considered this law, otherwise an undoubted achievement of the Legislative Sejm, to be part of a greater plan aimed at weakening the competitive strength of Jewish trade and crafts. It is important that this modern, progressive act was to apply to all the lands of the Republic of Poland. Mr Grünbaum, representing the Jewish population in the Sejm, announced that his nation, in addition to defending themselves on socio-political grounds, was ready for a “defence on primary, ordinary, everyday, trivial grounds, and it may be that the trivial defence will prove the most effective, but the most harmful to the State.” He recalled that: “Characteristically enough, the Sejm had debated on plebiscites in the Cieszyn region, about the Czechs, the Germans, never mentioning the Eastern Borderlands, or Eastern Galicia, for that matter.”⁴⁵ Until then, Jewish deputies in the Legislative Sejm had supported the idea of a federation of the Eastern Borderlands with the Republic of Poland. They fell silent when the Sejm passed a resolution whose benefit for this particular ethnic group of the former Commonwealth could have been questionable. Fr. Kazimierz Lutosławski was the Constitutional Commission’s rapporteur for the election of the Eastern Borderlands’ representatives. Mieczysław Niedziałkowski unsuccessfully attempted to postpone the deliberations of the small group of deputies present, and it seems that the late hour may not have been his only concern in doing so.⁴⁶

The session was preceded by a discussion on the report by Ignacy Paderewski, who collaborated with Piłsudski in the implementation of the federation concept.⁴⁷ In the course of the dispute, Władysław Seyda, a fervent representative of the national movement, accused the Government of implementing pro-German policies. He believed that the Government’s efforts were decisively influenced by factors “whose entire past can be traced to the Central States.”⁴⁸ It was, of course, a clear allusion to the legionary past of Józef Piłsudski. Seyda’s speech also resulted from his misunderstanding of the essentials of German politics in the years 1917–1919 in the territories east of Poznań, not to mention the misunderstanding of the counter-proposal for the German agenda, planned by Piłsudski, who was emotionally connected with Lithuania. Seyda spun illusionary daydreams of peace with a new, law-abiding Russia, in friendship with Poland. Russia, to his mind, would be ready to give up Grodno, Vilnius, and Minsk, in

45 SSSU, 101, 20th November 1919, f. 33–36.

46 SSSU, 102, 21st Nov 1919, f. 56.

47 SSSU, 97, 12th Nov 1919, f. 10–32.

48 SSSU, 102, 21st Nov 1919, f. 25–26.

exchange for Polish protection against the flood of Germans. He appealed from the Sejm rostrum not to thwart the efforts of Russian politicians and parties.⁴⁹

PPS leader Ignacy Daszyński, who was associated in a peculiar way with the Central States – through his career with the Austrian Parliament, did not defend Piłsudski or attack the views of his predecessor. Instead, he began to undermine the authority of the incumbent Prime Minister, to whom he referred in a stingy manner: “He is a great star, but not a great minister. He has a great deal of merit to his credit, but not in the field of governing or ruling.” His opinion on the Government cooperating with Piłsudski was no better: “The Government is neither ruled nor ruling. The Government is a nothing.”⁵⁰ Greatly impressed by this stream of eloquence, the Chamber did not notice that, once again, the resolution adopted on 23rd May was being breached. After all, Daszyński must have understood that the problem of Poland lay in its location between Germany and Russia. He could not have failed to notice the infatuation of the deputies, who would wish Poland to border on Russia all the way from Estonia to the Black Sea. Despite this awareness, he attacked the Government, which stood for the implementation of the federationist concept, in line with Józef Piłsudski’s policy.⁵¹

On 21st November, Fr. Lutosławski, rapporteur of the Constitutional Commission, requested from the Sejm rostrum that the election in the Borderlands be ordered within 90 days, arguing: “Should this election replace the plebiscite, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland will know how to proceed in order to bring the unification of the Republic to an end.” The ZLN refrained from using the phrase “the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania”, considering it “a discredited tool of international intrigue amongst the enemies of Poland, seeking to destroy the unity of the Republic.”⁵² The subject of the future of what was once the Grand Duchy debated at the Sejm was straying further from Piłsudski’s policy line. It was already too late when the Socialists came round and tried to save the situation on 21st November 1919. Their motion, which questioned the position of the Borderlands within Poland, failed; it only aggravated the already-heated atmosphere, as the deputies believed that the PPS represented not so much the interest of the Polish state as a different “policy of creating political forces hostile to Poland out of Borderland tribes.” Emotions took over. The attempt to stall

49 Ibid., I. 32.

50 Ibid., I. 33, I. 42.

51 Ibid., I. 50–52.

52 Ibid., I. 52–61. The 22nd April 1919 Proclamation was addressed to the residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

failed as well. Despite the late hour and almost empty benches, the deputies did not want to postpone the vote, whose outcome, unfavourable to the concept of the federation, seemed inevitable. Mieczysław Niedziałkowski eventually managed to postpone the 'sentence', by means of criticising the autonomy and impartiality of the ZCZW.⁵³

Legislative Sejm's session of 25th November 1919

The 103rd session of the Legislative Sejm was dominated by a discussion on the resolution of the majority of the Constitutional Commission, which came up as a consequence of the discussion on the urgent motion proposed by ZLN deputies for the election of Eastern Borderlands representatives.⁵⁴ The supporters of the national camp, prevailing among the Constitutional Commission members, prepared a resolution aimed at ordaining the election, but only in those eastern regions that had already explicitly requested it. The election was to be nothing more than a formal statement of willingness to merge with Poland, and since it was to be ordained by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, and thus the funding would come from the Polish state coffers, it was logical for many deputies that it was not the Commander-in-Chief, but the Marshal of the Sejm, that ought to be notified of the results.⁵⁵

Such a solution not only discriminated the populaces of Poles living in diasporas in the areas dominated by other nationalities, not only did it prevent the normal functioning of the young Lithuanian state and call into question the establishment of Byelorussian statehood, but it also dangerously moved Russian borders closer to the Polish state. The threat of this perspective provoked some deputies to attempt to overthrow the political line proposed by the majority of the Constitutional Commission members. Deputy Poniatowski stated from the rostrum that the voting in the lands of the entire [*sic*] former Grand Duchy should be 'similar in form' [*sic*] to a plebiscite; it would thereby not be the announced plebiscite/act of self-determination. Moreover, he proposed halving the number of inhabitants delegating one deputy from 50,000 to 25,000, which within the geographical reality of the Borderlands offered a slightly better chance that those elected would not be completely unknown to their voters. In addition, he called for abstaining from specifying any concrete date, in order to leave the ZCZW a free hand.

53 SSSU, 102, 21st November 1919, l. 56–57.

54 Sejm Paper No. 1176: Legislative Sejm.

55 SSSU, 103, 25th November 1919, l. 7–8: Address by Deputy Stefan Sokółowski.

This did not convince the audience. The following speaker, Kazimierz Czapiński, did not succeed either; in his commentary on the parliamentary speeches of Marian Seyda, he drew attention to many contradictions in the Eastern agenda of the right wing:

Imagining that some law-abiding Russia will come over and recognise Minsk, Grodno, and Vilnius as Polish possessions is politically contradictory ... this concept is a new axis of Poland's resolute policy in the East that is to consist in co-operation with Denikin, which means that relying on the fictional assumption that Denikin would give back Minsk to Poland can only lead to one of the two: either we support Denikin, and he will take Grodno, Minsk, and Vilnius, etc., off us; or, it may lead to a petrification of the war, for once we have ended the war against the Bolsheviks, we will have to wage a war against Denikin, precisely for these possessions. This policy is indigested and contradictory.⁵⁶

However, those assembled preferred to listen with applause to the arguments of Deputy Józef Zagórski, member of the parliamentary commission sojourning in the Borderlands, regarding the historical right of Poland to the Eastern Territories: "Already the Four-Year Sejm has bound them to the Crown for all time. Every lump of this soil is soaked with our sweat and our blood, as we have fought 16 wars with Muscovy for the eastern borders and twice broke into an insurrection, and this is why we have the right to this land; it belongs to us."⁵⁷ The mutually exclusive demands of the representatives of Lithuanians and Byelorussians who were in contact with Poles did not help to convince the deputies of the need to cede the decisions on the region's future to 'national individualities'. "Fr. Tumas and Mr Aleksiuik demanded, respectively, that Vilnius be the capital of Lithuania and of Byelorussia. We wanted to come into contact with the common Lithuanian or Byelorussian people, but they are absent. There is just a handful of agitators, a staff without an army."⁵⁸

The inspiration for Fr. Stanisław Maciejewicz in disavowing the term 'Byelorussian nation' was the representative of the Russian Government and former Governor-General of Vilna, who had officially admitted that this nation was Polonised in the western part of the area it inhabited. Despite the facts, Maciejewicz rejected the idea that the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were inhabited by different 'nations' (ethnicities), thus additionally marginalising the importance of the Jews in these areas. Upon hearing such

56 Ibid., l. 12–13: Address by Deputy Kazimierz Czapiński.

57 Ibid., l. 17–18: Address by Deputy Józef Zagórski.

58 Ibid., l. 18: Address by Deputy Józef Zagórski.

convergent opinions from three members of the Sejm commission (Maciejewicz, Zagórski, and Piotrowski), who had been sent there by the deputies unfamiliar with the issues of the Borderlands, the assembly considered their competences sufficient to decide on the Polish policy regarding the East.

The atmosphere in the Chamber⁵⁹ was not conducive to an attentive reception of the speech by Samuel Hirszhorn, a self-declared Jew by nationality and creed, and a Pole by political criteria, who penetratingly touched upon several extremely important aspects. The plebiscite, he claimed, should not be about defining the legal and political relationship with the Republic of Poland, but about the future of the land on which the respondents live. Given that a war was raging and these people did not know – as they could not know – what their options were, postponing the date of the plebiscite was a logical thing: “The population of the Borderlands is not composed of angels or prophets knowing what will happen, but of different peoples who are mostly uninformed.”⁶⁰ The Jewish deputy also proposed a way out of the situation: “If we carried out an agricultural reform here, but not on paper, only in reality, then who knows if we would not encourage the Byelorussian or Lithuanian peasants to vote for Poland?”⁶¹ Hirszhorn considered the plebiscite ‘arranged’ by the Constitutional Commission scandalous. He pointed to the fact that if a similar mechanism to that which the Poles wanted to apply in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania had been applied to the Poles in Upper Silesia, in Cieszyn Silesia, or even in Eastern Galicia, it would obviously provoke their rightful indignation. No one, he emphasised, had consulted any Byelorussian council, Jewish organisation, or Lithuanian organisation whatsoever; “Now is the time to pass in this paramount matter from an anthem to a simple novel.”⁶²

The last two speakers, Mieczysław Niedziałkowski and Fr. Lutosławski, returned to legal and political issues and clashed about the establishment of a constituent assembly in the Eastern Territories. The Socialists’ representative declared that his club aspired to bring about genuine self-determination in the Eastern Territories. “From the two forms of self-determination that exist, namely the plebiscite and the local constituent assembly, we most deliberately and most openly prefer the local constituent assembly ... the future prepares

59 Taking the opportunity, Hirszhorn spoke up for the Jewish people in all the issues touched upon.

60 SSSU, 103, 25 XI 1919, f. 28: Address by Deputy Samuel Hirszhorn.

61 Ibid., f. 31: Address by Deputy Samuel Hirszhorn.

62 Ibid., f. 26–27: Address by Deputy Samuel Hirszhorn.

for Poland, and for all peoples living in the Eastern Territories, a shared destiny and a common struggle against imperialism, be it Russian or German. But the question of how these peoples should be willing to define their mutual relations and what kind of ties, more or less close, they should wish to have with Poland, should be left to them and only to them, for we want to look into the future a little further than just the coming weeks or months.”⁶³ Fr. Lutosławski objected vigorously, “In no respect nor in any sense can we consider the representation that we will bring to life there a constituent assembly of the Eastern Territories. It is meant to be the closest possible alternative way to define officially the will of the people, and nothing more.”⁶⁴ Only one of the five amendments proposed by the minorities was adopted in the vote; the exact definition of the territory subjected to the vote was the responsibility of the Civil Commissioner for the Eastern Territories.⁶⁵

The session of the Sejm of 25th November 1919 determined the new position of the Legislative Sejm in relation to the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In order to humiliate Józef Piłsudski, a demand was made, and accepted, to notify not the Chief of State, on whose behalf the administration was managed and the Polish troops remained in the area, but instead the Marshal of the Legislative Sejm, for submission to the Chamber.⁶⁶

After 25th November 1919

The last episode was the debate held on 19th December on the proposals of the Administrative Commission concerning the administration of the Eastern Lands, combined with a discussion on the report of the parliamentary commission delegated to examine the condition of the administration in the Eastern Borderlands.⁶⁷ The rapporteur, Deputy Jan Dębski, former Legionnaire and member of the Polish Military Organisation, now a representative of PSL ‘Wyzwolenie’ at the Legislative Sejm, accused the ‘hastily organised’ ZCZW of ignoring the interests of the Polish population, all the while going too far with its care for other ethnic groups. He put forward a proposal to carry out a selection among the clerical staff who had ‘overly uncritically’ been appointed for duty. This postulate could be convincing to the supporters of both the incorporation

63 Ibid., I. 33–34: Address by Deputy Mieczysław Niedziałkowski.

64 Ibid., I. 36: Address by Deputy Kazimierz Lutosławski.

65 Ibid., I. 38.

66 Ibid., I. 25–32.

67 Sejm Papers. Paper No. 1222.

and of the federation. However, the speaker authoritatively stated that the intention of the law was only to exclude the people concerned from under the competence of the military authorities, and that the ZCZW was, from the Sejm's standpoint, nothing more than a ministry. The rapporteur deputy advocated the uniformity of the provisioning function across the territory of the Republic of Poland, which clearly disadvantaged the Eastern Territories whose needs were incomparably greater than those of Warsaw, for instance.⁶⁸ The basic demands of the Administrative Commission specified here were aimed at changing the status of the ZCZW. An institution remaining outside the control of anyone but Józef Piłsudski, it would be degraded to the role of one of the several ministries subordinate to the Sejm.

That pursuing politics calls for money is a truism. Fr. Lutosławski touched upon this topic from the rostrum, finding with astonishment that the State Treasury budget foresaw not a penny for the ZCZW's objectives within the first half-year. Considerable sums allotted to the Administration exceeded the confines of the general mobilisation amounts of the Ministry of Military Affairs (along with the amounts earmarked for reactivation of the University of Vilnius).⁶⁹ Clearly enough, Piłsudski had well thought over this state of affairs: he wanted to prevent any discussion on the sums allocated to the pursuance of politics in the East, and prevent being told, with use of targeted subsidies, what he might or might not be doing. Lutosławski also denounced the Chief of State's policies in Byelorussia. The following accusation was thrown from the speaker's stand: we give money "to our enemies for Byelorussian schools, under the protective wings of our irresponsible managements ... if the lands of the Duchy were to be treated as foreign, they should also be administered differently." This statement should be treated as a great compliment to those of the ZCZW staff who loyally implemented Piłsudski's ideals.⁷⁰ Lutosławski refuted the ZCZW's postulate of subordinating the field gendarmerie, which was very often used to sabotage the Administration's instructions and orders in the Eastern Borderlands.⁷¹

68 SSSU, 106, 19th December 1919, ł. 25–32.

69 Ibid., ł. 32–37.

70 For more on ZCZW personnel/staffing, see Chapter III.

71 Numerous instances of reprehensive behaviour by the gendarmerie can be found (amidst valuable pieces of information) in despatches by Borderland Guard instructors as well as Conscription-and-Enlistment Department agents from all the districts. See *Raporty Straży Kresowej 1919–1920. Ziemi Północno-Wschodnich opisanie*, with an introduction, selected and ed. by J. Gierowska-Kałuża, series 'O Niepodległą i granice' VII, Warszawa–Pułtusk 2011, p. 1173.

At the end of his speech from the Sejm stand, Fr. Lutosławski expressed his conviction that the same laws should apply in the Duchy as in the other areas of the country.⁷²

Particular importance was placed on labour legislation, which the Jews saw as a violation of their economic status, as well as the land allotment/subdivision law. The prospect of land allotment prompted, in turn, the Borderland Guard, so far committed to the idea of federation, to change sides.⁷³ According to Kazimierz Świtalski, the Commander (i.e. Piłsudski), on his part, was most affected by the statement in Lutosławski's resolution whereby the Sejm reserved the right to issue laws to be in force in the Eastern Territories. Prime Minister Leopold Skulski informed his club that Lutosławski's parliamentary resolution would not be implemented.⁷⁴

At the 19th December session, PPS came to ZLN's defence again. Mieczysław Niedziałkowski denounced the unclear mutual relations between the military and civilian authorities. He publicly complained that "the tangle of most diverse interests and contradictory edicts regarding war booty is an orogeny from which a wide stream of confiscated objects is flowing onto Warsaw's speculative market."⁷⁵ And he was right. The relations were unhealthy indeed, and Jerzy Osmałowski was de facto incapacitated by the Supreme Command in the matter of war spoils – but not by the Commander-in-Chief himself. However, this changes little in the fact that PPS, impersonated by M. Niedziałkowski, lending support to the litany of ZLN's complaints against the ZCZW torpedoed the Sejm's acceptance for the policy of the Commander-in-Chief in the East. From that moment on, Piłsudski, co-founder and architect of the Polish parliament, would remain in permanent conflict with the Constituent Assembly over the most important issue – the problem of security of the State of which he was the Chief. This issue affected the deepest feelings of Piłsudski the man.⁷⁶ He loved Lithuania, and loved his city of Vilnius, remaining faithful to this love until his very last day. Any solution to the Eastern issue other than the federation would put this ardent patriot, Lithuanian,

72 SSSU, 106, 19th December 1919, ł. 32–37.

73 For a broader discussion, see J. Gierowska-Kałuż, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999.

74 K. Świtalski, *Diariusz 1919–1935*, ed. by A. Garlicki and R. Świętek, Warsaw 1992, p. 40, note dated 20th December 1919: Lithuania.

75 SSSU, 106, 19th December 1919, ł. 37–44.

76 'The paper delivered by Józef Piłsudski on 24th August 1923 in Vilnius', in J. Gierowska-Kałuż, 'Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego', *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. V, 1999, fasc. 4 (20), 767–91.

heir of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Chief of the Polish State in one, in a lost and tragic position. The Legislative Sejm's stance with respect to the mutual relations between Poland and Lithuania – adverse to his political line, whose evolution from 23rd May to 19th December 1919 appeared meticulously and carefully directed by ZLN, in close contact with KNP in Paris, with the unconscious cooperation of Socialist deputies and the silence of representatives of the Jewish community – influenced his life and conduct. The standpoint prevailing at the Sejm in late 1919 annihilated the idea – optimal, yet too far-sighted for his contemporaries – which the Chief of State wanted to implement on the basis of democracy, the rule of law, and the principles of loyalty, which he always followed. However, his fight had not quite reached its end.

In January 1920, the deputies considered another change in their position. Piłsudski had introduced the Ukrainian trump card into the discussion.⁷⁷ He ordered an agricultural reform in the areas subject to the ZCZW oversight.⁷⁸ However, the sovereignty of his tool, the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands, only lasted until 31st May 1920.⁷⁹ It seems that it was around then that he moved on from being the creator of the parliamentary system to becoming, implicitly and deep inside, its critic. He had paid too high a price for the functioning of the parliamentary system in the country of which he was the Chief of State.

The signing by the Lithuanians, on 12th July 1920, of an alliance with Russia, Poland's greatest enemy, and their subsequent participation in the military

77 See Z. Karpus, W. Rezmer and E. Wiszka (eds.), *Polska i Ukraina. Sojusz 1920 roku i jego następstwa*, Toruń 1997, p. 558.

78 “By Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces to the Commissioner-General (*Official Journal* No. 42/86 of 4th June 1920), [the area] was to be rearranged in its agricultural relations, in the spirit of law and justice and in line with the agricultural reform's principles as adopted by the Legislative Sejm of the Republic of Poland as of 10th July 1919. A number of experts have pronounced their opinions on the parliamentary bills compiled, which, before put into execution, were supposed to obtain approval from the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1666, c. 156–157 (22 – section ‘Reports on the operations of the Agricultural Department of the former ZCZW’).

79 Order of the Commander-in-Chief of 29th May 1920 ‘to Mr Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories regarding the responsibility of the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories to the Government of the Republic of Poland’ subordinated the office to the Council of Ministers as from 1st June 1920 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories*, Yr. II, No. 42, 29th May 1920, item 1057.

attacks by the Bolsheviks, marked the turning point in Polish-Lithuanian relations. On 24th September 1920, Wincenty Witos raged about this fact from the Sejm's podium.⁸⁰ Piotr Łossowski, an expert in Polish-Lithuanian relations, devoted many pages of his book on the Polish-Lithuanian conflict to discussing the armed struggle of the Lithuanians.⁸¹ Lithuania violated neutrality in the Polish-Soviet war, and was an active and armed party against Poland.⁸² The Lithuanians were fixed on their only goal, which was the formation of their own state, and took no account whatsoever of any of the existing geopolitical limitations. They wrongly saw Poland as their main, if not sole, threat. From Warsaw's point of view, not only did the Lithuanians endanger Poland's security with their attitude, they also exposed themselves to an enormous peril. In view of what happened on 12th July 1920, it is also necessary to understand the position of the Polish people.

Today, we are absolutely certain that Soviet Russia, despite the peace treaty and the declarations of friendship, was preparing an upheaval in Lithuania in

80 "It must be stated deplorably that, despite the most sincere striving for a harmonious coexistence with Lithuania, with which we have been bound by centuries of historical twines and shared sufferings under bondage, we have failed to arrive at an agreement with the Lithuanian Government. In a situation that was the most critical for us, united with the Bolsheviks, they aggressively came out against us, and seized the part of the country which had definitely been allotted to the Polish State. When our army, having smashed the Soviet armies, launched a pursuit for them, the Lithuanians broke neutrality by letting the Bolshevik soldiers pass through their territory, as well as the armaments and ammunition from Prussia, and by seizing our territory they triggered an armed conflict between Poland and Lithuania. In our will to avoid a war, we entered into peace arrangements with the Lithuanians. Yet, not only did the Lithuanians continue to stay on our territory but also, through further – despite their denials – co-operation with the Bolshevik army, they were hindering our warfare operations against it. The arrangements made at Kalwaria led to no outcome. Incapable of attaining an agreement with Lithuania directly, the Government submitted a complaint before the League of Nations. The representative of Poland in the League of Nations explicitly emphasised our striving for concord. Unfortunately, this attempt eventually failed as well. With all the measures exhausted, which would otherwise have enabled our army to unrestrainedly operate against the Bolshevik army, which with a great powerfulness is preparing for a new attack against Poland, we have gone out of our way to avoid an armed clash with Lithuania." SSSU, 167, 24th September 1920, ł. 11–20, quote: ł. 15.

81 Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*, 116–28 ff.

82 *Bitwa warszawska 13–28 VIII 1920. Dokumenty operacyjne*, Part I: (13–17 VIII), ed. by Marek Tarczyński (and his team), Warsaw 1995, p. 562.

the event of victory over Poland. The Soviet rule was not introduced in Kaunas only because of the situation on the front near Warsaw, which even Lithuanian researchers admit.⁸³ Indeed, only the unfavourable turn of events on the front lines caused them to relinquish power in Vilnius to the Lithuanians. The Lithuanians, demonstrating their reluctance towards everything Polish, eagerly began to strengthen their authority in the city, ignoring in their governmental declaration of the upcoming plebiscite in the occupied areas.

Since 1st August 1920, the Union for the Defence of the Homeland, led by Marian Zyndram-Kościałkowski, who was strongly tied to Vilnius, was operating behind the back of the Soviet army. Rather than in Lithuanian publications, elements of the federalist programme could be found in *Gazeta Krajowa*, which had been issued since 2nd September 1920 by Ludwik Abramowicz. The Polish-speaking streets were anticipating the Polish army with tension. It has to be stressed that Józef Piłsudski rejected the strategically optimal plan of flooding Lithuanian territory with Polish troops, as proposed by General Tadeusz Rozwadowski.⁸⁴ Instead, he opted for a variant more favourable to the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania; that is, crossing the Niemen/Nemunas River and pushing the Bolsheviks towards Minsk from the left flank. To Piłsudski's mind, it was high time for his 'errant brethren' to appreciate this gesture, yet another one, of the Polish Army's Supreme Commander.

The obligations imposed on Prime Minister Władysław Grabski by the Entente powers at the Spa conference⁸⁵ excluded the possibility of simply seizing Vilnius,

83 This topic is covered by Algis Kasperavicius, 'Kształtowanie się litewskich struktur państwowych', in A. Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Rok 1918. Odrodzona Polska w nowej Europie*, Warsaw 1999, pp. 133–134.

84 "The Commander has mentioned his talk with Rozwadowski, who was evidently pushing forth the [idea of] resolute action against the Lithuanians. He remarked to him that the Commander's background is other than Eastern Galicia and this is why he had no inclination to initiate fratricidal struggle." K. Switalski, op. cit., 60, note dated 8th October 1919: Lithuania.

85 From 5th to 16th July 1920, a conference was held in Spa, Belgium, between the Supreme War Council and Germany. The Polish Prime Minister, given the threat Poland faced from the Bolshevik offensive, accepted Britain's proposal of intermediation in armistice talks with Soviet Russia, with the underlying acceptance of the Curzon Line and consent for altering the border with Lithuania; the other preconditions included the depletion of Poland's rights in Gdańsk and recognition of the Polish-Czech frontier along the Olza River. On 17th July, the Soviet Government rejected the British offer. For more on Britain's policy towards Poland in the course of the Polish-Soviet campaign, see Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska – Wielka Brytania w latach 1919–1923*, Warsaw 1975, pp. 167–298.

then a Polish-Jewish city inhabited by merely 2 % of Lithuanians. The Legislative Sejm was well aware of this. After the victorious Battle of Warsaw, Polish society as well as the Sejm, from the right to the left, were unanimous. This unanimity appealed to Piłsudski: the Chief of State did not abandon his federalist concept, the only one that could bring comfort to him, a child bred by both Lithuania and Poland. However, this story belongs to a different study.⁸⁶

86 For a broader discussion, see P. Łossowski, 'Wydarzenia militarne i polityczne wojny 1920 r. na ziemiach północno-wschodnich', in A. Koryn, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1920 roku. Przebieg walk i tło międzynarodowe*, Warsaw 1991, pp. 41–58; his, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*; Z. Krajewski, *Geneza i dzieje wewnętrzne Litwy Środkowej (1920–1922)*, Lublin 1996; and, J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Litwa Środkowa (1920–1922)', in *Zeszyt Naukowy – Muzeum Wojska w Białymstoku. Ośrodek Badań Historii Wojskowej*, Fasc. 18 (2005), pp. 117–125.

CHAPTER VI: RECEPTION OF THE PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED IN THE PROCLAMATION TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE FORMER GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

22nd April to 25th November 1919

After a brief moment of consternation, the slogans of the Proclamation cemented the Polish opposition. Their fellow residents of other ethnicities closely observed daily practice in the post-Proclamation reality, which was understandable behaviour. The Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania was seen by the Vilnian Poles as a mistake. To what self-determination, and to which 'residents', did it refer, when Vilnius had only those Poles who, for various reasons, had not left for Warsaw, and Jews who remained in their own cliquish milieu? These were the same Jews who, according to numerous accounts,¹ were shooting from the windows at the Polish troops entering the city in April 1919, which resulted in riots and deaths. The fact that almost all of the representatives of the small Vilnian community of Lithuanians had fled to Kaunas alongside the Germans at the end of December 1918 and beginning of January 1919 wholly discredited them in the eyes of Polish society. Byelorussians were perceived in the city as a group of political émigrés rather than a community.

In the social landscape of Vilnius Land, the Karaites were seen as an element of exoticism rather than politics. The Russians were either supporters of the old tsarist regime or Bolsheviks. The Germans remaining in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were not treated as peers, because in autumn 1917, at the time when they were in power, they engaged, in cooperation with the Lithuanians and later on the Russians, in political activities that were clearly directed against the Poles.

The Vilnian Poles could not find anyone with whom they could co-decide on the fate of their land. Józef Piłsudski had predicted the resistance of the

1 Biblioteka Publiczna m.st. Warszawy (dalej BPW), Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 390–391: Memo demanding that the Israelite Religious Community be held to forensic account, dated 22nd May 1919, received at the Secretariat on 26th May.

Borderland Poles and their dislike of the slogans of the Proclamation. “For [it is] an effort understandably doomed to [i.e., consisting in] a hard laborious work of changing views and concepts; putting new views and thoughts into human hearts.”² It was still too early in April 1919 to assess properly the chances of convincing the sceptics of the idea of a plebiscite, which was contrary to their political views. The ‘Address from the Polish landed gentry from the Lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania’ sent to Piłsudski after his appeal left the Chief of State with mixed feelings. According to the authors of the address, the ‘Beloved Leader’ should tear the rest of the Polish Borderlands from the enemy’s hands; his bravery, political tact and wisdom were to lead the Poles from the former Grand Duchy to unification with Poland.³

Józef Piłsudski must have been saddened by the reaction of his compatriots. He strongly believed that Polish Borderland communities would understand what was in their best interests with time. Unfortunately, this prediction was not correct. Vilnius was not as passive as Piłsudski suggested to Paderewski in a letter dated 4th May 1919, its most characteristic sentence being: “Since I found Vilnius abandoned by Poles, Lithuanians and Byelorussians alike, I could not create anything broader [i.e., more constant] after the seizure of the city. During the negotiations with them, the Poles, the Lithuanians and the Byelorussians alike were looking towards Warsaw, Kaunas, or Minsk respectively, to where the majority of their representatives had emigrated.”⁴

It seems that Piłsudski wrote this letter with a specific purpose in mind. His opinion of Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the recipient, was rather critical: he considered him a man of “rather weak character, prone to influence, and I am very much concerned that diverse imperialistic rogues can oftentimes drive him away from the thorny path that leads to the federalistic paradise.”⁵ Paderewski sojourned in Paris from 4th April 1919 as a Polish delegate to the peace conference, alongside

2 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, ‘Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego wygłoszony 24 sierpnia 1923 roku w Wilnie, cz. XV’, *Przegląd Wschodni*. Vol. V, 1999, Fasc. 4 (20), 767–91; also, cf. letter to Leon Wasilewski of 8th April 1919, excerpts from which related to “opening the door to a policy connected to Lithuania and Byelorussia with a revolver in the pocket” are too often quoted by various authors, without adding the final fragment claiming the need to “break the resistance and the imperialistic vices of the beloved compatriots.” J. Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe* [complete works], Vol. V, Warsaw 1937 (reprinted 1990), pp. 73–74.

3 LMAB, Fond 161–60, lap. 1: Incipit ‘Most Reverend and Most Dignified Commander!’

4 J. Piłsudski, *Pisma ...*, Vol. V, 81.

5 *Ibid.*, 73–74: J. Piłsudski’s letter to Leon Wasilewski, 8th April 1919.

Roman Dmowski. From Piłsudski's standpoint, it was better for Paderewski to believe that Vilnius was immersed in idleness, rather than critical of the federation programme. From 4th April 1919 on, Paderewski stayed in Paris as the Poland's other delegate, in addition to Roman Dmowski, to the Peace Conference.

The duration of the organisation of the ZCZW structures, the personal change in the position of Commissioner-General and the fact that the Commissariat was seated in Warsaw until October 1919, were probably unfavourable to the proper transfer of information from the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania to Belweder palace. Meanwhile, a lot was going on there, which was mentioned in the first chapter of this book. Jan Jurkiewicz deals with these issues in a dedicated section of his study on Polish political trends in Lithuania and Byelorussia.⁶ The Polish Convention, which took place on 28th and 29th December 1918, brought to life a Provisional Polish National Council in Lithuania (representing the Polish communities from the Governorates [*Guberniyas*] of Vilnius and Kaunas), which replaced the Polish Committee, dissolved on 4th January 1919, whose activists had left for Warsaw in the face of the Bolsheviks' seizure of Vilnius. It also involved activists from the previously formed Polish Councils of the Byelorussian governorates. In Minsk, the Polish Main Council functioned alongside the Polish Council, the former later uncovered and broken up, headed by Bishop Zygmunt Łoziński. Between early December 1918 and April 1919, the Polish Supreme Council was active in Grodno; it subsequently moved its headquarters to Warsaw. In the territory of the former Grand Duchy, county National Councils were set up: in Lida, Szczuczyn, and Słonim. There was also the Polish Military Organisation, along with many other structures in each of the districts. However, describing the achievements and conduct of individual activists from numerous Polish organisations is outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, since I have come across naming alternations in the documents which mainly concern the relations between the Polish National Councils and the ZCZW, driven by the interest of the other scholars I follow the rule of quoting the names literally, as it stands in the record concerned. The divergences in nomenclature, even if limited to the order of words or a missing segment, may serve as a hint in determining, for instance, which faction within the Polish Supreme Council in Grodno led to this, and not another, occurrence.

6 J. Jurkiewicz, *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi w latach 1905–1922*, Poznań 1983, pp. 165–221, Chap. III: 'Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi XI 1918–I 1922' [The development of Polish political thought in Lithuania and Byelorussia, November 1918 to January 1922], sections 1–5.

In April 1919, after the Proclamation was announced, problematic support for Piłsudski came from the Branch of the Supreme Command of the Polish Military Organisation [POW] in Lithuania and Byelorussia. In a proclamation, it appealed that “foundations be cast under the solid edifice of the unification of Lithuania and Byelorussia with the Republic of Poland upon the old and eternally-just principles: the free with the free, the equal with the equal.”⁷ A week after Józef Piłsudski published his Proclamation to the residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Executive Department of the Provisional National Council in Lithuania and the “members of the Provisional National Council gathered in Vilnius”; together with the Poland National Councils of White Ruthenia and Livonia, adopted a resolution regarding a proclamation on the occasion of the Third of May. Duplicates were sent to the Sejm and to the Polish Government.⁸ Not only was the ZCZW thus ignored but also its founder himself – the Chief of State. The ZCZW’s position could not have been more severely depreciated in the perception of the inefficiently teased Lithuanians⁹ and the ignored Byelorussians. The controversy between the Sejm and the Borderland Poles over the recognition of the representation of Poles from the Eastern territories in the Legislative Sejm of the Republic of Poland in Warsaw may have played a certain role in the issuance of the Provisional National Council’s appeal. The fact that two appeals with the same name had been published within one week in Vilnius, while being wildly different in terms of the programme, must have caused confusion and ambiguity. The plebiscite was mentioned only in the first one.

The Executive Department and the unspecified “members of the Provisional National Council” praised the “liberator of the eastern lands, our army and its Commander-in-Chief” (whose name was not mentioned), but the Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy was passed over, with an extensive quote of the resolution of the Legislative Sejm dated 4th April 1919, advocating the unification of the “north-eastern provinces with their capital-city of Vilnius with the Polish Republic.”¹⁰ The General Assembly of the Polish Borderlands Union,

7 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/VII, c. 83.

8 Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybės Archyvas (hereinafter, LCVA), Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 8: Resolution of the Delegation of Polish National Councils in Lithuania and Byelorussia of 3rd May 1919.

9 “We believe that the fraternal Lithuanian nation, building its political future on its own land, will also refrain from severing the junctions linking it with Poland.” LCVA, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 8: Resolution of the Delegation of Polish National Councils in Lithuania and Byelorussia of 3rd May 1919.

10 Ibid.

held in Vilnius on 16th May 1919, did not respond to Piłsudski's Proclamation nor to the Proclamation of the Executive Department of the Provisional National Council in Lithuania.¹¹ This conduct can be seen as a tactic of evasion and biding time. The session was dominated, instead, by a discussion of the accusation made by the Israelite religious community of Vilnius against the Polish army and nation, which was published in the press.¹² A letter to the ZCZW on this particular matter was signed by members of the Presidium of the Polish Borderlands' Association in Vilnius: Stanisław Łopacewicz, Florentyn Kudracki, and Edmund Piłsudski.¹³

On 20th June 1919, a Convention of Instructors of the Borderland Guard of the District of Vilnius took place in Vilnius. The structure, personnel and achievements of the Borderland Guard in the territories subordinate to the ZCZW are dealt with in focused studies, which have not exhausted the subject. The Borderland Guard has been covered by Zofia Tomczonek¹⁴ and Tadeusz Nowacki.¹⁵ The decision to extend the activities of the Borderland Guard to the Eastern Territories was made before Vilnius was liberated from the Bolsheviks. The first arrangements regarding the cooperation of the newly appointed Administration with the Borderland Guard's Board were probably sealed on 1st March 1919, at a reporting meeting of the Guard's Organisational Department. This assumption is supported by the presence of not only a member of the Central Board, the 28-year-old Zdzisław Lechnicki,¹⁶ but also of representatives

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- 11 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/I, c. 390–391.
 - 12 In the unanimous opinion of the attendees, who had eye-witnessed the developments taking place in Vilnius on 19th, 20th, and 21st April 1919, the protest of the Israelite Community of Vilnius, printed in issue 16 of *Nasz Kraj*, incited not only the local Christians but also the Lithuanians and Byelorussians against those who had liberated Vilnius from the Bolshevik invasion.
 - 13 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 390–391: Memo demanding that the Israelite Community be held accountable before a court of law, 22nd May 1919; received at the Secretariat on 26th May.
 - 14 Z. Tomczonek, 'Ruch ludowy w latach 1919–1922'; in eadem, *Ruch ludowy na kresach północno-wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Białystok 1996, pp. 43–60.
 - 15 T. Nowacki, *Zet w walce o niepodległość i budowę państwa. Szkice i wspomnienia*, ed. by T. Nowacki, Warsaw 1996, pp. 130–143.
 - 16 Z. Lechnicki could not join the Legions because of his disability, but he actively supported POW in the vicinity of his farmstead in Święcica near Chełm. In 1915 he was elected member of the Lublin-based National Department Committee, which was an organisation of Polish Sociality Party [PPS], Polish Peasant Party 'Liberation' [PSL "Wyzwolenie"], etc., activists. Nineteen-eighteen saw him join the organisation of the Borderland Guard, in response to ZET authorities, and became the Guard's

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Eastern Territories, the Military Command, and the Borderland Defence Committee.¹⁷ It was ten days after the appointment of the Civil Commissioner at the Board of the Eastern Borderlands. The following districts of the Borderland Guard were established in the Eastern Territories: Białystok, Brześć Litewski-and-Polesia, Grodno, Minsk-and-Lithuania, Podolia, Vilnius, and Volhynia. From June 1919 until the end of the Administration's activity, the Borderland Guard received, via the ZCZW, government funds for its operations.¹⁸

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- director. For a broader discussion, see the biographical note of Z. Lechnicki, by Zofia Dłużewska-Kańska, in the Polish Biographical Dictionary [PSB], fasc. 71, pp. 599–600.
- 17 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1690, c. 190–193: Minutes of the reporting meeting of the Borderland Guard's Organisational Department, 1st March 1919.
- 18 As it seems, the basics regarding the scope of works were established on 14th March 1919 by the annual Convention of the Borderland Guard held in Lublin. The Guard began its operations with the organisation of the District of Chełm; this was followed by the formation of the Districts of Białystok, Brześć Litewski-and-Polesia, Grodno, Minsk-and-Lithuania, Podolia, Vilnius, and Volhynia. This structure was not identical with the administrative organisation of the ZCZW, introduced as progress in the warfront went on. The budgets and reports on their execution, submitted to the Commissioner-General for acceptance in 1919, took account of the District of Kaunas as well. It is remarkable that Borderland Guard emissaries did not initially take up their activity in the County of Grodno, considering the social labour performed by the Military Command satisfactory enough [*sic*].

In Warsaw, a central office called the Executive Committee was active. Stefan Plewiński was replaced as Chairman of the Managing Council by Zdzisław Lechnicki, who in parallel chaired the Executive Committee. In the concerned period of the Borderland Guard's activity, which overlaps with that of the ZCZW, Tadeusz Jankowski was in office as Secretary-General. The Organisational Department (headed by Juliusz Narkowicz and his deputy Teofil Szopa) was tasked with managing the work of the Borderland Guard in the Eastern Territories. The emissaries were expected to establish contacts and win the Orthodox Byelorussian as well as Lithuanian common people over to the cause of the union with Poland, in the areas both seized and not seized by the Polish Army. It was planned to cover the territory with a network of national organisations on the communal and county levels, which would collaborate in the area of intelligence with the Polish Army. These organisations would be tasked with supporting all the Polish cultural and economic associations. In addition, the emissaries were due to support the initiative of setting up Polish schools and canvass in favour of joining the Polish Army. For a broader discussion, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999, p. 128; T. W. Nowacki, *ZET w walce o niepodległość i budowę państwa. Szkice i*

Teofil Szopa, who chaired the session of 20th June 1919, addressed the attending Guard instructors from Vilnius District: “Considering the proclamation of the Commander-in-Chief to be the point of departure, the Borderland Guard ought to prepare the people for the future plebiscite with respect to the Provincial Sejm in Vilnius by collecting signatures for annexation [*sic*] to Poland, the propagation of adequate publications, oral canvassing, and the like. Any resolutions or demonstrations that might prevail as regards the frontiers and the political system of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania ought to be avoided, so as not to inhibit the progress of the military and diplomatic action aimed at the merger [*sic*] of Kaunas region and eastern Byelorussia with Poland. In order to systematise the political action, the Convention has resolved to establish in Vilnius the Society of the Polish Guard, which until the nearest General Convention of the delegates of the Borderland Guard Clubs shall operate as an agency of the Borderland Guard in Lublin.”¹⁹

In a letter to J. Osmołowski dated 3rd July 1919, T. Szopa and Z. Lechnicki stated, in contrast to the observed facts: “The Guard is becoming the organisation of the Borderlands’ society in which the Eastern policy of the Republic of Poland, initiated by the Vilnius Proclamation of the Chief of State, will find permanent support.” Perhaps the secret of the exchange of almost all the entire personnel of the Borderland Guard’s Vilnius District at the beginning of 1920 lies in this very description: becoming an organisation of the Borderland society?²⁰ Osmołowski would not check his partner’s credibility. He allocated extra funds (apart from the permanent subsidy) to the Guard, following its demands, and ordered that “the Borderland Guard be requested, especially, to forthwith take care of the local-government election.”²¹ This decision doubtlessly reinforced the position of the Borderland Guard in relation to lower-level ZCZW officials who were less gullible or better-informed than the Commissioner-General. It has to be clearly remarked that neither the ZCZW personnel nor the Guard instructors formed a uniform group: among both of them, followers of the federationist

wspomnienia, Warsaw 1996; A. i A. Garliccy [=A. Garlicka & A. Garlicki], (documents selected by, eds.), *Zarzewie 1909–1920. Wspomnienia i materiały*, Warsaw 1973.

- 19 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1592, c. 27–35 & 37–44: Report on the Convention of the Instructors of the Borderland Guard, District of Vilnius, 20th June 1919.
- 20 For a broader discussion, see Gierowska-Kałuż, *Straż Kresowa ...*, p. 129.
- 21 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1690, c. 3–3 (verso)–4: Memo by T. Szopa and Z. Lechnicki of 3rd July 1919.

concept as well as the incorporationist idea were present. The issue is that local peculiarities informed the situation in almost every county.

On 26 July 1919, Osmołowski received a delegation of representatives of the Farmers' Union of Vilnius Land.²² The guests, who considered the restitution of Borderland farms the most urgent task, came up with an initiative to establish special committees for reconstruction and cooperation with the Government in the organisation of reconstruction. The moment was favourable, as a meeting had taken place just the previous day between representatives of the ZCZW, the Central Welfare Council [RGO], and the Borderland Defence Committee, the organisations entrusted with drafting the statute of the Commission for the Reconstruction of the Borderlands.²³ Meanwhile, instead of dealing with specific arrangements, Osmołowski began to criticise the landowners, claiming (rightly so) that most of them did not want to invest in farms. He also criticised some representatives of the higher military authorities, whom he called 'swindlers.' His criticism further extended to other 'swindlers,' who worked for the Administration.²⁴ Having caused understandable consternation among his guests, he stated, "I act upon a general ground: I consider myself a citizen of the Polish state, not a parochial citizen of one district."²⁵ However, his declarations were not supported by actual effort in the declared direction. For a change, concrete action was taken by the Presidium of the National Council of the Byelorussian Lands and the Presidium of the National People's Council of Grodno Land, who, together with

22 Ibid., No. 1671, c. 100–103 (verso).

23 The attendees included Kossakowski, Klott, Iwazskiewicz, Niemcewicz, Count Zabiello, and Count Czesław Krasicki. At the subsequent session, held 31st July 1919, the latter submitted, in the presence of representatives of the Polish Associations in Lithuanian and White Ruthenia, a 'Draft Organisation of the Commission for Reconstruction of the Borderlands.' The matter stalled as the Commissioner-General's representative opposed: he was supposed to submit explanations regarding the history of the drafting and approval of the statute of the Interim Committee for the Reconstruction of the Eastern Territories at the subsequent recorded meeting (i.e. on 19th August). BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1670, c. 95, 103, 106.

24 "The War Spoils Committees dependent on the military authorities are outright inquisitors who are seeking and extracting everything that [they believe] ought to belong to them; they would readily drag out the spokes from an operational factory, and thus they greatly inhibit the work. They are inquisitors in the name of principles; but on the other hand, in the name of their own pockets, too." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 100–103 verso.

25 Ibid.

the Representative of the National Council of Vilnius Land entered into an arrangement in the course of their joint sessions on 19th, 21st, and 22nd July. They resolved to take joint action and strive, in strict mutual agreement, to annex the lands they respectively represented to Poland. It was determined that each of the Councils would use its specific methods, whereas a system of reciprocal support was declared. On behalf of the Presidia, the understanding was signed by Hieronim Kieniewicz, Ursyn Niemcewicz, Teofil Wasilewski, Zygmunt Jundziłł, Mieczysław Porębski, and Wawrzyniec Puttkamer.²⁶

On 28 July 1919, Commissary General Jerzy Osmołowski received a letter from the Provisional Polish National Council in Lithuania, which denounced the policies of the Commissariat-General as incompatible with the desires and aspirations of the population.²⁷ The Council was particularly outraged by the fact that ZCZW bodies would forbid local social entities to speak out in favour of incorporation into Poland.²⁸ It is indeed debatable whether this ban really served the federation idea. A memo from Włodzimierz Bochenek, who ran the Borderland Guard's Organisational Department, to 'Mr Jerzy Osmołowski, Civil Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories',²⁹ referring to the recipient's 7th August conference with Z. Lechnicki, requested that 60,000 Marks be paid out of the funds budgeted by the Commissariat-General as the cost of the organisation of a plebiscite in the Eastern Territories, regardless of the amounts allocated on the expenditure as per the estimate budget. The memo reads, among other things: "Categorised as initial works is, primarily, the organisation of county-level people's conventions based upon general voting by the people. The action has already kicked off. ... According to the action's draft, as accepted at the aforementioned conference, the people's convections shall appoint a delegation from the entire population of the Eastern Territories. The delegation shall submit the wishes [*sic*] of the people to the authorities of the Republic of Poland and to the Paris Peace Conference, as acquiesced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."³⁰ It is an interesting question whether Osmołowski

26 LCVA, Fond. 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 100–103 (verso).

27 In light of this memo, the statement proposed by J. Jurkiewicz (op. cit., p. 174): "During its short-lived existence, the Council did not develop political activity to a broader extent" appears disputable.

28 LCVA, Fond. 13, Ap. 1 B. 127, lap. 19–20: 'Letter from the Provisional Polish National Council in Lithuania, of 28th July 1919, to Mr. Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories.'

29 Ibid., c. 14: Letter of 14th August 1919/822.

30 Ibid.

was aware of the formal contradiction between the programme announced in the Vilnius Proclamation and the project he had approved on 7th August. To put it briefly: Was he so lacking in insight that he was simply unaware of what he had done by approving the Borderland Guard's project of 7 August 1919?

On 18th August 1919, a conference was held in Warsaw at which J. Osmołowski and his representative Michał Kossakowski, with the participation of the newly-appointed President of the Central Electoral Committee Roman Wirszylło, met representatives of the Polish National Councils in the Eastern Territories.³¹ Niemcewicz, President of the National Council of Grodno Land, presented Osmołowski with a resolution of the joint People's Councils of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands. The stance of both Councils regarding the election left no doubt as to the critical discrepancy between the policy pursued by the ZCZW and the representatives of the Polish population. The conviction was expressed that: "The people's opting for a merger with the State of Poland ought to be effected via the representatives elected based upon the Sejm's electoral regulations. Such representatives should be appointed to take part in a congress in Warsaw and regarded as a [Legislative] Sejm deputy, unless they have rejected the merger with Poland. A plebiscite carried out in this very form represents itself the most favourably, as it is difficult to presume that the elected individuals, even if ill-disposed, might ever resist the potential of the parliamentary seat, which offers very considerable prerogatives and personal benefits."³²

The People's Councils of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands, organised by the Borderland Guard, also proposed a 'rescue factor': a form of indirect expression by municipal and communal authorities in the counties, popularised by Fr. Maciejewicz. However, there was some concern regarding the result of this 'vote', as well as protest from democratic Europe against such procedure. Both Councils unanimously warned against holding a general convention of representatives anywhere other than Warsaw. They believed that a different location could lead to the formation of the Constituent Assembly, which could oppose, with only a handful of votes, the merger with Poland and consider itself an Interim Government. Józef Piłsudski did not share this concern, and wanted to convene the Sejm in Vilnius. He met with resistance immediately after he initiated preparations.³³ Blocked by political opponents in the Sejm, 'he took a

31 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 71–79: Conference of 18th August 1919.

32 Ibid.

33 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Odczyt Marszałka Piłsudskiego w Wilnie, cz. XXV', *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. V, 1999, fasc. 4 (20).

smaller step.³⁴ He demanded that elections be held for the municipal offices and county dietines (assemblies), along with conventions of the county and district dietines. This order was executed by rank-and-file ZCZW functionaries.

These people were not only in charge of preparing future elections – the rationale of which seemed problematic to many of them, as the representatives of these lands had already been elected – but also of controlling the situation in their respective subordinate territories. These people were to bring calm, order, and prosperity to the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania: the best agitation factor, which would convince the population desiring the normalisation of life to vote for Poland at the moment of the election announced in the April Proclamation. The preparations were carried out by ZCZW officials as part of their duties, with various enthusiasm, and with just as various effects. Much depended not only on the specific local conditions, but also on the views of the full-time employees of the Administration. Many of them did not support the policies of the Chief of State and treated their work solely as a source of income. Nevertheless, the census effort preceding the plebiscite was ultimately completed in the spring of 1920.³⁵

Three days after the meeting of 18th August 1919, on 22nd August, another conference on political choices in the Eastern Territories was held. It was presided by Count Wawrzyniec Puttkamer in the presence of Roman Wirszyłło, who was Chief Electoral Commissary, and Henryk Orliński, representing the Commissioner-General. The attendees unanimously chose Warsaw as the site for the convention. They resolved not to allow the formation of electoral group agreements, which was intended to prevent the creation of Russian-Jewish blocs. It was also decided that the direct election and five-point electoral law would also include the County of Buksztā in Curland, and only natives of the territories where the elections would take place would be allowed to vote and stand for election. When determining their 'descent', the criterion of birth in a given province was used (i.e. Russian administrative division was used). One parliamentary seat per 50,000 voters was envisioned.

Vilnius would soon attract numerous speeches and rallies. Two of these took place on the same day of 24th August 1919: one by St. Casimir Workers' League, and one by the Polish Union of Unity and Strength, whose leader was Władysław Studnicki, soon to become a full-time employee of the Commissariat-General. The latter rally saw the adoption of some surprising resolutions. Not only was the

34 Ibid., cz. XXVII.

35 For more on staffing/personnel, see Chapter III.

plebiscite announced in Piłsudski's Proclamation denounced, but also a petition was to be submitted to the High Council of the Five Allied Powers at Versailles, requesting that the demarcation line be shifted westwards.³⁶

Such disregard for the decisions and the authority of the Chief of State, which disgraced him in the international arena, did not serve the unity and strength of Poland as a state. The rationale of this move would be difficult to explain. It is possible that the Polish National Committee [KNP] had made some promises to groups of Poles from the selected regions or areas, without taking into account the fate of those lands whose Polish inhabitants could not count on incorporation for geographical reasons. Alternatively, perhaps individual, influential members of the Polish elites from Borderland areas situated close to Poland wished to obtain such promises for their own benefit?

Relations between the representatives of Polish society from various eastern regions abounded in fundamental disagreements and controversies, which is why the joint Council for the Eastern Borderlands (supposedly operating under the agreement of 19th, 21st, and 22nd July 1919) was dissolved in August 1919. From now on, the provincial (district) offices would exist independently. At that time, only three active Councils could have hoped for their interests to be taken into account in the KNP's policy; namely, the Supreme Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands, the Vilnian National Council, and the Polish National Council of the Byelorussian Lands and Livonia.³⁷

This meant the implementation of a certain provincial policy, approaching the lands of the former Grand Duchy not as a whole but as a set of components. Why did this situation occur? Was it caused by a lack of political foresight among Borderland activists alone? Or, was it the result of someone's skilful control over the influential personalities from the Borderlands? Accepting this last possibility would provide an explanation for one astonishing fact: the lack of some elementary mutual solidarity among the Polish residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania in August 1919. Were the politicians of the national camp at all pragmatic? As the Minsk and Kaunas regions, due to their location on the political map, had no chance to be merged into Poland, did the supporters of

36 The following course of the demarcation line was postulated: from Grodno, along the Niemen River, to the estuary of the Dubissa/Dubysa, then upstream the Dubissa to Betygoła and, from then on, via Kruki, Wilkomierz, and along the Petersburg road up to Dyneburg, whereas Kaunas and Wilkomierz would remain east of this line. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/13/II, c. 188: Press extracts.

37 *Ibid.*, No. 1773/3, c. 452: Memo of 8th January 1920 from the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands.

incorporation of whatever-possible decide to reduce the extent of the territories occupied by the Polish army in order to decrease the risk of irredentism in the controlled area? Adopting such a tactic was tantamount to abstaining from fighting for the rights of Poles living in the Minsk and Kaunas regions. The implementation of this scenario would favour the political activists of the national camp in Paris. The KNP gained a devoted electorate and a guarantee of peace after seizing power. However, we should not ignore the fact that the decomposition of the Council for the Eastern Borderlands facilitated Russia's manoeuvres.

During that same month of August 1919, while the aforementioned Council for the Eastern Borderlands was being dismantled, a poorly prepared Polish uprising broke out and failed in the then-‘isolated’ Kaunas. Was this merely a coincidence? The very fact that the provincial (district) offices had begun to act independently from one another points to the need for further archival searches, which would allow us to verify the emerging conclusions. On 1st September 1919, the leading activists of the Borderland Guard in the Eastern Territories³⁸ received an alarming letter from Warsaw: “We hereby inform you, Sir, that the ZCZW has appointed Mr Wierszyło [actually, Wirszyła], who is currently in office in Warsaw, as the Chief Electoral Commissary for these lands. A census of the population and voters must be carried out in the counties before the elections and the plebiscite can take place. Census commissions (each formed of five to six persons), headed by a special census commissary, will be set up in the counties. The entire census structure will then be used to conduct the elections and the plebiscite. We would like to draw your attention, Sir, to this matter and ask you to submit the names of candidates for the position of census commissaries via our Central Agency. This matter requires the greatest haste possible.”³⁹ Was this done so that only Poles would enter the census commissions? Or perhaps, this was in order to extend a network of trusted representatives from the Borderland Guard over the census committees?

The issue of the elections announced in the April Proclamation was debated at the sessions of the Supreme People’s Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands

38 J. Narkowicz, director for the Grodno and Vilnius Districts; W. Natanson, deputy director for Vilnius District; T. Szopa, manager of the Lithuanian Agency; Mr. Małowieski, ‘Z’ [*sic*] of the Lithuanian Agency; and four instructors: Orłowski, Mydlarz, Podwiński, Świętorzecki.

39 Central Archives of Modern Records [Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereinafter, AAN)], Towarzystwo Straży Kresowej [Borderland Guard Society (hereinafter, TSK)] No. 154, c. 82: Letter of 1st September 1919.

on 9th–11th September 1919 in Warsaw.⁴⁰ The attendees were concerned by the statement of the Chief Electoral Commissary confirming the launch of the preliminary works for the plebiscite. The Council, as a representative of the entire society and not just the Poles, unconditionally reserved for itself the right to vote on the form of the plebiscite. The representatives of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands considered the declaring of membership through local governments to be more advantageous for Poland. They saw provisioning as Poland's most important political asset in the pre-election period. Seed cereals were also treated as an element of the electoral campaign. The success of the National Council of Vilnius Land in the Vilnius City Council election of September 1919 was welcomed with enthusiasm by the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands.

On 13th September 1919, the 17-member Presidium of the Delegation of Vilnius Land,⁴¹ including one Byelorussian from the County of Lida, met the Commissioner-General. They were not impressed by his assurances: "The Administration must be equal for Jews, Orthodox Byelorussians, and Poles alike. To bring them all care and justice. This is its task."⁴² The assembled were not enthusiastic about the policies of the Chief of State. Moreover, the delegates were outraged by the pro- Byelorussian policies pursued by the ZCZW. Already in September 1919, they perceived it as favouring a foreign and allegedly

40 In as early as January 1919, members of the National Council of Grodno Land acknowledged the considerable amounts paid out of the Ministry of the Treasury's cashbox for administrative expenses in the Grodno region. Prince Konstanty Czetwertyński, Antoni Żaboklicki, Nikodem Hryckiewicz, Jerzy Cytryński, Edward Stępniewski, and Stanisław Iwanowski received 500,000 Roubles as a government loan, 50,000 Marks in cash, and 300,000 Marks from the Ministry of the Treasury. On 19th February 1919, Stępniewski and Żaboklicki acknowledged 30,000 Marks for the sections of Vilnius and Grodno; on 19th March 1919, 50,000 Marks were received, and the 18th April figure was 100,000 Marks (for education system purposes). These amounts were not settled afterwards. The handwritten account of Rafał Woźniakowski, School Inspector in Grodno, on the people's detine assembly held on 11th June 1919 in Grodno makes one consider the method and form of expending these amounts, as none of the 500 dietine delegates seemed to know anything about them. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 436: Account by Rafał Woźniakowski.

41 The delegation was formed in the aftermath of the election for the people's convention of the counties, also attended by Jews and Lithuanians.

42 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 70–78: 'Minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 1919 between Mr Osmołowski, Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, and the delegation from Vilnius Land [sic].'

hostile ethnic group from the so-called Western Byelorussia. They saw the Byelorussian movement as a disguise for Russian reactionaries and a threat to the Polish state. Moreover, they were averse to the ZCZW's actions with regard to the Byelorussians. Dr Hipolit Harniewicz, the delegation's leader, appealed for Vilnius Land's counties to be merged with Poland as soon as possible. According to Harniewicz, the people of the Vilnius region mostly expected support from the Kingdom, so such help would be the only path to normalisation. He asserted: "This temporality is extremely harmful, as no organisation can get established, and no action undertaken in the economy or any other area for that matter, because no-one knows what awaits him and who will take care of him."⁴³

Subtle blackmailing was also employed. Harniewicz informed the Commissioner-General that the current delegation planned also to dispatch a group of representatives to Paris. Osmołowski unsuccessfully attempted to draw the attention of the assembled to the fact that a successful resolution of the issues of the Vilnius and Grodno regions, in accordance with the demands made by the delegation of Vilnius Land, would be tantamount to surrendering the chances of the region of Minsk. He even declared that he was expecting a request of incorporation at any moment, and that: "All the three lands must select a delegation together and only then make an external effect."⁴⁴ He advised that "external action" be postponed, and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should "not be forgotten." These recommendations undoubtedly fell within the 'scope of responsibilities' of the Commissioner-General of the Civil Administration.

The collocutors understood the ideals behind the proposed federation concept, but did not approve of them. The Commissioner-General's assertion about the "incorporation of all three lands" under the auspices of the ZCZW must have resulted in a loss of credibility of the objectives of the office he represented. Osmołowski did not convince the delegates, who instead were demanding the incorporation of the Vilnius region with increasing insistence: "We firmly demand it, we shall not back down, and we will support it with all our material and physical efforts. We will turn Vilnius into Lwów, and make it even greater. We will never agree that our will, awakened by Piłsudski, our Chief, can be restrained. We will be sad about the fact that representatives of the Polish Government have obstructed this will."⁴⁵

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

While trying to win over the members of the delegation, the Commissioner-General committed a series of mistakes. Above all, he revealed his lack of understanding of the federation concept, which the Administration was entrusted with implementing. Therefore, he could not convince anybody of the policy of the Chief of State. In addition, he admitted the weakness of his power as Commissioner to those who advocated the use of force in politics. He did nothing to hide from them that real power rested in the hands of the Ministry of Provisions and the Ministry of the Treasury in Warsaw. Further, he gave invaluable advice to the opponents of the concept on which his mission relied about how to settle their relations with the office he headed.

On 19 September 1919, the Organisational Department of the Borderland Guard informed the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories about a deteriorated attitude of the population of the territories seized in Volhynia towards Poland. Among the reasons for this shift, the approach of Anton Denikin's troops was pointed out, along with a lack of appropriate political instructions for the relevant authorities and bodies, and 'insufficiency' of administrative regulations that often caused one-sided actions or stances expressed by local authorities.

Much confusion was caused in Volhynia by the irresponsible behaviour of Polish army officers in Kowel, who interfered into the competences of the civil authorities in breach of all accepted principles. As a result of these incidents, the Guard encountered a political situation unfavourable to the Polish state, given the specific ethnic structure in Volhynia. This state of affairs left little hope for a positive outcome in the potential plebiscite. The Organisational Department of the Guard proposed that "the form of the plebiscite be replaced by that of a declaration of the will of the people in the same way as it was once organised in the Chełm region, namely by collecting valid resolutions of all the communes and rural councils in the seized areas." Such a step would have one more advantage from the Guard activists' standpoint: it would "prevent deliberate communication between the population scattered over vast areas."⁴⁶ Indeed, this was a peculiar way of implementing the flagship slogan of the Borderland Guard: "The free with the free, the equal with the equal. The Guard activists had to systematically analyse the material collected by their emissaries. As the territorial range of the Borderland Guard network did not differentiate, until June 1920, between lands incorporated into Poland and areas whose lot was to be decided by the plebiscite, it can be assumed that these areas were treated in a uniform manner, to a large extent.

46 AAN, TSK, No. 154, c. 121.

The memo signed by Zdzisław Lechnicki (and countersigned by Tadeusz Katelbach as secretary to the Borderland Guard's address) "To the President of the [Council of] Ministers of the Republic of Poland regarding the memorial [of early October 1919] from the alleged exponents of the Orthodox population in the Lands of Chełm and Podlachia"⁴⁷ is in itself characteristic of the views of the Guard's executive team. The role of the three signatories to the abovementioned memorial was disavowed, while mentioning – nevertheless rather aptly – that once they considered themselves as Russians under Russian rule, while having represented themselves in recent time as Ukrainians, "they will not stand on the ground of Polish statehood." However, the authors ignored the fact that the signing of such a memorandum from non-Polish people to the Polish authorities could testify to the importance of the Polish Government and the hopes related to it for sorting out the relationships, in their own interest. It is undisputable that the Orthodox people could at any time be used as an instrument in the hands of the enemies of Polish statehood. On the other hand, it cannot be precluded that they could have supported the latter in their own interest. The Borderland Guard therefore supported the religious demands of the Orthodox population and the project to establish an Orthodox bishopric – not in Chełm, but in Warsaw. This was supposed to prevent the bishopric from transforming into a centre of Russification.

Lechnicki called, on behalf of the Borderland Guard, for the exerting of influence on the Polish Church authorities in order for them to stop resolving religious animosities in the area by taking all churches away, including the Uniate ones, in the towns entirely inhabited by Ukrainians (in Chełm county, these were Pniowo, Czulczyce, and Kanie) and to settle partially and temporarily the matter of Orthodox churches until the fundamental points of Polish policy in the East were established. Given that the letter was compiled six months after the announcement of Józef Piłsudski's April Proclamation, it can be concluded that the argument of the Borderland Guard's reliance on the Proclamation, used in subsequent requests for new subsidies, and the obligation to conduct the plebiscite action, was merely a manoeuvre, allowing it to obtain funds from the ZCZW – not for the plebiscite, but for its own development.

The nationalist attitudes of the highest staff of the Borderland Guard were also evidenced by their opposition to the idea of establishing a Ukrainian Committee of some sort, which, according to them, would hamper the assimilation processes.

47 Central Military Archives [Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (hereinafter, CAW)], Teki Laudańskiego [Laudański's dossier], 1.440.12/2–3, c. 109–113.

The theory of a schism in the Borderland Guard between incorporationists and federationists would be a rational explanation for the odd replacement of almost the entire personnel of the Guard in the Vilnius region, where the arguments useful in relation to Volhynia, Podlachia, or Chełm Land did not apply.⁴⁸

The incorporationist sentiments within the Borderland Guard reflected those of a significant part of the Polish community in Minsk. On 1st October 1919, the National Councils and Social Clubs of Minsk prepared a memorial signed only by Olgierd Sinica.⁴⁹ The signatories, indignant at the “arrogant speech [in Byelorussian] by Jaroszewicz”, the representative of the Byelorussians, at the welcome of the Chief of State in Minsk, and moved by the publication of an official announcement by the ZCZW in Russian (which has not been found so far), informed the Commissariat-General about the impossibility of further cooperation, should the Administration pursue its current policy. The reason behind the break-up was “the stirring of Polish opinion and of the faction of the Byelorussians with whom we are supposed to build statehood in the Borderlands, [for] the representatives of the Polish opinion learned with astonishment what they have resolved” (based on the official notice in Russian).⁵⁰ The only rational explanation for the reason of this last remark is the assumption that Sinica was a representative of one of the fractions of these National Councils and Social Clubs of Minsk, who had usurped the right to represent all of them. (This last remark from the Sinica memorial confirms my principle of meticulously noting the differences in spelling of the names of Polish organisations that appear in the documents.)

In October 1919, resulting from talks between Z. Lechnicki and Lt Zygmunt Zabierzowski, who managed the ZCZW’s Conscription-and-Enlistment Department, arrangements were concluded that aimed at avoiding the pursuance of two identical actions by two separate organisations. The Borderland Guard took control of the situation.⁵¹ In late October 1919, Tadeusz Jankowski

48 Gierowska-Kałaŭ, *Straż Kresowa...*, pp. 48–49.

49 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 221: A ‘Memorial’, from the National Councils and Social Clubs. Minsk, 1st October 1919 (ms.).

50 Ibid.

51 Tadeusz Jankowski remarked that contact should be established in the field and demarcate the scope of work, or discuss the rules of cooperation. The agreement had it that Zabierzowski consented that Conscription-and-Enlistment Department functionaries would be invited to take a part in district conventions of the Borderland Guard, whereas the Guard would unrestrainedly attend the relevant conventions of functionaries of the Department reporting to Zabierzowski.

described the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department as an organisation constrained during the preparations for the plebiscite action precisely because of its governmental character.⁵²

This characteristic can be interpreted in a variety of ways – notably in the following terms: since the Inspectorate was a body of the ZCZW, it could not oppose its programme (i.e. the plebiscite). The decision to have the Inspectorate dissolved was most probably made during talks between Jankowski and Zabierzowski, and not at the Commissioner-General's office. The regional instructors of the Borderland Guard were instructed to prepare a comprehensive report on the nature of the work of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department and very precise characterisations of all of its employees. As a result of simultaneous efforts by the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department was soon dissolved. The field personnel of the dissolved institution formed an independent team of instructors well acquainted with the local conditions, most of them sincerely committed to the ideas behind the Vilnius Proclamation. Their expulsion from the administration was formally justified by the military authorities taking over enlistment duties, but it was extremely unfavourable to the ZCZW, which was thus deprived of its own informers. Zabierzowski's personal career, in turn, developed harmoniously during 1920 and 1921.

In 1919, the Borderland Guard was pursuing its own policy in an increasingly clear manner. At Jankowski's request, Guard instructors were obliged to give short political speeches whose texts would be sent from headquarters. The messages were divided into public and "strictly confidential, to the attention of Heads [of departments] only."⁵³

Early in November 1919, the Chief of State received a delegation from the Minsk region, formed, among other things, of an Old Believer and an Orthodox delegate. The delegates asked for their region to be annexed to the Republic of Poland, so that "the disorder that prevailed under the tsarist regime and under the Bolsheviks could never occur again."⁵⁴ Having heard this declaration, Piłsudski reportedly replied, "Should you steadfastly be willing to belong to us, and to collaborate with us ... the freedom of religious belief is prevalent in Poland, for

52 Gierowska-Kałtaur, *Straż Kresowa*

53 *Ibid.*, c. 205–206.

54 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/III, c. 115: Borderland Press Bureau [Prasowe Biuro Kresowe (hereinafter, PBK)], issue of 10th November 1919.

everybody ... If they are willing to belong to Poland, they must also take on the duties and obligations of the country's citizens."⁵⁵

The political moods of the members of the Agricultural Society of Brześć Litewski are well characterised by one of the addresses sent by its chairman E. Woyniłowicz in November 1919 to the Marshal (speaker) of the Legislative Sejm. He assured the Sejm that the people of the Byelorussian Borderland wished to remain the "bulwark of the Most Serene Commonwealth."⁵⁶ Following the first successes of the ZCZW, which undoubtedly included the formation of the organisation, the establishment of the Commissariat-General in Vilnius, the launch of the school year and, above all, the breakaway from the competence of the Polish Army's Supreme Command, the ZCZW unleashed the campaign against the political programme called the 'Platform of the Chief of State' in Poland in autumn 1919. The slogan stood for a set of territorial, political and social postulates. The very fact that it existed made the national camp an alternative to the Chief of State's policy, which led to an atmosphere unfavourable to what Piłsudski planned for the Eastern Borderlands. It contributed to the weakening of the Polish state, which was of vital interest to Russia, and Germany, too.

The end of November 1919 saw a letter received by the Commissioner-General from a Liaison Commission,⁵⁷ a body established ad-hoc which was characteristically described by Osmałowski as a 'neoplasm'. The Commission was formed of 14 organisations. Its session was chaired by E. Starczewski, delegate of the Volhynian Association, and the secretariat was run by K. Skrzyński, delegate of the Polish Executive Committee in Ruthenia. The attendees included Count Wawrzyniec Puttkamer of the National Council of Vilnius Land, Ursyn Niemcewicz of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands, Mr Wasilewski of the Borderlands Defence Committee, Stefan Szwedowski of the Borderland Guard, Mr Kieniewicz of the Byelorussian National Council, Mr Kawecki of the Committee for the Unification of the Eastern Borderlands with Poland, and Count Czacki of the Volhynian Educational Society [Macierz Szkolna Wołyńska]. The declaration was signed by the National Council of Vilnius Land, the Supreme People's Council⁵⁸ of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands (appearing before them as the 'Supreme Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands'), and

55 Ibid.

56 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/IV, c. 25, PBK, No. 174, 17th November 1919.

57 Ibid., No. 1665/1, c. 59–59 (verso): From the Liaison Commission to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories.

58 People's Councils were formed by the Borderland Guard.

the Polish National Council of Byelorussian Lands (up to then, 'Polish National Council of Byelorussian Lands and Livonia'). The Commission was set up on the basis of the mutual support principle. It submitted a draft declaration to the Commissariat-General via Count Zygmunt Jundziłł. The Commission intended to hold elections with the aim of incorporation into Poland, envisioning two stages: awareness-raising, meant to 'stimulate Polishness', and political canvassing. As the Commission declared, it had concluded an agreement between the member organisations and had the will to lead the jointly planned action. The minutes of the second session of the Commission on 20th November were sent to Osmołowski as an appendix to the declaration.⁵⁹

Suspending the elections to the Sejm in the areas where the vote result would be uncertain was deemed necessary. However, this did not prevent the parallel submission of nine budget estimates for the launch of preparations for the plebiscite. Perhaps the Liaison Commission had begun the implementation of the project of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands, which, as mentioned earlier, reserved itself at the beginning of September the right to vote on the form of expression of one's state affiliation?

Laconic comments by Jerzy Osmołowski appear in the margins of this document. The Commissioner-General apparently did not notice the change in the controversy's subject. He did not realise that it was about the election of representatives of the Eastern Territories to the Legislative Sejm in Warsaw, rather than any other Sejm. Osmołowski's notes are an extremely valuable source of information on the climate of the relations between the ZCZW and the Liaison Commission.⁶⁰ Through them, one can see the financial expectations of the Polish community of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania with regard to the ZCZW, as well as the attitude of the Commissioner-General to the people whom he was supposed to win over to the idea that he was officially representing. The following were treated somewhat bitinglly: the Borderlands Defence Committee,⁶¹

59 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 61–62: Minutes of the second meeting of the Liaison Commission in the Eastern Borderlands, 20th November 1919.

60 The question marks against certain of the tasks of the organisations mentioned in the breakdown of the pre-election action cost estimates, as proposed by the Liaison Commission member institutions, are meaningful. For a list specifying the cost estimates, see BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 63–64.

61 Osmołowski grew especially indignant at the envisioned conducting of socio-political courses with use of the ZCZW's funds and aid to be provided to the people in kind. He crossed out the item number against the Borderlands Defence Committee [KOK], which can be interpreted as charging KOK with an out-of-the-ordinary role in the

Association of Poles of the Ruthenian Lands, Poles of the Ruthenian Lands' Club, and Delegation of the Polish Executive Committee in Ruthenia. The names of these four organisations were circled together, which apparently is barely a coincidence. The presence of the estimates of the Borderland Guard, the Borderlands Department of the Polish Women's Club, and the Committee for the Unification of the Eastern Borderlands with the Republic of Poland, was left without a comment. The presence of the estimates of three branches of the Polish Educational Society [Macierz Polska]: those of Vilnius, Minsk, and Volhynia, and of the Central Welfare Council, was briefly commented thus: "Politics is not their business: may the Educational Society mind their own business, and the Council theirs."⁶²

These remarks prove that the Commissioner-General responded to the letter very emotionally, but did not remind the Liaison Commission of the assumptions of the Chief of State's policy. He acquiesced without hesitation to the request not to grant loans for propaganda activities from state funds without hearing the opinion of the Commission, "which, by virtue of this very thing, will have the potential to control the entire action and inhibit actions that often prove undesirable." It cannot be determined today whether it was an oversight on his part, or a thoroughly considered move.

development of the 'neoplasm'. The projected one-off allowance of 66,000 Marks [*sic*] was commented on by Osmołowski with a sulphurous remark, "How much per word?" The excessive per-diems for 60 KOK canvassers were marked by him with telling underlines. Requests for funding KOK posters were commented with the meaningful question: "As inauspicious as before?" Wages and salaries, trips, per-diems of the 60 canvassers were 2,700 Marks each, in total 142,000 Marks monthly, 426,000 Marks every quarter. In quite a similar manner, the sum of 165,000 Marks per quarter for theatre entertainment and a single 120,000 Marks payment for the production of six agitation films were challenged. At the sight of a one-off allowance for people's community centres of 200,000 Marks, Osmołowski made a sarcastic comment expressing his traditional view of the distribution of competencies between males and females: "Polish Women's Clubs, or KOK – which of these is better?" Likewise, a request from KOK to grant 50,000 Marks per month was also called into question. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 63–64.

62 In the Statute, approved two weeks earlier, the Society's name was the 'Polish Educational Society of the Eastern Territories' Branches [*Polska Macierz Szkolna Ziem Wschodnich. Oddziały*]; without seeking the Commissariat's acceptance, it renamed itself as Polish Educational Society (Vilnian), Minsk, in Volhynia) [*Macierz Polska (Wileńska, Mińska, na Wołyniu)*], which operated legally and legally used the subsidies for the Educational Society. Osmołowski must have felt cheated.

On 25th November 1919, the deputies adopted a new stance of the Legislative Sejm with regards to the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Sejm's decisions fundamentally affected the ZCZW's situation, as they were aimed at reducing its competences.⁶³ Two days after the Sejm's resolution of 25th November, the Ministry of Internal Affairs requested the Commissariat-General for its opinion on the dossier of the Board of the League of the Eastern Territories, an organisation based in Warsaw, which declared as its objective: "the annexation to the State of Poland the Polish and Polish-Byelorussian lands in the East, along with Vilnius, as well as all those sections of the eastern territories whose liaison with Poland is indispensable for national, cultural, economic, and strategic reasons."⁶⁴

By addressing the ZCZW with an issue that fell outside the scope of its competences, the Ministry of Internal Affairs signalled that it considered the Sejm's resolutions of 25th November to be tantamount to the transfer of the ZCZW's dependency on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The lack of objection by the Commissariat-General was a mistake. The ZCZW responded to the letter from the Ministry of Internal Affairs after three months; the decision was positive. Its consequences called into question the ZCZW's political endeavours pursued to that point in the territories of the former Grand Duchy, and reduced its role to that of a branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

25th November 1919 to February 1920

The activities of the Borderland Guard soon attracted the interest of the Congress Works Bureau, cooperating with the Polish National Committee, which asked the Guard to designate a delegate to participate in the Bureau's work;⁶⁵ this marked a clear sign of the Guard's rise in ratings. The Guard also sought admission to

63 See Chapter V.

64 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/1, c. 321: 'Letter from the Board of the League of the Eastern Territories No. 4339/19, dated in Warsaw on 22nd October 1919, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw'; *ibid.*, c. 320–320 (verso): 'Statute of the League of the Eastern Territories'.

65 On 15th December 1919, the Borderland Guard submitted a list to the Congress Works Bureau of 22 county instructors who would provide information on the local relations; the represented Counties included: Grodno, Wołkowysk, Sokółka, Słonim, Prużany, Brześć Litewski and Lithuania, Kobryń, Białystok, Kowel, Równe, Włodzimierz Wołyński, Luck, Chełm, Włodawa, Vilnius, Oszmiana, Troki, Świąciany, Nowogródek, Iłumeń, Bobrujsk, and Baranowicze. AAN, TSK 154, c. 266.

the sessions of the Sejm's Administrative Commission, arguing that it could contribute to clarifying fundamental issues when discussing the questions related to the Eastern Borderlands.⁶⁶ Therefore, the Guard sought the support of individual deputies. In a letter to Niemcewicz dated 21st November 1919, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Liaison Commission of the organisations operating in the Borderlands, Szwedowski, stressed the urgency for the Commission to act in a 'unanimously concordant' manner before the Civil Commissioner of the Eastern Territories. On 3rd December 1919, Z. Lechnicki sent a request to J. Osmołowski to earmark the 200,000 Marks awarded on 28th November in Vilnius (three days after the shift in the Sejm's stance of 25th November) to cover the plebiscite expenses on the efforts "that have already been initiated, in line with the Commissariat-General[']s concept]."⁶⁷

On 1st December 1919, a meeting took place on the premises of the Central Welfare Council in Warsaw, with the aim of preparing a 'Convention to Secure Polish Society against Bolshevism'.⁶⁸ For the participants, 'Bolshevism' also referred to any democratic thought adopted by the Chief of State and Commander-in-Chief, and to the Borderland Guard's manifesto slogan 'The free with the free, the equal with the equal'. The remark made by M. Obiezierski, incidentally a full-time employee with the Commissariat-General, was: "In certain strata of society, a type that contributes to the spread of Bolshevism is becoming increasingly remarkable ... the moral condition, if I may say so, of the actors and agents forming our authorities is not clear enough and does not always stand up to the task,"⁶⁹ may have not been targeted at the Guard alone. According to this speaker, the solution to the impasse lay in "awakening, within society, the urge to control the factors that could oppose these Bolshevik attempts." It was agreed that, of the three conflicting authorities in the state, the military, in contrast to the Sejm and the Government, had the 'appropriate' views. Archbishop Józef Teodorowicz was elected Honorary President of the Congress, and Mr Obiezierski was tasked with forming the Editorial and Proceedings Committee, though finally Mr Muttermilch took charge of the latter. The Liaison Commission continued its activities, which had begun in mid-November. According to the plan prepared by Niemcewicz for the meeting of 10th December 1919, the Commission would

66 *Ibid.*, c. 227.

67 *Ibid.*, c. 255.

68 LVIA, Fond 1135/13/245, c. 1–35: 'Report on the deliberations at the meeting held in order to agree on organising an action against Bolshevism on 1st December 1919 on the premises of the Central Welfare Council[, Warsaw,] 32 Jasna St.'

69 *Ibid.*, c. 11.

essentially seek to bring together all Polish political and economic organisations active in the area of the planned elections. The plan included the establishment of a 'White Poland' ['Białopolska'], whose future existence would be founded on breaking with Russia (Ruthenia) and on a liaison with Poland.⁷⁰

It was projected that a Central Electoral Committee would be established, which would include two representatives of each of the four organisations: the National Council of Vilnius, Representation of Minsk Land (counties covered by the planned plebiscite action), the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands, and the Borderland Guard. The Central Committee was to have its registered office in Vilnius and its Branch in Warsaw was to have eight representatives, provided that the tactics were the responsibility of the headquarters. The last of these was to collaborate with organisations based in Vilnius whereas the Branch would work with Warsaw-based Borderlands institutions. Niemcewicz projected that, apart from the Branch, the Conciliation Committee would be joined by the following associations: the Club of Polish Women's Borderlands Department, the Committee for the Unification of the Eastern Borderlands with the Entirety of the Republic of Poland, the Borderlands Defence Committee (with a particular role of the Soldier Care Department), the Central Welfare Council, the Association of Poles of Vilnius Land, and the Borderlands Educational Society [Macierz Kresowa]. Loans obtained from contributions and other sources were to be distributed collectively at monthly meetings to be held in Vilnius or Warsaw. Long-term projects were planned with the aim of promoting the idea of Polish statehood in the Eastern Borderlands.⁷¹

The written statement formulated by the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek concerning the elections, including the plan of conducting the announced 'plebiscite' in the Eastern Borderlands in a substantially modified form, leaves little doubt as the Presidium incontestably opted in favour of people voting via representatives elected on the basis of the Sejm's electoral law. It was therefore simply a matter of preventing the plebiscite in the form announced by Piłsudski's Vilnius Proclamation.

The Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands was right to claim that allowing the municipal and communal self-governments in the counties to express themselves gave the opportunity – if the lands of the former Grand Duchy were to be divided and the incorporation option put into effect – to

70 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 5: 'J. Niemcewicz's draft to be submitted at the meeting of the Liaison Commission.'

71 Ibid.

'save' particular lands for Poland. However, this attempt at saving some of the regions was tantamount to sacrificing the chance of saving the entire former Grand Duchy of Lithuania from being partitioned. And this was the intention of the Chief of State, who, among other things, sought to ensure Poland's security and remove the danger posed by Russia by achieving optimal relations with all the nations of the former Grand Duchy. It should be noted, however, that the chance of implementing his plans in November were lower than in August 1919, before the early outbreak of the uprising planned together with the Lithuanian opposition.

The Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands postulated that the convention of such specifically understood elections should be held in the territory extending to the line of trenches from 1915 (it possibly envisaged the addition of several counties, such as Minsk), and chose Warsaw as the centre of the convention. The proposed venue was not accidental: they wanted to avoid the risk of an Interim Government being formed.⁷² As at the meeting on 18th August 1919, the National Council persistently expressed its concern that the gathered delegates would stand against Poland. Members of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands wrote passionately of the Borderland Guard emissaries who since March 1919 had operated in the former Grand Duchy lands, among other places:⁷³ "the entrustment of the agitation effort to an institution [composed of] non-local elements, whose operation is conspiratorial, to a degree, and which has considerable financial resources at its disposal, offers no potential to assume responsibility for the result of the election."⁷⁴

It should be noted that in a Warsaw where the relations in the Borderlands were known only as reported by the Borderlanders flocking to the capital city, the claims of the Supreme Council, considered by public opinion to be an expert body in matters practically unknown in the former Congress Kingdom, must have been received indiscriminately. Stories from various sources about "Messrs County Commissioners, many of whom, affected by a mania of greatness, succeeded in the arming of the indigent classes of not only foreign but also Polish people against the Polish authorities"⁷⁵ were spread in good faith, without wondering why these commissioners would prevent the Polish population in those

72 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 49–50: 'Position regarding the elections, together with the planned plebiscite in the Eastern Borderlands, of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek.'

73 For more on the Borderland Guard, see Gierowska-Kałamur, *Straż Kresowa* ...

74 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 49–50 (as in fn. 72).

75 Ibid.

areas from voting in favour of incorporation. A comment is necessary here. This last quote was an obvious criticism of those ZCZW officials who, being sincere supporters of the federation of Poland with Lithuania or Byelorussia, had to persuade the Polish population living in the border areas to vote against affiliation with Poland, which would allow an adjacent state to be created that would become able to enter a union with Poland – in order to put the conception under discussion into effect.

The address delivered by the members of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands emphasised that public participation in the election campaign was dependent on government loans, because "the prospect of material benefits has a far stronger impact on the psychology of a hungry and ruined peasant than any and all papers, fine words, and vain promises."⁷⁶ Consequently, the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands accused the Commissariat-General of making a colossal mistake: "detaining within a few months a loan of 54,000,000 allocated by the Polish Government for the purpose of activating it in the Borderlands [in this connection], the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council submitted its entire responsibility for this asset, which had not been exploited in time, but which was of primary importance as far as the plebiscite is concerned."⁷⁷ Expressing an opinion on this particular charge 100 years in retrospect poses considerable difficulty indeed. The question remains open: how should the funds have been used (i.e., how should one have taken responsibility for the money thus spent) against such a fierce dispute over the form of elections going on? After all, the censuses were carried out as part of the ZCZW's full-time employers' duties. There might have functioned some 'intermediate account' at the ZCZW, i.e. a system of double counting of the incoming amounts; this would allow for the unrestrained turnover of cash. However, the ZCZW could not expect to get away with such a practice, and this allegation was never been documented. The Government granted loans to the ZCZW and the Commissioner-General was responsible for their dispersal. But was it real money, or balance-sheet money only? The loans had to be released by the Ministry of the Treasury, which did so when it deemed it appropriate. In turn, the Commissioner-General, with no treasury of his own, was forced to subject the work of his formally subordinate Treasury Section to the Ministry in Warsaw, which was controlled by opponents of the federation idea and of the plebiscite, who were undoubtedly in contact with representatives

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

of the aforementioned Conciliation Committee. The allegation of the non-use of funds would, in this situation, have been almost provocative. Or perhaps, in the unclear political situation, the Commissioner-General allocated the funds 'for the plebiscite' to allowances for overburdened communal scribes? And perhaps this is how he subsidised the Borderland Guard?

On 5th December 1919, the following announcement by Lechnicki was sent to seven newspaper editorial offices and 19 Borderland Guard county directors:

With regard to the commencing election actions for the representation of the eastern lands, which is to determine the relation between these lands and Poland, I hereby inform you that the Central Board of the Borderland Guard considers it desirable to unite, in view of the election, all the Polish parties and the Byelorussian and Lithuanian actors, which firmly favour ties with Poland, on a common electoral platform. The Central Board of the Borderland Guard considers the following to be the foundation of such platform:

1. Dissociation of all the lands seized by the Polish army from Russia, [and] their connection [i.e. merger] with the Republic of Poland.
2. Uncompromising resistance to the ideas of abandoning some of these lands in favour of Russia in order to ransom peace from this country.
3. Ensuring that the nations living in these lands (Poles, Lithuanians, Byelorussians) have full equality of rights and the potential of national development.

Whilst announcing the above, I also communicate that the involvement of the Guard's employees in the election campaign on their own shall be deemed harmful by the Central Board. [Any instance of] Such involvement ought to be preceded by the submission of a resignation to the Guard Board by the employee concerned.⁷⁸

It is understandable that an organisation of progressive Polish nationalists refused to acknowledge the state-oriented development of the other nations living in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Such a declaration lay outside the scope of the Guard, regardless of the fact that it would not impress the Lithuanians as they were sceptical of Poles, whereas the Belarusian politicians had already been promised a great deal. Thus, the Guard pursued its own social agenda.

The situation, of course, called for new and extensive funding. What is puzzling is that in the abundant correspondence concerning the elections, the subject of the ZCZW is virtually non-existent. Apparently, the Borderland Guard was aware of the fact that the exact appointment and announcement of the date of the elections was no longer the responsibility of the Commissariat-General of the Eastern Territories. No information has so far been found as to who deprived the ZCZW of this right, or when. This was probably the result of the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 259 & 257.

25th November 1919 resolution, and even more probably of the Commissioner-General's reluctance to take a stance on this matter, which would expose him to inevitable conflict with Polish political organisations. A press release from the Commissariat-General's Press Department, published in the press in February 1920, claimed: "[the plebiscite] – this is a matter for the Polish central state authorities. On the other hand, what falls within the scope of its competencies and duties has always been fulfilled, with conscientious earnestness."⁷⁹

On 16th December 1919, the Ministry of the Interior (and not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) issued a letter signed by Stanisław Wojciechowski. Ignoring the Commander-in-Chief's instruction of 10th October 1919,⁸⁰ it was manifestly addressed to the 'Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories affiliated to the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces.'⁸¹ A report was expected on what the ZCZW had done to implement the parliamentary Law of 25th November 1919 on the elections in the Eastern Borderlands. Two days later, a reply from the ZCZW appeared, announcing the completion of a draft of the electoral regulations, the state of preparation of the technical organisation, the near-completion of the census, and the commencement of work expected to be funded by loans.

Officially, however, the Administration knew nothing about the elections, as the Commissariat-General had only received a copy of a letter from the Marshal of the Sejm to the Minister of Internal Affairs, which indicated that the preparation of the draft of the organisation of the elections and the submission of applications to the Council of Ministers had been entrusted to the latter Ministry.⁸² The reply, which came so quickly out of the otherwise painfully slow Commissariat-General of the ZCZW, proves that, in his preparations for the plebiscite announced in the Proclamation, Osmołowski felt the lack of the promised amounts, and that in order to obtain money for the execution of the received order, he would make use of all the options to secure funds, regardless of whom he would be formally subject to by obtaining them.

The documents from that period expressly show that he considered himself an executor, ready to fulfil orders. A greater political awareness could be expected from the Commissioner-General, who was the highest authority for the

79 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1760, c. 545: 'Report on the Borderland Press No. 153, 19th February 1920'.

80 See Chapter IV.

81 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/IV, c. 10.

82 *Ibid.*, c. 9.

implementers of the federation concept. Osmołowski did not use the possibility of stalling, nor did he apparently remember that the plebiscite was decided by Piłsudski's Proclamation. He did not emphasise that he was accountable only to the Commander-in-Chief and that he was obliged to report on his work and efforts only to him. It appears that he himself was an advocate of incorporation.⁸³ In the new situation from 25th November onwards, he probably began to fear for his own career. Perhaps this is why, in view of a potential political change, he tried to secure a satisfactory career for himself in the future. The press reported that the Sejm's resolution of 19th December 1919 ordered the Supreme Command to forthwith transfer the ZCZW under the competence of the Council of Ministers. Since 10th October 1919, however, the ZCZW had been subordinated not to the Supreme Command but to the Commander-in-Chief.

The Polish national rally, held in Grodno on 4th January 1920, adopted a resolution on the immediate inclusion of the remaining part of Grodno Land into the free and united Poland. Invoking the hundreds of thousands of signatures submitted during the Regency Council, the resolutions adopted by countless rallies and by the Grodno County Dietine of 1919, as well as "in recognition of the purposefulness of the Resolution of the Polish Legislative Sejm of 25th November 1919", the request for the immediate organisation of a plebiscite in the Eastern Territories was presented, in the certain belief that its outcome would prove successful for the Polish cause, in both state-related and national aspects.⁸⁴ Eleven political and social organisations from Vilnius sent a petition to the Sejm in Warsaw on 4th January 1920 asking for the Sejm's resolution to be implemented as soon as possible. These included the Union of the Unity and Strength of Poland, the Polish Bourgeois Club in Vilnius, the National Club, the Vilnius Land's Association of Farmers, the National Party [*Stronnictwo Narodowe*], the National Organisation of Polish Women, the Workers' League, and the Christian Democracy Party.

On 8 and 9 January 1920, the First Congress of the Presidiums of the People's Councils of Vilnius Land, which were successively set up by the Borderland Guard in the autumn of 1919. As the federation with Lithuania, Byelorussia, Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine, within their respective ethnographic borders,

83 Cf. the above analysis of the course of the Vilnius Land delegation's visit. Also, cf. J. Gierowska-Kallaur, 'Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich – kadra i procesy decyzyjne', in K. Jasiewicz (ed.), *Europa nie prowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej RP w latach 1772–1999*. 46.

84 After *Echo* (Grodno) No. 3, 6th January 1920, BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 577.

on the principle of “the free with the free, the equal with the equal” was seen as a necessary, if not indispensable, goal, the emissaries themselves could not understand the purpose of ‘federating’ the most Polish territories, such as the Lands of Grodno or Minsk, with Poland. They expressed their conviction that the elections (ordained by the Legislative Sejm’s resolution) should not be held in a hurry, and that the Borderland-area Lands of Grodno and Minsk Lands should simply be incorporated. They considered it a clear sign of unification with Poland that all the laws and acts that were in force in Poland – especially the resolution on the implementation of the agricultural reform already adopted by the Legislative Sejm, as well as the law on freedom of religion and nationality – would be extended to the Eastern Territories.

The reconstruction of Vilnius Land begun with the planned convening of the Congress of the Eastern Territories. The lack of decisiveness regarding the choice of the course of action was amplified by the hesitant position of the authorities in Warsaw. Teofil Szopa expressed the quandaries of Borderland Guard activists in the following way: “The Sejm once stood on the point-of-view of the plebiscite [*sic*], then on the point of gradual incorporation [*sic*], and presently [as of 20th January 1920] the idea of the plebiscite is germinating again. Ever-changing divergences in opinion [are appearing] also in the Council of Ministers ... One may gain the impression that some politics is being made in spite of political parties.”⁸⁵

The first meeting of the Secretariat of People’s Councils of the District of Vilnius, with representatives of political parties and Borderland Guard representatives attending, took place on 20th January 1920 in Vilnius. The assembly unanimously opted in favour of the merger with the Motherland: either via a proper plebiscite, or by convoking a plebiscite parliamentary assembly (*sejm*) in Vilnius, or, by holding a Constitutional Sejm in Warsaw. Carrying out a general plebiscite (as announced by Piłsudski) was considered undesirable in January 1920. Only the Entente could force Poland to fulfil its obligation in this particular form. In the opinion of Józef Małowieski, Head of the Borderland Guard’s Vilnius District, such a move would have been quite unfavourable for Poland. Believing that “social thought is unable to keep pace with the course of events”, he postulated that a plan be implemented that proved unrealistic in 1920; namely, the formation of a parliamentary representation of the Eastern Lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (within the pre-Partition boundaries) to the Legislative Sejm.

85 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 65 (verso).

The second session of the Secretariat of the People's Councils of Vilnius Land, with the participation of representatives of the political parties, took place one week later, on 27th January 1920. This time, Ludwik Chomiński and Witold Abramowicz, both of whom were important figures in the political arena of Vilnius, were absent from the meeting, while journalists were present in large numbers. Had any decisions been made before then, would they not have been supported by those absent?

Those present on 27th January discussed the advisability of holding any elections in the Eastern Territories. The debaters split themselves into two groups. The group joined by the Democratic Party, the People's Union, members of People's Councils and of the Borderland Guard, found the idea of holding the elections undesirable. Some might have wanted to prevent the plebiscite announced by Piłsudski from turning into a parody, and to this end, they opposed the resolution of the Legislative Sejm, which should not have decided whether or not to conduct any elections of Sejm deputies in a land not under its jurisdiction. There are ample indications that the Borderland Guard, which belonged to this group, had become an advocate of incorporation due to the prospect of extending agricultural reform to the incorporated lands. The other group consisted of the National Democracy and Christian Democracy. Both organisations spoke in favour of holding gradual elections as soon as possible, by co-opting the members of Eastern Territories' deputies to the Sejm in Warsaw. In other words, by voting 'for the election', they in fact voted against the plebiscite as heralded by the Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former w Grand Duchy of Lithuania. There was one point at which the two groups were unanimous, however: they declared their shared distrust in the prospective organisers of the elections; that is, the ZCZW. This standpoint was justified: the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, who was responsible for preparing the elections, was suspected by some (supporters of federation) of being disloyal to his mission, while others (incorporationists) saw him as an advocate of federation.

The compromise solution proposed by the Borderland Guard's Teofil Szopa, consisted in simultaneously holding the election for the Warsaw-based Sejm across the Eastern Territories. The Christian Democrats, in turn, stubbornly postulated a gradual procedure of this 'election'. The People's Council of Brześć Litewski Land adopted a critical stance towards the project, both with respect to the plebiscite announced by the Vilnius Proclamation and the election to the Sejm – the body that had enacted the agricultural reform. This standpoint came as no surprise to anyone. According to a witness from the period, the People's Council, and the Electoral Committee it had established, "were considered

a reactionary element in relation to the general state policy and opposed the ideas expressed in the Vilnius Proclamation. In tsarist times, those people fought Eastern influence on the one hand, whilst acting together with the Russian actors against the peasant movement on the other ... clericalism ... preservation of the grand private property, fighting the agrarian reform, the candidacy of a grand landowner proposed as the one who represented the will of the people – these are their postulates.”⁸⁶

The Convention of Agricultural Tenants of the County of Vilnius, organised by the Borderland Guard on 8th February 1920, recognised itself as the proponent of this particular social group before the authorities of the Republic of Poland and the ‘national authorities’. Transformation into a the Union of Lessees in the Borderlands or perhaps even an All-Polish Lessees’ Union were considered as the possible options.⁸⁷ The position of the Borderland Guard in the region of Vilnius was weakened in February 1920 by the People’s Congress ‘Odrodzenie’ [‘Rebirth’], organised by Ludwik Chomiński and Stefan Mickiewicz. During the event, it transpired that the assembled were not followers of the Chief of the State, and that their understanding of the term ‘agricultural reform’ was quite precise, which was a consequence of the rapidly radicalising sentiments in the countryside. These developments led to the stirring of the social climate in Vilnius District to the point that the Borderland Guard was forced to intervene. In this way, it was effectively deprived of its main asset, which it used in other areas subordinate to the ZCZW.

The Borderland Guard acted in the Vilnius region in disregard of its own slogans expressed in other districts, thus contributing to the future success of its rivals: Polish civic groups with nationalist views.⁸⁸ The rivalry was about taking control of the People’s Councils, whose opinion could determine not only the outcome of the common discussion on the question of autonomy, the plebiscite and the elections, but also the future social system. The opinions on the future of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania varied greatly among the Poles living there in 1919–1920. Not everyone opposed the federalist policy proposed

86 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 190–192: ‘Report by Antoni Niedzielski, Recruitment Inspectorate emissary of Brześć Litewski, dated 31st January 1920.’

87 LCVA, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 3434a, c. 15–18; BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/6, c. 40–44.

88 One example is the conflict between the Borderland Guard’s instructor M. Matuszkiewicz and the starost of Nowogródek; cf. Gierowska-Kałuż, *Straż Kresowa ...*, pp. 38–39.

by the Chief of State. On 25th September 1919, Second Lieutenant Bolesław Zahorski submitted a memo in Warsaw, personally to the Commissioner-General, from the Organisational Section of the 'Józef Piłsudski' Society.⁸⁹ Numbering 1,000 members and consisting almost entirely of POWs, the Society declared that it would offer support to its network of instructors operating in the field. The 42-page statute of the Minsk-based society⁹⁰ claimed that its scope of activity extended to all the lands of White Ruthenia;⁹¹ in the event, further activity was impossible and the funds were to be transferred to the Polish White Cross. The Society was chaired by Ernest Ambroszkiewicz, and its Board consisted of Wanda Brzezicka, Janina Ciundziewicka, Sydalja Chrzanowska, Janina Dziekońska, Poła Dąbrowska, Olgierd Jeleński, Jadwiga Konopacka, Janina Leska, Jadwiga Raczkiewiczowa, Fr. Edward Szwejnic, Józefa Zahorska, and Bolesław Zahorski.⁹²

The Society aimed to bring together "all the rational and well-behaved [lit., non-disgraceful] sons of the former Commonwealth, to confront pig-headedness and unhealthy ambitions with civic discipline", and to concentrate its efforts towards a common goal as an expression of opposition to "unhealthy and envenoming criticism." The Society prioritised the interests of the nation, rather than some party, caste, or social class. It was assumed that the Borderlands of what had been Poland-Lithuania "should be governed by the political platform

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- 89 The Society was formed in August 1919 through a merger of the Society for the Aid of Polish Soldiers (of former POWs), the Society of the Friends of Polish Soldiers, and the Polish Women's Club. Five months later, it had 15 sections in the provinces, eight soldiers' inns, one bed-and-breakfast house, nine 'people's community centres', one cooperative, and 3,000 members – let alone its growing influence in the military; based on a letter from Władysław Raczkiewicz, Commissioner of the ZCZW's District of Minsk, to the Head of the Nationalities and Press Department of 8th October 1919 (ms), BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1662b, c. 54–54 (verte), and *ibid.*, No. 1760, c. 432: Report on the Borderland Press No. 173, 13th March 1920.
- 90 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1662b, c. 55–55 (verte), 56–56 (verte): 'Statute of the '[Józef] Piłsudski' Society in Mińsk Litewski'.
- 91 In the Poland of yore, 'White Ruthenia' (Biała Ruś) was identified with the Voivodeships of Minsk, Połock, Mściśław, Witebsk, and Smoleńsk; 'Black Ruthenia', often mistaken for White Ruthenia, embraced the Counties of Nowogródek, Słonim, Wołkowysk, and Stuck within the Voivodeship of Nowogródek, and the Counties of Mozyrz and Ruczycza within the Voivodeship of Minsk.
- 92 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1662, p. II, c. 47: 'Appeal of the 'Józef Piłsudski' Society in Minsk, entitled 'Citizens', done at Minsk on 15th September 1919'.

of Commander Piłsudski, reconciling the workers, peasants, and landowners in the name of the good of Polish culture and the broadest development of Polish National Life.”

The Society's objectives also included establishing positive relations with other segments of the population, “a fight to the death” against corruption in public life, bribery, profiteering, lack of a sense of civic responsibility, slothfulness and apathy; fighting ignorance by spreading education, fighting the inertia and anarchy of economic life by supporting the cooperative movement, and arousing civic awareness. The basic aim of the Society's activity was to “defend the Polish statehood in accordance with the thought of the Chief of State” as a result of its work “for the world, caring for the soldier, charitable, political, economic and social.” While the Society, established in August 1919, declared itself to be based on the political platform of the Chief of State, its agenda envisaged participation in the election campaign for county-level councils and for the Representation of the Eastern Territories. This in itself was contradictory. If the Society embraced the April Proclamation's programme announcing a plebiscite, it should not have assumed that it would participate in the election for the Eastern Territories' Representation, which was to represent these lands in the Legislative Sejm.

Maciej Glogier's mission to the area of the plebiscite announced in the Proclamation to the residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, February 1920

In February 1920, Maciej Glogier, President of the District Court of Radom, was delegated to the Borderlands in order to partake in efforts aimed at carrying out the election in the Eastern Territories. This expert was tasked with a challenging mission indeed, as he had received two clearly different instructions: one, from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Poland, to examine on-site the issue of “the election of representatives to be held in the Eastern Borderlands in accordance with the parliamentary resolutions of 1st August and 25th November 1919”; the other, a verbal one whose true content remains unknown, from the Commissioner-General, to whom he was supposed to submit his comments and remarks intended for the Chief of State.

The supporters of incorporation,⁹³ whom he met on 11 February, believed that it was necessary to take into account the motions, resolutions and applications sent to the Chief of State and the Marshal of the Sejm. They believed that the

93 Aleksander Zwierzyński, L. Perkowski, S. Brzostowski, Jan Obst, W. Węśławski, Emilia Węśławska, Witold Bańkowski, Fr. Olszański, Fr. Rutkowski, A. Jankowski, W. Rytteł, W. Studnicki, W. Zahorski, and M. Engel.

federative concept had no *raison d'être* in view of the "counterparty's" lack of interest in a federation. They claimed that the Borderlands should have been incorporated into Poland six months earlier, for the sake of the population's interest, whereas now the need appeared to carry out the programme "by way of parliamentary resolutions."

Instead, the followers of the federation⁹⁴ considered any and all elections limited to particular autonomous regions to be inadvisable. As there was no possibility to conduct a plebiscite in the entire territory of the former Grand Duchy, including the 'Ethnographic Lithuania' and Byelorussia, it was advocated that the elections be postponed in anticipation of developments. It was believed that the incorporation of Vilnius Land into Poland, whilst leaving a considerable part of Eastern Byelorussia outside the Polish area of influence, would be detrimental to Polish politics. After the incorporation of Western Byelorussia (without the southern Grodno region and Polesia, where the result of any election would not be favourable to Poland), the frontier line would become adverse to the Republic in the event of a conflict with Russia. A border strategically beneficial to Poland would have to extend to an ethnically non-Polish area so large that the autonomy of individual constituents seemed to be the optimum solution. Conservative representatives were also against the partial election.⁹⁵ They defined themselves as supporters of the plebiscite announced by Piłsudski on account of the great importance of the Borderlands to the political and economic life of Poland.

The Borderland Guard fundamentally altered its position. This might have been an indirect result of the conflict over the People's Councils in Vilnius Land. In February 1920, the Guard opted for incorporation into Poland, "for there must be one government, one authority, otherwise there will be no order at all."⁹⁶ The representatives of the Polish political elite of Minsk, not declaring themselves as either incorporationists or federationists, considered the reinstatement of the Polish territory at the 1772 frontiers an obvious thing. The method of

94 Witold Abramowicz, Ludwik Chomiński, Z. Nagrodzki, Bronisław Krzyżanowski, Jan Piłsudski, Mr Adolph, J. Łastowski, Eng., Ludwik Abramowicz, Stefan Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Jundziłł, Jan Klott, A. Roźnowski, Stanisław Downarowicz, Teofil Szopa, and Marian Świechowski.

95 Count M. Plater, Count Wincenty Łubieński, Stanisław Kognowicki, Hipolit Giecwicz, Stanisław Wańkiewicz, Dr Dębowski, Strumiłło (a lawyer), and Stanisław Łunicki.

96 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665, c. 47: 'M. Glogier's Memorial of 28th February 1920'. The copy cited by A. Srebrakowski (*Sejm Wileński 1922 roku. Idea i jej realizacja*, Wrocław 1995) is kept at LCMAB, Fond 4325307.

achieving this goal was, in their opinion, Poland's internal affair. Pushed to the wall by Glogier, they spoke out against the election. It is probable that they were opposed to both the idea of a plebiscite proper and of a partial election to the Legislative Sejm.

In summary, Glogier decided that the population of the former Grand Duchy should not be teased "in one way or another", but rather "be subjected to hard rule", to be explained the political situation: Polish rule ought to be consolidated within the country, while "no hurry should be taken with the Sejm election, or any other election, whatsoever."⁹⁷

Considering that he expressed his opinion on the country whose future had "not yet been resolved by any official act, or by any manifesto of the Commander-in-Chief, and by any of the August or November resolutions",⁹⁸ and "there is no one to force to so resolve", in a 'Memorial' he signed on 28th February 1920 he put forth the following two variants of action:

1. Postpone the elections for an indefinite period, stimulate growth and wealth to launch fundamental reforms enacted by the Sejm of Warsaw. The Commissioner-General should be subordinated to the Government, on the rights of a minister.
2. If the need is acknowledged to implement the Sejm resolutions (25th November 1919), then, in view of the almost-completed preparatory works, the 'elections' should be set for the beginning of May, according to the five-item electoral law, with the establishment of multi-member constituencies, combining the towns with the surrounding villages. The adoption of this method was meant to strengthen the Polish cause.

On 29th February 1920, at the Organisational Department's Convention in Warsaw, Zdzisław Lechnicki officially defined six basic assumption determining the political line of the Borderland Guard.⁹⁹ He declared that the organisation he was representing held the position that the territory of Poland should not be determined on the basis of the ethnographic criterion of Poland's inability to exist as a uniform state in terms of ethnography. He postulated a reconstruction of the state within its historical borders, recognising the necessity for Poland to

97 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665, c. 26: 'M. Glogier's Memorial of 28th February 1920'.

98 *Ibid.*, c. 28.

99 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1592, c. 46–51: 'Report by T. Szopa re. Z. Lechnicki's address as per the report on the convention of County Heads of the Borderland Guard, District of Vilnius, 3rd March 1920'.

obtain the status of superpower. The only way to achieve the thus-determined target was through reconciliation and agreement with the peoples of the previous Commonwealth's Borderlands. According to Lechnicki, in January 1920 the Borderland Guard had no detailed agenda for resolving the issue of the Eastern Territories. The decision was to be taken after the Polish army seized the territory within the Commonwealth's 1772 borders.

Lechnicki clearly stated that the Guard was primarily protecting the interests of land-owning peasantry in the Borderlands areas, believing that this particular stratum was the most interested in "establishing peace and state order in these lands", which from the Guard's point-of-view was tantamount to establishing Polish statehood there.¹⁰⁰ The logical consequence of adopting this approach was the abovementioned stance of the Borderland Guard's representatives interrogated by Maciej Glogier against the announced plebiscite (disregarding the form). The adoption of this position permitted further funding from the ZCZW, which was duly provided.

There is no doubt that the nature of the Borderland Guard's activities benefitted the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but did not support the implementation of the concept that inspired Józef Piłsudski when he announced the Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy. It is unlikely that Osmałowski's approval of the Guard's policy, which contradicted the ZCZW's programme, was sanctioned by verbal arrangements made at the Belweder, where he was a frequent guest who received oral instructions. The question thus remains whether Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmałowski was aware of the fact that the partner subsidised by the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, which reported to him, was beginning not only to co-create the reality in the Borderlands territory, but also to take control of the situation. If not, it would prove his incompetence. If he did not want to know, it would prove his disloyalty to Józef Piłsudski, stemming from his concern for his own career. From a formal point of view, such conduct by the Guard should be treated as an attempt – by *faits accomplis* – against the scope of the Commissioner-General's real authority. While Osmałowski was aware that he was implementing the policy of the Chief of State, he should have prevented such a situation from occurring.

100 Ibid.

March 1920 and afterwards

The Polish Council of Minsk Land regained its former position following the break-up of the Central Council and declared its willingness to revive the old councils and create new District Councils. In order to unite and organise the Polish population in the Civil District of Minsk, it declared that a general congress would be held of delegates from all the councils (communal, parish, county, and district) so that the Polish residents of Minsk Land could officially express their opinion and a new Executive Committee could be elected to represent those people. The initiative was favourably received by Edmund Iwaszkiewicz, Deputy Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories (incidentally, formerly a member of the Council), who supplemented the letter with a handwritten note recommending the payment of 75,000 Marks to the representative of the Executive Committee for the organisation of a congress of the Polish people.¹⁰¹

The money was allocated from the plebiscite funds. The Editorial Committee of the *Bulletin of the Polish Council of Minsk Land*, chaired by Ignacy Porębski and seated in Mińsk Litewski, may have used this money to publish its first issue, which included the opinion: "All concepts of union, federation, autonomy, or complete fusion (wrongly called 'incorporation') can take place in accordance with how the will of the Borderlands' people is ultimately cleared, but only after the borders have been established, and not as a way to establish those borders. They have existed, they do exist, and we have no right to renounce them."¹⁰²

The Polish National Council of the Byelorussian Lands and Livonia expressed a negative position on the Soviet peace proposals on as early as 10 February 1920.¹⁰³ The Polish Council of Minsk Land expressed the same view on 5 March 1920. Both Councils baldly suggested a need for military action. Military and strategic arguments also supported such course of action. However, the execution

101 Appendix to the order-of-payment from the Chairman of the Polish Council of Minsk Land to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories. Minsk, 5th March 1920. A relief of 75,000 Marks was paid based on a personal talk between Kazimierz Petruszewicz, member of the Executive Committee of the Polish Council of Minsk Land, and Edmund Iwaszkiewicz, Deputy Commissioner-General, and issued upon the manuscript order of the latter on 8th March 1920.

102 *Bulletin of the Polish Council of Minsk Land* [*Biuletyn Rady Polskiej Ziemi Mińskiej*] No. 1, 10th March 1920.

103 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/II, c. 131: 'Declaration of the Polish National Council of the Byelorussian Lands and Livonia received at the Borderland Press Bureau, Warsaw, 10th February 1920. Printed in the *Bulletin of the Borderland Press Bureau*, No. 138, 12th February 1920.

of an offensive action against the Bolsheviks required time. During this time, the Polish community further from the front was gaining time to reflect on and revise its views. The anticipated military successes could lead to approval for the Chief of State. It is possible that, in his calculations, Piłsudski also took into consideration the fact that this would have given him a chance to implement this long-term political plan.

On 6th March 1920, the Paris Peace Conference submitted a protest to Count Maurycy Zamoyski, Polish Ambassador in Paris,¹⁰⁴ against the plebiscite that the Poles intended to carry out in the Lithuanian-Byelorussian lands 'occupied' (in military, *not* political terms) by Polish troops. In reference to Article 87 of the Versailles Treaty, the note argued that the plebiscite could only be organised and controlled by the Entente without any form of pressure. The allied powers, not Poland, were to decide when and how the inhabitants of these territories would be surveyed about the fate of the lands they inhabited. Any attempt to conduct the plebiscite without permission would be considered by the powers to be legally unfounded and irrelevant. The note of 6th March excluded the enforcement of the aforementioned Glogier's second variant. In spite of the Administration having carried out the recommended work, no election was ordained until the dissolution of the ZCZW. Instead of the plebiscite, Glogier's variant number one was being implemented.

The Commander-in-Chief's Order of 29 May 1920 'to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories on the responsibility of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories before the Government of the Republic of Poland' subjected Jerzy Osmołowski, as from 1st June 1920 to "the authority of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, with the right of vote in matters concerning the Eastern Territories at meetings of said Council."¹⁰⁵ The stage of lost opportunities in the activities of the ZCZW therefore came to an end.

Czesław Krupski, the author of the 'Motion on the creation of the Authority for Political Affairs, affiliated to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories' of 1st June 1919, thus described the situation in the area subordinated to the ZCZW until 29th May 1920:

Ignoring the external affairs, otherwise of importance to the issue in question, the very internal arrangement of the relations in the State, the Government, and the Society of

104 See Chapter II note 118 p. 76

105 *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* [*Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich* (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW'), Yr. II, No. 42, 29th May 1920, item 1057.

Poland, and of those factors that ought to be taken into consideration as significant and authoritative in these questions, even if they are surveyed perfunctorily, offers the possibility of ascertaining a series of circumstances that inhibit the application of a direction appropriate to a number of these matters and the achievement of a final result being successful for them. Firstly, it is the multiplicity of these factors; secondly, they are not harmonised in any way, which results in the frequently observable greater marked discrepancy between them; thirdly, there is a fundamental lack of a uniform and established programme; and, fourthly, there is a lack of even permanent specific guidelines, for example in the tactics and conduct of individual factors.¹⁰⁶

The question arises: who was actually responsible for this state of affairs? Was it the originator of the idea of establishing the Civil Administration, or the Commissioner-General? Krupski provides an indirect answer to this question. After the changes decreed on 29th May 1920, he wrote:

Since the Commissariat-General, being a local administrative apparatus, cannot conduct the so-called great politics in the Eastern affairs outside the country, leaving this task to the competence of the General Supreme Authorities of the State, no less categorically can it be claimed that the internal policies in the Eastern Territories should, in their entirety, be managed by the Commissioner-General on behalf of these authorities, having with him a body adapted to this task.

Already in the past, having the facility in this respect on several occasions, I took the liberty of drawing the attention of the Commissioner-General to the essential necessity of concentrating beside him not only small specific matters, be they national or denominational, but in fact the entire local policy in the Eastern Territories, subordinate to the [Civil] Administration and to the administration of the Commissioner-General, as well as in relation to those lands which, at any time in the near future, as a result of the successes achieved by the Polish army, may be transferred under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner. At the same time, I have tried several times to convince the Commissioner that all the matters related to local politics fall within the exclusive competence of the civilian authorities impersonated by the Commissioner-General and are dealt with and managed by the competent office, which is directly dependent upon and subordinate to, the Commissioner-General.¹⁰⁷

When analysing the facts, one finds grounds for concluding that the office of the Commissioner-General had been filled quite unfortunately since 15th April 1919. I believe that the abovementioned actions disqualified Osmołowski as a person adequate to implement Józef Piłsudski's idea of a federation. He was not

106 LMAB, Fond 168-13, lap. 87-91: 'Czesław Krupski. motion for the establishment of an Authority for political affairs, affiliated to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, 1st June 1920'.

107 Ibid.

the right man. It was also extremely harmful for the implementation of the Chief of State's policy that the interlocutors of the Commissioner-General identified Osmołowski with a political direction that was in fact alien to him.

During the ZCZW's activity, the Borderland Guard systematically strengthened its position. It seems that its activists analysed the sentiments prevailing in the Eastern Territories and acted with a view to their own success in the future elections, rather than the success of the policy of the Chief of State, which they otherwise declared to adhere to and from which they drew funds for their own development.

One cannot say, however, that the group of landowners gave no hope for a change of perspective. Attitudes evolved. Enclosed with a private letter, Stanisław Kognowicki sent Tadeusz Wróblewski on 7th April 1920 a sketch drafted by the commission appointed to develop the project of the federation of Poland and Lithuania. It is a sign of a radical change in the position he had held so far. The same letter mentions the activity of another commission that worked on a plan for agricultural reform, in which Kognowicki did not participate due to his different views, but the fact of which he notified Wróblewski.¹⁰⁸ The work of the latter body resulted in a 22-item outline of the law on the parcelling of landed property in the North-Eastern Borderlands, drawn up in Vilnius on 12th June 1920.¹⁰⁹ The Economic Congress of Vilnius Land, which was held on the initiative of the Borderland Guard on 18th June 1920 (Corpus Christi), adopted a resolution expressing the unwavering desire for unity with the Republic of Poland by the votes of 188 delegates.¹¹⁰

The events of the summer of 1920 marked the beginning of a new era in which there was no room for the Administration. Józef Piłsudski's original vision remained unattained not because of the presence of Bolshevik troops close to Warsaw, but because of the Borderlands' public opinion, inspired in the first period by the existence of an alternative Polish decision-making centre in Paris, and later supported by the Legislative Sejm, dominated by national political thought. Throughout the entire period under consideration, the national camp was strongly supported by Polish Army troops and by the ranks of regular Catholic clergy, striving to reclaim more and more new churches, with a glaring disregard for the principles established by the Commissariat-General. The

108 LMAB, Fond 7-1144, lap. 6, 6 (verso), 7, 7 (verso).

109 LMAB, Fond 292-96.

110 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/VI, c. 38: 'Report on the Economic Congress of Vilnius Land'.

Catholic Church must have at least felt battered by the Commissariat-General's actions aimed at warming to the Orthodox Church.¹¹¹

The order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army of 9th September 1920 liquidated the Office of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories and the Office of the Commissioner-General of the Volhynian Lands and the Podolian Front, which had been separated from its jurisdiction since January 1920.¹¹² On the same day, Jerzy Osmołowski was released, by the order of the Commander-in-Chief, from the post of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories.¹¹³

111 On 12th October 1919, the Commissioner-General issued an ordinance re. the procedure of the return of churches, chapels and shrines to the Roman Catholic Church (*Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories – Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces*), Yr. I, No. 25, 31st October 1919, 256. On the request of the Supreme Command [*sic*] of 17th October 1919, J. Osmołowski issued an instruction to pay salaries to Orthodox popes at the expense of the Polish Government. Also, see LCVA, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 328, lap. 64–64 (verte), 65, [personal] Report on the payment of salaries to the Clergy of the Greek-and-Russian Orthodox Church, from 1st May 1919 to 1st August 1920.

112 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 59 (103), 25th October 1920, I. 1630.

113 *Ibid.*, I. 1631.

CHAPTER VII: EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE ZCZW-CONTROLLED TERRITORY

Under Władysław Lichtarowicz's term-of-office (ended October 1919)

Organising the education and school system in a manner consistent with the wishes of the inhabitants of the subordinate area is essentially not typical of an occupier. But this is how the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories behaved. The ZCZW's activities, including in this particular field, can be evaluated in a multifaceted way. Selected facts, taken out of a wider context, have been used for decades as arguments against the Polish policy conducted in 1919–1920 (and later) in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Byelorussian authors and commentators have excelled at throwing accusations against the Poles, beginning with Waław Iwanowski, who in his 'Memorandum on the Byelorussian issue' of 16th March 1920 accused the ZCZW of preferring the organisation of a Russian over the Byelorussian education system in the territory under its control.¹ This is a clearest case possible of a misunderstanding of the idea that had guided the formation of a civilian administration apparatus that was meant to allow the people inhabiting the areas subordinate to the ZCZW to decide their fate and future autonomously.

It is indisputable that teaching in the Russian language was in total contradiction not only with the Byelorussian but above all with the Polish reason for state. However, the local population (mainly Jews) wanted their children to continue their education in the language of which they had a good command.² In addition, there were not enough Polish and Byelorussian teachers. Unemployed

1 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], J. Osmołowski's personal documents, No. 1553/2, c. 27–30: Waław Iwanowski, 'Memorial regarding the Byelorussian cause, 16th March 1920'. This memorandum is partly discussed in J. Turonek, *Waław Iwanowski i odrodzenie Białorusi*, Warsaw 1992, pp. 83–84.

2 This demand is quite clear as it was about the good of the pupils/students; the parallel learning of language and the contents expressed in it would not give much hope for positive progress in the learning.

Russian teachers still lived near the schools they formerly taught at. The Polish authorities therefore created Russian schools in the interest of the local population, and against their own. After all, it was better for the children to attend a Russian school than not to be taught at all. Given the situation, which should have been known to Iwanowski, the accusation that Poland supported Russian schools to the detriment of Byelorussians seems not entirely unfounded.³

The ZCZW's fundamental task was to create conditions for the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania to express their own will. The local population's postulates regarding the introduction of either a Russian, Polish, or Byelorussian education, were a sort of quasi-plebiscite in the Eastern Territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and could reliably illustrate the actual political preferences of the population subordinate to the ZCZW. An analysis of the demand for Byelorussian schools formed a valuable information resource for the Polish decision-makers.

As it soon transpired, the local people were not very interested in setting up Belarusian schools, contrary to what the elite pretended. The adoption of the method based on the free choice of a school's ethnic/national character, based on an interpretation of the spirit of the Vilnius Proclamation, torpedoed the ambitions of the Byelorussian activists, who at the end of 1919 and beginning of 1920 realised what the situation was and were aware of the weaknesses of the Byelorussian movement, knowing well that that "Byelorussians should first be taught how to read and write. And not only in Polish, but in Byelorussian too."⁴

Given the situation prevailing in the autumn of 1919, the only chance to implement the federationist idea was to create for the inhabitants of those lands the conditions to enable them to make free decisions related to education and schooling. Piłsudski was aware of this. In parallel, the only chance for an autonomous rather than a puppet-like development of the Byelorussian state – and the one that was realised by the Byelorussian elite – was to make the people who had not yet clearly defined their identity send their children to Byelorussian schools. They would be forced to do so because this population would otherwise choose for their children an education in Russian or in Polish. For some individuals, political sympathies might have played a role; but for the majority, their

3 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich – kadra i procesy decyzyjne', in *Europa nie prowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina, wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1772–1999)*, Warszawa–Londyn [Warsaw–London] 1999, pp. 53–54.

4 Ibid.

decisions stemmed from an understandable desire to provide their children with an education in a language that was better-known to them and could facilitate contact with the authorities. At the start of their learning process, these pupils could, based on the Administration's decision, be sent to Byelorussian schools and subjected to coerced Byelorussianisation. This would not have been a voluntary decision, though, and the results would only be visible in the longer term. In the Polish-Russian contest that was on, there was no time for receiving the expected effects of the development of the awareness of the emerging Byelorussian nation. This was the core of the drama taking place.

During the ZCZW's activity, the Byelorussian elite was mainly concerned with secondary education, as they wished to form a Byelorussian intelligentsia as quickly as possible. Piłsudski supported this endeavour. However, intelligentsia cannot be created through a political decision. The situation in 1919/1920 could have been solved by the imposition of education in the state language, contrary to the spirit of the Vilnius Proclamation. An analysis of the school statistics⁵ leads to the plausible observation that the Byelorussian elite sought to selectively use the Proclamation slogans. The Byelorussians resolved to initiate talks with the Poles because the latter represented authority and power in the areas concerned. The Byelorussian elite's natural political counterparty should have been those who supported their preferred method – the one of imposing one's will, rather than those who respected the people's right to self-determination.

When negotiating matters of education with Piłsudski, the Byelorussian elite did not actually support the Chief of State's policies; after all, they sought to overthrow the principle of free choice wherever they found it inconvenient, and enforced it where it was possible to gain benefits for the Byelorussian cause. Since the future Byelorussian state was to constitute the foundation of a planned federation, Piłsudski supported the Byelorussian elite's claims, and obliged the ZCZW to win them over for him. During the negotiations, the behaviour of the Byelorussian party was characterised by the constant expectation that Poland, their prospective partner within the probable but not-yet-concluded federation, would spread not Polish national awareness but a competitive, Byelorussian one, using its own budget and effort, in a land pried from Russia's hands with its own blood, before any commitments were made by the Byelorussian elite.

Like Polish society, the ZCZW staff did not represent a uniform position on the future of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory. The situation was similar in the Administration's Department of Education. The supporters

5 See Tables 6 to 17.

of democracy and of a future federation believed that the people should decide themselves about the schools of their preference, and that the ZCZW's duty was not to hinder the implementation of the path they had chosen – hence the high number of Russian schools.⁶ The consistent stance of the supporters of the Chief of State's policy in this respect was a source of conflict with the Byelorussians. The supporters of incorporation found the setting up of foreign schools, especially Russian ones, unacceptable, seeing it as a threat to the Polish *raison d'état* in this territory. Wherever possible, the followers of this oppositional faction hindered the establishment of foreign schools, including Byelorussian schools, which they identified with Russian ones. Several examples of these actions were eagerly cited by the Byelorussian press, and they resound to this day in Polish-Byelorussian studies reconstructing the actual intentions and determinants on both sides.

The numbers of schools with a language of instruction other than Polish and the student and teacher statistics quoted in Tables 6 , 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 clearly prove that despite the often contradictory behaviour of individual Polish decision-makers at the ZCZW's Education Department, Byelorussian schooling was not repressed; on the contrary, it clearly enjoyed support from the Administration compared to other ethnic groups – to the clear detriment, let us add, of Polish secondary education in Minsk⁷ as well as of Polish and non-Polish primary schools in Brześć Litewski District.⁸ This

6 See Tables 9 to 17.

7 Secondary education. In Vilnius, there were 15-plus children per teacher at the average Polish secondary school; at the Lithuanian school, the figure was fewer than 14. In Vilnius's Jewish secondary school, one teacher taught 15.5 students; in its Russian counterpart, the figure was one per 19; the Byelorussian Eighth-grade Co-educational Intermediate [*resp.* lower-secondary] School [*gimnazjum*] (the only one in the area) had ten students per teacher. In Vilnius District's counties, there was one teacher per 19 students at Polish schools, 17.5 at Russian, and 23 at Jewish schools. In Minsk, one teacher taught, on average, 16 Polish students at the secondary school, the figure for the Russian and Jewish school having been 28. The Byelorussian Eighth-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Minsk had one teacher per fewer than nine students, whereas the local Polish Eighth-grade Philological Intermediate School for Boys had one per 40. In Minsk District counties, Polish secondary schools had one teacher per 18 students, Byelorussian intermediate schools had 25, Russian and Jewish secondary schools had 28 and 36, respectively. The average Polish as well as Jewish secondary school in Brześć Litewski District employed one teacher per 23 students, and the number for the peer Russian schools was 22.

8 Elementary education. In the District of Vilnius, the average Polish elementary school (then referred to as 'common') was attended by 62 pupils, Byelorussian by

state-of-affairs offered an excellent argument for the Polish nationalist anti-federation propaganda.

The disproportionate increase in the number of Byelorussian schools in the District of Brześć in the last term of the 1919/20 school year, i.e. after March 1920, doubtlessly resulted from the Polish negotiations and concessions made at the sessions presided by Leon Wasilewski. An analysis of the data sheds new light on the concessions obtained by the Byelorussian party.⁹ As a matter of fact, Poland backed away from the assumptions of the policy it had implemented in the preceding period (for a more detailed discussion of these assumptions, see Chapter IX). At the same time, the other ethnic/national groups proving more socially powerful and displaying a larger economic potential in the area, the Polish population included, felt discriminated against, as they were not able to obtain comparable, let alone peer, conditions for themselves. This situation must have made a bad impression on the Poles inhabiting in the Brześć District, which was located closest to Poland. This deepened the reciprocal aversion, since these Poles were in any case rather sceptically disposed to the idea of a Byelorussian state, possibly federated with Poland.

The beginnings of education in the Eastern Territories in 1919 were indeed very tough. Barely any schools had survived the turmoil caused by the Russians, Germans, and Bolsheviks. The county educational supervisors [*referents*] appointed on behalf of the ZCZW, having no means of transport at their disposal, initially did not even know the number and distribution of the institutions in their subordinated counties. Osmołowski highlighted this fact during his tour of the territory in July 1919. This being the case, the Commissioner-General

58.5, Lithuanian by 37.6, Russian by 54.5, German by 45, Jewish by 118, Karaite by 36, and Latvian by 40. The average teacher taught at the district's Polish school 43.5 pupils, at the Byelorussian one 41.8, Lithuanian 34.4, Russian 54.5, German 22.5, Jewish 82.4, Karaite 24, and Latvian 40. At Minsk District's elementary schools, the average Polish school was attended by 50 pupils, Byelorussian by 53.6, Russian over 66, and Jewish 109. On average, one teacher worked at the Polish school with 37.6 pupils, at the Byelorussian school with almost 50, Russian 47, and Jewish 26.6. Brześć Litewski District's schools had in the first half of the year, statistically, 65.5 pupils attending the Polish elementary school (70 as of June 1920), its Byelorussian counterpart having 77 pupils attending (31 in June 1920), Russian fewer than 60, and Jewish 151.

9 N. Gąsiorowska-Grabowska and I.A. Chrienow (eds.), *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, Vol. 2, Warsaw 1961 [hereinafter, 'DiM'].

was not certain whether the school year would begin in autumn at all, given the objective and unimaginable difficulties.¹⁰

Soon after the liberation of the Lands of Grodno and Vilnius by the Polish Army from the hands of the Bolsheviks, the Borderland Guard – which, by means of an understanding with the ZCZW,¹¹ was entrusted with the mission to extend special care over ‘schooling on private initiative’ – prepared a communiqué ‘On the most urgent needs of the education system in the Eastern Territories’,¹² which stated that there was no schooling structure – teachers or buildings – in the eastern and southern counties of Grodno Land. The Borderland Guard postulated that during the summer school holidays, schools should be built and teacher training courses organised. Years later, Kazimierz Wolbeck, School Inspector in the Brześć Litewski District, noted: “However colossal was the effort needed for the reconstruction of the school buildings and supplying the school[s] with at least the necessary teaching aids and textbooks, it was a hundred times more difficult to find suitable teaching personnel ... [so,] the hunt had begun.”¹³

The observation of the authors of the abovementioned Borderland Guard’s communiqué on the expected interest of the Orthodox population in the Polish school is significant. As a response, it was postulated that two- or three-month Polish teacher training courses be organised (in Białystok, Grodno, and Wołkowysk) in order to attract a minimum of 600 teachers for the Grodno region alone; this postulate was fulfilled by the ZCZW. As is otherwise known, the 1919 summer courses for the Brest region took place in Brześć Litewski, Kobryń, Prużana, Wołkowysk, and Słonim.¹⁴ In Vilnius Land, some 50 schools per county had survived, which meant that the situation there was not as drastic as in the Grodno region. The needs, however, were not that insignificant either; there was understaffing of about 600 teacher vacancies in the Counties of Oszmiana, Lida, Vilnius, Święciany, and in the town of Lida itself.

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- 10 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 93–95: ‘Minutes of the conference of 31st July 1919 in Vilnius [Osmołowski, Węśławski, Lichtarowicz]’.
 - 11 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999, p. 26.
 - 12 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/6/11, c. 67–68.
 - 13 Ibid., No. 1773/10/IV, c. 1–3: ‘Report of the School Inspectorate of the District of Brześć Litewski for its duration of 3rd April 1919 to 23rd July 1920, Torun, 12th January 1921; signed by Kazimierz Wolbeck’.
 - 14 Ibid.

The Commissioner-General recommended that, regardless of the costs, the inspectors took care of organising teacher training seminaries whose graduates would take up teaching jobs in the elementary education system. The recruitment of those willing to take the offer and teaching them the basics of their profession was aimed at raising the quality of the population in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, solving the problem of pedagogical staff, and giving work to graduates. There was a chance that the candidates would represent all social, ethnic and national groups. This gave an opportunity to create an avant-garde in this 'borderland' of cultures and nationalities, one that would work out a *modus vivendi* for the region. In the absence of funds, the initiative of professional development courses could have been an optimal solution. The Borderland Guard took an active part in their organisation by searching for speakers. The courses were also run by the Education Section, though a ten-day training course fixed by it for the Christmas period makes one wonder whether such a coincidence in dates was a lucky idea indeed. Legal and political ties between Poland and the Eastern Territories had not been settled yet, so although it bore the costs of schooling the Borderlands population, the State Treasury had no guarantee of benefiting from it.

Under Łucjan Zarzecki's term-of-office (October 1919 to September 1920)

The two successive decision-makers at the ZCZW's Education Department; namely, Władysław Lichtarowicz, in office from April to October 1919, and Łucjan (Lucjan) Zarzecki (October 1919 until dissolution of the Administration), differed in their views on what was in Poland's interests. The replacement in the position of the director for education at the Commissariat-General was part of a restructuring of the ZCZW's Education and Culture Division. The last quarter of 1919, immediately after the reorganisation of the Education Department for the Eastern Territories, the outflow of teachers, who were taking to better-paid administrative jobs, posed a considerable problem to the Education [literally, 'Enlightenment'] Section. Common opinion had it that this was the case because of the poor emoluments offered to pedagogues. But perhaps this particular reason was just a pretext for such resignations? Could it have actually been due to the overtaking, in late October 1919, of the superior authority of the Eastern Territories' education by a formation with a different political orientation than that which had initiated the organisation of the schooling system? When the Education ['Enlightenment'] Department was abolished and Władysław Lichtarowicz's term-of-office concluded, a total of 3,670 teachers (according

to the official statistics as at December 1919) were employed at 2,688 primary schools in four districts, attended by 163,565 pupils and students, in aggregate. The vast majority of these teachers had been headhunted and employed by Lichtarowicz's team.

The appointment of Zarzecki was announced on 31st October and almost immediately followed by resignations or requests for transfers to administrative positions. This happened only one or two months after the teachers had taken up their duties and accepted the financial conditions. I firmly believe, however, that this was not merely about money. The replacement at the top directorial position entailed not only a change in the education subsidising system (which proved greatly successful)¹⁵ in favour of Polish secondary schools, but also a new way of recruiting the teaching personnel. As per Zarzecki's credible opinion, the lack of teaching staff was the principal issue. Polish was the language of instruction in state seminaries. It is characteristic that no such institution was founded in the District of Minsk; seminaries with a language of instruction other than Polish could be established there, but they would obtain no subsidies. One additional barrier was the fact that the dormitory was only intended for students of Christian denomination, and there were no non-Christian Poles in the Byelorussian lands, while Catholics with an unspecified nationality affiliation oscillated towards Poland. However, "the scarce local forces were completely overwhelmed with their work at schools and offices, whereas the attempts at organising short-term professional development courses locally foundered due to a lack of candidates."¹⁶

The remuneration system adopted by the new management team in the first quarter of 1920 rewarded secondary school teachers, as teachers with many years of experience and long years of service were preferred,¹⁷ which is quite fair.

15 The Section outstandingly supported the scout movement, initiated and developed a fun-and-games ground for children in Vilnius. A similar playground was to be built in the same Polish city at the 'King Sigismund Augustus' Intermediate School. Autumn 1919 was to see the emergence of a special Nursing Institute whereat, under the tutelage of experienced physicians, young female students of schools for girls were to obtain their compulsory traineeship in dealing with infants and babies up to two years of age.

16 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, c. 58 (verso)–64: 'L. Zarzecki, A general overview of the activities of the Public Education ['Enlightenment'] Section in Vilnius, Torun, 12th January 1921'.

17 On 16th March 1920, an ordinance was passed to equalise the teachers' salaries with those of the officials, their amounts to be calculated based on seniority. *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* [Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu

However, the system could also be used to manipulate the graduates of summary courses, teachers from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, who were potential followers of the Chief of State. These teachers obviously had no long seniority. Participation in the courses held by the ZCZW offered few career opportunities. It is no wonder that the professional development courses soon ceased to be popular. The potential intellectual avant-garde of these areas obviously did not want to become second-class citizens, in economic terms. The emerging void needed to be filled, which made it a must to import teachers into the Borderlands from other parts of the country. However, qualified teachers from the former Congress Kingdom of Poland, or Lesser Poland (Małopolska), did not crave employment in this ethnographically diversified, vast and ruined area whose state affiliation had not been decided yet – and which they found completely unknown. This was all the more so given that they were not guaranteed equality in rights with the elementary school teachers from the former Congress Kingdom, which actually challenged the personal career opportunities in the Eastern Borderlands, an area with much poorer conditions of provisioning. But complications of a still different nature were more important, as extensively remarked by Zarzecki in his report for the Liquidation Committee: “These complications, of a political nature, placed a rather considerable obstacle to the building of the schooling and education system, which – conditional upon the situation in which the Eastern Territories found themselves under the occupation [the term stood for ‘seizure’ at the time] of the Polish Authorities – had to be drawn into the orbit of the policies pursued by these authorities, despite the essence of things.”¹⁸ As is commonly accepted, a good teacher is an apolitical one.

After assuming office, Lucjan Zarzecki, the new head of the Education [‘Enlightenment’] Section (established in place of the former Education [‘Enlightenment’] Department) decided to allocate amounts from the Section's budget, which was used to support the development of education in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, for the organisation of short-term teacher training courses in Lesser Poland. In this way, he won over several hundred teachers, who, in his own words, formed a “mostly quite poorly prepared element, often not representing an appropriate moral standard. In spite of this, they have fulfilled their service, to quite a great extent.”¹⁹ The question remains whether the

Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich (hereinafter, ‘D.U. ZCZW’)], Yr. II, 1920, No. 22 (66), item 545.

18 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, k c. 58 (verso)–64 (as in fn. 16).129

19 *Ibid.*, c. 25.

author only meant the pedagogical or also a political service? Did not the financial policy and the initiative to offer additional complementary instruction to female residents of Lesser Poland, who in fact had no jobs before, based on funds earmarked for raising the standard of the 'Borderlands, boarded up against the world', scuttle the guiding thought that originally propelled the organisation of the courses in the former Grand Duchy lands?

In May 1920, 13 months after the ZCZW took Vilnius over, and nine months after the takeover of the Department, the Education Section prepared a plan for the establishment of a Teachers' Correspondence University, with a view to providing professional development instruction to the remaining teaching personnel.²⁰ The participation cost for non-Christians would not be as great a deterrent as in the case of in-service courses. The project remained unimplemented, owing to the course of events. Incoming teachers who had been imported from Lesser Poland were not on close terms with the local population. The gap between the teacher and the parents of the pupils and students was to be filled by an institution called 'School Care'.²¹ To Zarzecki's mind, the system proved deficient due to the lack of local-government (self-government) in the Districts of Brześć Litewski and Vilnius.²²

"In anticipation of developments", the Education Section began to create a teachers' association competitive to the one that already existed.²³ "The plan consisted in creating a sound opinion amongst the teachers, a decent emulation against the background of real, positive school labour, through skilfully putting individuals amongst them into better moral and material conditions."²⁴ The question remains, what was the nature of the 'unsound' atmosphere encountered by Zarzecki and his team among the teachers hired during Lichtarowicz's

20 Ibid.: organisation of the work of the Teachers' Correspondence University as published in the Section's circular, after N 2780 of 15th May 1920.

21 Circular: D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, 1920, No. 38 (82), item 966 and No. 7 (51), item 119.

22 The ordinance was published only on 10th June 1920 (D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, 1920, No. 46 (90)); it is not true, though, that local governments were not in operation in none of these districts.

23 As a result, two such organisations functioned in Vilnius: (i) Polish Association of Popular Teachers in Lithuania, belonging to the Christian Trade Unions' Headquarters domiciled at 4 Gubernatorska St., and (ii) Polish Association of Popular Teachers, with its seat at 2 Benedyktyńska St.

24 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, c. 61 (verso): 'A general overview of the activities of the Public Education [lit., 'Enlightenment'] Section in Vilnius, Toruń, 12th January 1921.'

term-of-office? Zarzecki would later harshly criticise his predecessor's activity: "My predecessor had everything in and on his head, so that his successor found himself miles behind with all sorts of things."²⁵ The signatures of both men appear on the act of the reestablishment of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. The criticism of Lichtarowicz's activity could not have resulted from the negligence of duties by the head of the Education Department. Upon taking up the office in the first days of October, Zarzecki complained that he could not get the people away from their work to set up furniture and organise the office, as classes were underway ("every professional educational worker was already tending to their duties, which made it hard to get them away").²⁶

It seems that it was more about Lichtarowicz's political views. Since whether or not the activity of the institution applying for a subsidy would be considered positive and, consequently, whether or not it had a chance to receive a subsidy from the State Treasury depended on the personal political views of the individuals holding the positions of school inspectors reporting to him, the situation becomes understandable.

It is highly probable that a fierce struggle to gain real influence on school policy was also being waged in the Section. In October 1919, the people operating in the spirit of the Vilnius Proclamation ceased to be the leading force. After achieving an incredible success in starting the school year despite all the unimaginable obstacles, Lichtarowicz lost his position as a result of the restructuring. His role was taken over by a man who disavowed the achievements of his predecessor, and whose views differed from those of the Chief of State. My opinion is that Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmołowski is the one to blame for the new staffing of the Department of Education, disadvantageous to the Chief of State's policy, and consequently the shift in the direction of the ZCZW's school policy. Judging from the concessions made in March 1920, Osmołowski was ineffective in executing the 'Byelorussian mission' previously entrusted to him by Piłsudski. This might have been due to his trust in the Borderland Guard; it was the Guard that had proposed, in the spring of 1919, to form 20 school districts, so-called 'directorates'.²⁷

25 Ibid., 58 (verso)–64 (verso).

26 This means that Lichtarowicz, so indecently criticised by his successor, had managed almost to work a miracle by starting the school year on the date he had fixed, to Osmołowski's disbelief (ibid., 58 (verso)–64 (verso)). The school year was to start in September and October for the secondary and primary schools, respectively.

27 With their seats in Grodno and Vilnius.

The Borderland Guard's proposal provided for the direct dependency of teachers and school supervisors [*referents*] on the directorates, thus placing the education division (the schooling system) beyond the jurisdiction of county commissioners and their superiors; this postulate was later implemented. It is currently impossible to determine the number of 'directorates' created when Lichtarowicz's was in office with the use of the available sources. What is telling, however, is that Zarzecki was unhappy about not having organised education from the scratch, but was forced instead to resume work that had already been initiated.

After his appointment on 31st October 1919 as head of the Section of Education ['Enlightenment'] and Culture at the Commissariat-General, Łucjan Zarzecki did not consider it necessary to draw up an opening balance sheet. The only way now to assess the performance of his predecessor, Władysław Lichtarowicz, is to juxtapose minor and dispersed pieces of information from various sources, such as the press.²⁸ I have come across the name of Lichtarowicz, apart from in Zarzecki's report, in two documents. Namely, on 31st July 1919, Jerzy Osmołowski had a conference in Vilnius with the newly-appointed Inspector of the Vilnius School District, in the presence of Lichtarowicz and one of the county inspectors. The minutes of this meeting have survived,²⁹ as they subsequently served as the core curriculum used by the organisers of the schooling system in the Eastern Territories. At the meeting, Osmołowski reportedly said, "forms are of minor importance. What is important is the understanding of local conditions and a sincere passion for the cause", and the head of the then-Education Department fully complied with this recommendation, retaining the spirit of the Proclamation and neglecting matters of lesser priority.³⁰ At the beginning of July 1919, Osmołowski ordered that the Educational Commission (actually, the Polish Educational Committee) was abolished and its personnel re-evaluated. This measure inevitably resulted in an immediate dislike of the region's Polish intellectual elites towards the 'Varsovian' Commissioner-General.³¹ In a paradoxical twist, aversion may have brought these disparate groups together. Several rival educational societies operated in Vilnius. The Borderland Guard was bargaining with the

28 As per a press-item copy, October 1919 saw the ZCZW support a total of 523 Polish schools in Vilnius District, 424 in Volhynian District, 283 in Brześć Litewski District, and 200 in Minsk District. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, c. 66–66 (verso).

29 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 93–95 (as in fn. 10).

30 Ibid., No. 1773/6/II, c. 58 verso–64 (verso) (as in fn. 16).

31 Warsaw was the Commissariat's registered seat until 8th October 1919.

Polish Educational Committee and the Catholic Society for Polish Schools³² for the formation, in their lieu, of a Branch Association of the Polish Educational Society [*Towarzystwo Okręgowe Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej*]. The Executive Board to be set up in Vilnius was intended to coordinate the work of its subordinate districts. The Association of the Polish Educational Society was established by the end of July. The money available was insufficient to sustain all schools, so the Commissioner-General recommended supporting those establishments that could be expected to survive. He moreover predicted that the number of schools would significantly increase owing to monastic schools, which would relieve the ZCZW. The Administration's priority, formulated in July 1919, was the development of elementary schools, with secondary education coming second. Peasant children would usually not reach secondary level, whereas students with an intelligentsia background mostly continued their education. The distinguished individuals associated with the Educational Commission, with their self-love grazed, essentially sought to develop secondary, rather than primary, education.

Article 1 of the Provisional Ordinance that formally arranged the school matters on the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory stated: "The principle of freedom to teach in the ethnic group's mother tongue shall be established for the territory under the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands."³³ In schools with a non-Polish language of instruction, Polish was officially taught for two hours per week, but some Lithuanian and Jewish schools evaded this obligation. The ordinance established that religious instruction would be offered of the faiths whose confessors attended the given school, and it was taught in the youth's native language. These regulations were an excellent showcase for Poland in the international arena. In fact, the Polish authorities' attitude towards schools with different languages of instruction was in essence expressed in the possibility of receiving financial relief, whereas only those non-Polish schools that used the language of instruction of the majority (two-thirds) of their pupils and students could receive this assistance. This provision was, possibly, one of the reasons for the 'conversions to Byelorussianism' among the Russians, numerous instances of which are described in the period's sources. A 'Russian-Byelorussian bloc' could have achieved the required two-thirds and the chance for a subsidy, especially if it appeared before the Polish authorities under the Byelorussian banner. According to Żarzecki, as a result of this condition, apart from the 'common' (elementary) non-local government-owned schools almost all of which benefited from state

32 Four persons appeared at the general meeting of the Polish School Association.

33 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, 1919, No. 31, II. 340.

aid, only a few Byelorussian schools and one Lithuanian school received governmental support during the operation of the Section.³⁴ Such practice effectively hampered the development of ‘common’ (non-Polish) education, which, after all – according to the Commissioner-General’s declaration of July 1919 – was supposed to be subject to the ZCZW’s special care. The statistics given in 1921 by Zarzecki prove, however, inconsistent with the 1920 press release. There were, reportedly, 66 foreign schools, i.e. Lithuanian, Byelorussian, Russian, and mixed ones subsidised by the ZCZW in the District of Vilnius, 40 in Brześć Litewski District, and 244 in Volhynia, compared to 424 Polish schools.³⁵

The secondary education met with strong support from Zarzecki’s team, for a change. The related schools were mainly Polish and Russian, spontaneously developed by the local communities, as opposed to their elementary (‘common’) counterparts. In the Districts of Vilnius, Brześć Litewski, and Minsk, a total of 34 Polish schools functioned. In the period of the Section’s operation in the Eastern Territories, all of them received governmental aid, 11 were nationalised, and another ten were meant to be nationalised.³⁶ In respect of possible allowances for the Russian and other schools, the decisions were made, in line with the State’s interest, by the respective inspectors following Osmołowski’s suggestions of July 1919 and their own judgment of the situation. The nationalisation procedure appeared quite untypical. In most cases, “a certain society acting under the legalised Act” appeared as the school’s owner,³⁷ with which an appropriate contract was entered into. The Government covered all the financial deficiencies and the entry was diminished (in the Eastern Territories, it would not exceed the symbolic amount 480 Marks annually until the very last moment). “To control

34 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, c. 58 verso – 64 verso (as in fn. 16 & 30).

35 Ibid., c. 66–66 (verso).

36 To be specific, three schools in Vilnius: ‘King Sigismund Augustus’, Joachim Lelewl (‘real’ [secondary] school), ‘Eliza Orzeszkowa’ (girls’ school); one school in Grodno (‘Adam Mickiewicz’); one in Brześć Litewski (‘Romuald Traugutt’); one in Nieśwież; one (‘Józef Piłsudski’) in Świąciany; three in Minsk (one for boys and two for girls); and, one in Słuck. Communisation/nationalisation of one school in Lida, one in Nowogródek, one (for girls) in Nieśwież, one in Kobryń, one in Pińsk, one in Oszmiana, one (‘Tadeusz Reytan’) in Minsk, one in Bobrujsk, one in Słonim, and one in Wołkowysk, were planned for 1920.

37 “The Public Education [‘Enlightenment’] Section persistently endeavoured to support private initiative and the Educational Societies as one of its forms of expression. All the Societies in the Eastern Territories received prominent pecuniary relief.” BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, c. 64 (as in fn. 16, 30 & 34).

and run the school, the Government nominated three officials on its behalf: the school's principal, the secretary, and the clerk [*kancelista*] ... the functions of the Parent-Teacher Association's Tutelary Council, the Pedagogical and Educational Council were strictly set and the entire organisation of the school minutely structured, which in this way represented an intermediate type between a private and, strictly, a governmental school. This type soon began taking root and was received very generously by society. It protected the schools against the inflow of alien elements whilst combining the two elements which so often prove disparate: the society and the state.³⁸ Such a solution, however, was glaringly contrary to Piłsudski's intentions, which Osmałowski knew well. The Commissioner-General found himself in an awkward situation. The Polish society of which he was a member acted in the interests of its own young generation and it was difficult to deny it the rights enjoyed by the other nationalities and ethnicities. Whether the Lithuanians or the Byelorussians were capable of using the existing regulations for their benefit, is a different story. The regulations and decisions of the Education ['Enlightenment'] Section, structured in line with the letter of the law, could only have been taken advantage of by conscious national groups that represented a certain social and economic potential. The Byelorussians, who proved the weakest in cultural and economic terms, apparently followed the Russians' advice, which might somehow explain the numerous cases of people opting for a Russian or a Polish school. The Byelorussian elite were aware of their own people's powerlessness. Their negative emotions turned against those Poles at the ZCZW who wanted to support them, to the benefit of those who sought to destroy them.³⁹

It seems that the Commissioner-General replaced the staff of this essential department, whose importance he underestimated, at the suggestion of some exponents of the groups opposing the Chief of State, and entrusted the department's supervision, together with responsibility for signing all regulations concerning school-related matters, to his deputy Edmund Iwaszkiewicz. He chose not to interfere with education affairs as a matter of principle. He probably thus attempted to secure the neutrality of the Polish community of Vilnius and to create conditions for the implementation of the Chief of State's policy. This, however, transpired to be a mistake by Osmałowski, as not only did he not achieve the expected result, but he actually deteriorated the existing conditions. Of course, there was certainly no unanimity at the ZCZW's Department of

38 Ibid., c. 62 (verso).

39 Cf. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Zarząd Cywilny ...' pp. 53–54.

Education, either: a struggle went on inside the organisation for adhering to the previously observed line of conduct as much as possible. It was Osmołowski, though, who was tasked with overseeing the Administration's labours in their entirety, and it was him who was responsible for implementing the Proclamation agenda with respect to schooling and education – and he failed to fulfil that task.

E. Iwaszkiewicz did not appear at the 'programme' conference held in July 1919 in Vilnius – and this was an extremely beneficial coincidence. Let us make it thoroughly clear that all of the 'temporary' decisions signed by Iwaszkiewicz were driven by economic exigencies; this man completely neglected the political situation. The subsidies distributed by the ZCZW, which had no funds of its own until the treasury apparatus was set in motion, were all released by the State Treasury. However, the fact that conditions were imposed that could practically be met only by the institutions enjoying the support of the Polish national camp, was painful to those who did not have such support, despite their *de nomine* equality in rights. Needless to add that such a practice was not tantamount to the implementation of the Chief of State's Eastern policy.

Byelorussians were receiving money from the ZCZW from the very beginning. The struggle for Byelorussian schools was for the Byelorussian activists a fight for money; however, the funds they obtained were not always allocated for that purpose. Władysław Lichtarowicz did not approach Byelorussian schools as 'alien' and did support them. The subsidy was paid to Paweł Aleksyuk, who in June 1919 received from the Commissariat-General the amount of 30,000 Marks for Byelorussian schools. In spite of this fact, Grodno's School Inspector Rafał Woźniakowski was visited in June and July by a number of Byelorussian teachers who claimed that they had not received the promised money from the Polish Government. Woźniakowski, weary of referring the applicants back to Aleksyuk, who was permanently absent, resolved that from then on, Fyodor Vernikovsky, member of the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno, would take care of the Byelorussian teachers in the city. As it transpired, Vernikovsky had received from Aleksyuk half of the amount transferred to him by Lichtarowicz. Woźniakowski forced Vernikovsky to square the accounts; in response, the latter produced and gave him incredibly inflated bills showing that the funds had been allocated not in the way the subsidy had been supposed to work (e.g., 12,000 Marks apparently spent on travel from Grodno to Vilnius).⁴⁰ The Poles found it unacceptable that the Byelorussians neglected the assumed settlement procedure. The conduct

40 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/1/, c. 18–18 (verso): 'Confidential report regarding the Byelorussian schooling system in the

exemplified by Aleksyuk and Vernikovsky hindered the activities of those members of the Administration staff who sincerely favoured the Byelorussian movement, whilst many felt forced to rethink their previously sympathetic stance. The presumption that the money might have been spent on anti-Polish political action appeared irresistible. The unfriendly – and rather unsurprising – resonance in Polish society of such instances of Byelorussian individuals' conduct did not alter the fundamental political line of the ZCZW with respect to the Byelorussian Council. Let us emphasise, though, that the Byelorussians who had taken self-government positions differed in their attitudes towards cooperation-seeking Poles.⁴¹

Outside the Public Education ['Enlightenment'] Section budget, the Byelorussian Council received, before July 1920, a total of 500,000 Marks from the Head of the District of Minsk,⁴² though R. Woźniakowski, Grodno County's School Inspector, had in August 1919 suggested that Byelorussians would receive decisions and subsidies regarding schools only from the respective county inspectors, who had the actual possibility to exercise control. It has to be clearly stressed that the reason behind the growing reluctance towards the incessant support for the Byelorussian education and school system was the settlement method applied by the Byelorussians subsidised from the ZCZW treasury. The Byelorussians would take any opportunity to place an emphasis on financial postulates related to their own schooling. They did not see – or perhaps, pretended that they did not see – that their conduct all too often provoked reluctance among those who had previously been well disposed towards them.

County of Grodno, by the School Inspector of the District of Grodno, No. 161, at Grodno, to the Commissioner-General at Warsaw, 7th August 1919.

- 41 The Educational Department in Minsk was headed by Stanisław Lenkowski, "presently a Byelorussian, albeit quite recently he was a Pole, with an almost national[istic] tint. He treated the Polish teachers, regardless of their sex, "in the meanest possible way, reminiscent of the time when we were officially regarded second- or third-class citizens, almost outlawed." He once promised the post of Polish teacher to a Russian woman, refusing it to a Polish (female) applicant. A hundred years afterwards, it is difficult to resolve whose pedagogical qualifications were of a higher quality. However, the presence in the personnel of Mr Jakobini – the notorious associate of Malka Frumkina, who kept a firm grip on the education system in the Bolshevik time, himself being responsible for removing priests and religious instruction from Polish schools – suggests that anti-Polish policy, rather than coincidence, was the case as far as the developments in question are concerned. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 246.
- 42 *Ibid.*, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/II, c. 64 (as in fn. 16, 30, 34 & 37).

Instead, they highlighted their sense of harm triggered, apparently, by the way the nicely-sounding idea was implemented.

From October 1919 onwards, the Education Section pursued, wherever possible, a policy contrary to the Chief of State's programme in the field of 'common' (elementary) education. The Byelorussian elite attentively followed its doings, recording all instances of anti-Byelorussian behaviour. Claims in this respect were submitted to the author of the Vilnius Proclamation, neglecting the fact that the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory, similar to the Congress Kingdom and Lesser Poland, and even Paris, was the scene of the fundamental Polish dispute over the territorial and constitutional shape of the Polish state. The Eastern policy was an element of the game, the Byelorussians having been the chess pawns.

The material inclination showed by the Byelorussians, their deliberation and 'self-interest', to which Maciej Glogier referred, were very well known to the representatives of the Polish society in the former Grand Duchy, who had broad contacts in Warsaw. The question thus arises whether the assumption, from October 1919 onwards, of this 'apolitical policy' towards the non-Polish education system by the ZCZW's department in charge of schooling was a considered method. Was it not so that somebody took advantage of the social sentiments for his (their) desired purpose? Another tinderbox for the dissatisfaction among the non-subsidised nationalities/ethnic groups must have been the fact that all the educational institutions were subjected to control by the school inspectorate, whereas in the subsidised Polish secondary school system the institution's director, i.e. the principal/headmaster, exercised the control function. The temporary ordinance regarding the school and education system confirmed the principle of freedom of receiving instruction in one's native language, as declared by Osmołowski in July 1919. To open a private school or other educational institution, the organiser had however to obtain a permit from the authorities in charge of education. This situation opened potential for manipulation. Only selected institutions, those regarding which a general state interest had been determined, could possibly count on being taken over on a state-employment basis. The decisions in these matters were made, or opinions were pronounced, by county and district school inspectors and the Head of the Commissariat-General's Education ['Enlightenment'] and Culture Section.⁴³

43 Lucjan Zarzecki was Head of the Commissariat-General's Education ['Enlightenment'] and Culture Section; Józef Łukaszewicz was Inspector of Secondary Schools; Władysław Probulski was Inspector of 'Common' [i.e. Elementary] Schools; Artur

Private and social schools had the liberty to compile their own curricula. To the schools which accepted the curriculum proposed by the ZCZW's Education Section, the latter could (but did not have to) grant state aid. The said curriculum was defined by means of 31 special circulars, not all of which were published in the *Official Journal*; "the adaptation of the common [i.e. elementary] school curriculum of the Min.[istry] R.[eligious] D.[enominations] and P.[ublic] E.[ducation/'Enlightenment'] to the needs of the schools in the Eastern territories was postponed until later."⁴⁴ Contrary to popular belief, the records related to the ZCZW's activities reveal an image of enormous development in vocational education, a segment that had not existed before.⁴⁵ Let us recall that the Commissioner-General had doubted the possibility to inaugurate the school year and the development potential of vocational education. The first attempts at developing vocational education were fruitless, but it cannot be clearly determined whether it was a matter of coincidence or a planned action. The young people born into Polish intelligentsia families would, generally, not flock to vocational instruction. It was decided in February 1920 that a dedicated department and a Vocational Schooling Council, run by the Head of the Public Education ['Enlightenment'] Section, would be established. The plans regarding the vocational instruction system were advanced indeed. It was envisioned that technical schools, and an industrial and a construction-and-road engineering school, would be set up in Vilnius. A 'lower industrial school' was formed in Grodno. Autumn 1920 would see the launch of two secondary technical schools in Vilnius, along with a 'lower' school with two specialised sections, lock-smithery and carpentry; also, an agricultural school was to be set up in Boniny. A comprehensive vocational schooling programme was compiled at the Public Education Section, "where different localities in the Eastern Territories have appropriately been taken into account."⁴⁶

Kopacz was Inspector of Teacher Training Seminaries. District School Inspectors were: Bolesław Zajączkowski in Volhynian District, Witold Węśławski in Vilnius District, Kazimierz Wolbeck in Brześć Litewski District, Lucjan Kwiek in Minsk District. Marian Adamowicz was School Inspector for the city of Vilnius; he was replaced in March 1920 by Stanisław Kurowski (the former inspector was demoted to his successor's assistant).

44 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/H, c. 62 (as in fn. 16, 30, 34, 37 & 42).

45 See Tables 9 to 17.

46 Ibid.

The answer to the question of which method was considered appropriate and precisely which localities were considered has to remain a matter of conjecture. The following excerpt from a report on the operations of the Public Education [‘Enlightenment’] Section might provide a clue: “True, there used to exist a destroyed agricultural school in Minsk Land, in Marijno-Górka, which was to be completely Polonised betimes.”⁴⁷ Perhaps this particular sentence hides the solution to the issue of ‘considered appropriate planning’? By way of experiment, it was planned to merge certain elementary schools with a multi-year vocational course (as in Kalwaria near Vilnius and in selected schools in Brześć Litewski District). Perhaps the point was for such schools to emerge in locations inhabited by pauperised Poles?

An analysis of the proportion of the financial outlays on the diverse types of schooling/education in the District Inspectorate’s activity proves that secondary education absorbed the highest amount of subsidies in the District of Brześć Litewski, the lowest having been received by vocational instruction and off-school education.⁴⁸ Otherwise, vocational education in Brześć District obtained the highest subsidies in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the first quarter of 1920, all vocational schools in the Eastern Territories received 724,501 Marks, in total.⁴⁹

The directives put forth by the Commissioner-General at the July 1919 ‘programme conference’ with respect to non-Polish schools were as follows:

We have no obligations whatsoever with regards to Russian schools, and are giving them no subsidies. Byelorussian schools, provided that there is a certain amount [i.e. number of prospective students] willing to be taught in Byelorussian, ought to be given a subsidy. It may be presumed that [the number of] such cases will be minimal. We are giving no subsidies to Jewish schooling. The minority law provides for care to the extent that they are not in a position to demand anything else from the Administration. Since we have no special school fund, and since our attitude towards Poland has not been regularised,

47 Ibid.

48 ‘Common’ (elementary) education in Brześć Litewski District (347 schools as of March 1920, of which 340 were Polish): 600 schools, including 34 Byelorussian, 76 Russian, several dozen Jewish (as of June); of which 489 were subsidised schools – total subsidy amount: 5,104,969 Marks, 69 pfennig. Secondary education: (18 schools*) subsidised – total subsidy: 944,041 Marks, 69 pfennig. Vocational education: (14 schools*) subsidised – total subsidy: 312,974 Marks, 90 pfennig. Off-school education: total subsidy amount: 285,445 Marks, 60 pfennig. See Tables 9 to 17.

49 In specific, ‘common’ (elementary) schools: 9,288,710 Marks; secondary schools – 2,190,027 Marks; off-school education – 830,560 Marks, culture and arts – 39,000 Marks; scholarships and reliefs – 110,000 Marks, after *Dziennik Wileński*, No. 57, 11th March 1920.

then the now-existing credit I am giving to Polish schools, whereas for the others I am but a kind observer.⁵⁰

The question of the use of the Russian language in schools disturbed one of the county inspectors, who requested clarification, since 'Ordinance No. 2',⁵¹ which considered schools, only referred to local languages: Polish, Byelorussian, and Yiddish. Osmołowski gave a clear answer: the schools with a foreign (i.e. Russian) language of instruction can exist, as there must be liberty in this country. Otherwise, it would entail the use of methods that used to, rightly, outrage the Poles. However, the schools with a foreign language of instruction could not expect to enjoy the support of the ZCZW; still, the latter would exercise control over them.⁵² Such a standpoint did not appeal at all to the Polish intelligentsia, and its members repeatedly expressed their stance in written protests. In his political report from Wołkowysk, Stanisław Podwieski stated that the Commissioner-General's position on equal rights for languages at schools was perceived as a manifestation of an 'irresolute attitude'. In Brześć Litewski, the local intelligentsia, acting under the auspices of the County Welfare Council, were appalled by the statement of Mr Dziewanowski, delegate of the Central Welfare Council, who, in the presence of an Orthodox pope, suggested that county funds ought to be used for the establishment of Russian schools to be managed by popes.

It appears quite clear to me that Dziewanowski did not seek to have the County of Brześć Litewski Russified. He proposed acting in this way in view of welfare of the local people who spoke this language. He was doubtlessly a follower of the Chief of State. The prospective objective of establishing a Russian school run by an Orthodox pope and supported by Polish money was to bring about a

50 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 93–95 (as in fn. 10 and 29). 123 i 142

51 The document has not been found so far.

52 "The gentlemen are expected to control whether there is a real need to form such a school, and whether the people are indeed willing to be taught in Russian. Pressure should be exerted so that the people refrain from this wish, but if they do demand the permit all the same, it ought to be given and control should be exercised over this school. This need for a Russian school in the countryside is highly unwelcome. Referring to the permits, I have basically thought of urban areas, of those students who have already been through several grades at a Russian school, so that they be offered the opportunity of gaining complementary education in the language in which they had once begun their learning." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 93–95 (as in fn. 10, 29 & 50). 123,142,&137

friendly attitude towards Poland among these very local people, at whose service the school was to be put. This was done because the self-determination of this population was foreseen in the future: in the event that the federative concept was implemented, the county would possibly be integrated into a Byelorussia-to-be, which by way of expressing their option in an unrestrained manner was to determine its tomorrow. After all, it was part of Poland's interest that Byelorussia chose it as the partner. Regrettably, either those who supported the Chief of State's political line did not know how to clearly communicate the incentive behind their actions, or the opinion-forming members of the local Polish intelligentsia did not find such a chain-of-reasoning convincing – or perhaps both. Indignant at the declarations of Brześć Litewski Commissioner Marian Zbrowski, who – with the knowledge of his superior authorities – propagated Russian and Ukrainian schools, the County Welfare Council, declared in June 1919 its intention to use all measures available to prevent the pronouncement of such views in the name of Polish institutions.⁵³

In the autumn of 1919, Russian-Jewish schools received concessions from the Brześć Litewski District, prior to the setting up of the Education ['Enlightenment'] Section, during W. Lichtarowicz's last days in office at the Education Department – possibly with his permission (though it cannot be proved). Run by L. Zarzecki, the Section, contrary to his predecessor's endeavours, consistently strove to abolish Russian-Jewish schools from the new school year 1920/1 onwards. Nevertheless, the concessions were retained in the Brześć District by School Inspector Kazimierz Wolbeck. The Education Section instructed that Polish as the language of instruction be gradually introduced, with the important proviso that if the students found it difficult to understand something precisely, Russian could be used in support – quite a pedagogical approach, given the realities of the time. Moreover, upper grades could use Russian provided that Polish terms were introduced and Polish used when talking to one another on a daily basis. This solution enabled the youth to continue their learning in the language with which they were less familiar. Since children have the ability to learn a foreign language quickly and fairly easily, the process of becoming acquainted with Polish proved painless and followed in a way that should not have irritated the faction in Polish society which thoroughly opposed any democratic and federalistic novelties.

53 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1713, c. 29–30: 'Political report by Stanisława Podwińskiego (B[ordeland] G[uard]) for 16th June–2nd July 1919. Circuit of Wołkowysk, District of Grodno.'

This state of affairs was upset in the District of Brześć Litewski in late December 1919 and destroyed after March 1920.

The scandal caused by the Jews of Nieśwież⁵⁴ attracted to the Brześć Inspectorate in particular, and to the issue of the non-Polish education system in particular, the vigilant attention of L. Zarzecki, the Education ['Enlightenment'] Section head, who was ill-disposed towards the 'aliens'. Fortunately for Inspector K. Wolbeck, frequent inspections found that the system adopted for the Brześć District had fructified the opportunity for the non-Polish youth to complete their education whilst, in parallel, absorbing Polish, a foreign language to them⁵⁵ – thereby confirming that the method he consistently applied was practically right. After March 1920, resulting from the school concessions received by the Byelorussians during the negotiations with L. Wasilewski and W. Raczkiewicz, the average Polish school 'common' in Brześć Litewski District was attended by 70 pupils per teacher, its Byelorussian equivalent having 31. The average Russian school had almost 60 pupils taught by one teacher, and the figure for the Jewish school was 151. It was obvious that such unjustly structured learning conditions would provoke heated protests by those who had thoroughly disliked the idea of a 'Byelorussian State' in an area so close to Poland and inhabited by Poles – whilst denying the arguments of the Poles considered Byelorussian followers.

The Polish personnel of the Education ['Enlightenment'] Section was composed not only of resolute followers of the federation of incorporation, there were also many centre-oriented individuals. Rafał Woźniakowski, School Inspector in Grodno, was not an opponent of the Byelorussians, as he tends to be portrayed by some scholars today. His attitude towards the Byelorussian people changed based on his personal experience. However, he was outraged by the letters received from the Central Council of Vilnius and Grodno Regions,

54 In December 1919, the Russian-Jewish intermediary school in Nieśwież, which was "tendentiously inimically inclined towards the Polish Government", sent a delegation to the Commissariat-General in Vilnius and attacked there the District Inspectorate of Brześć, which, contrary to the provisions of the temporary ordinance (D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, 1919, No. 31), had reportedly demanded from it, in writing, that lectures be delivered in Polish at non-Polish schools. The Commissariat repealed the 'illegal' edict of the District Inspectorate and allowed the delegation to officially introduce Russian as the language of instruction in the lower grades.

55 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/1, c. 1–3 (verso): 'Substantive report of the School Inspectorate of the District of Brześć [Litewski] for the entire period of operation, 3rd April 1919 to 23rd July 1920, signed by K. Wolbeck, School Inspector of the District of Brześć, Toruń, 12th January 1921.'

which disdained his function (titriling him ‘inspector of Polish schools’ only) and treated him very instrumentally.⁵⁶ Along with a critique of the ‘black-hundredist’ Grodno Council, Woźniakowski’s manuscript contains information that enables us to reconstruct his assumptions of school/educational policy implemented at the institution he ran. Woźniakowski regarded it as his task to control the location and arrangement of Byelorussian schools and to prevent a situation where no alternative Polish school would be set up.⁵⁷ This practice was not contrary to the Commissariat-General’s stance with respect to school system and education.⁵⁸ Creating an alternative to the emerging Byelorussian school was treated by the Byelorussian elite as an efficient sabotage of the Polish partners.

In contrast to Mr Jezierski, who was responsible for secondary schools and was the inspector in the District of Minsk (his contemporaries saw him as an

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- 56 Certification No. 183 of 5th August 1919 announced that the Central Byelorussian Council of Vilnius and Grodno Lands resolved to turn the four-grade Byelorussian school in Grodno into an intermediate school and requested the competent Polish offices to offer assistance to the teacher, Luka Dzekut’-Malei, in a situation that there was no four-grade Byelorussian school in Grodno. Memos Nos. 146 and 182 authorised the said teacher to take back the 16,500 Marks, taken off by the Polish Government from the teacher Yanka Antonov, for teacher training courses in Vilnius. R. Woźniakowski sent copies of these documents, together with his own report, announcing that he would ignore such one-sided moves by the Council. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/1, c. 18–18 (verso). Incidentally, issue No. 125 of *Belarus’*, dated 13th June 1920, announced that Vilnius’s Byelorussian eight-grade intermediate school remained under the custody of the Byelorussian School Council (which received money from the ZCZW) and encountered hindrances from the ZCZW’s Education [‘Enlightenment’] Section, which allowed for the opening of four grades only. This piece of information might otherwise be read in the sense that a Byelorussian school was formed in Vilnius with use of Polish money.
- 57 “Now the time has come when Byelorussians will likely establish their schools. Should they do it outside my knowledge, I shall not be in a position to become aware of where they would set up such schools; so, there could be a village wherein they would come ahead of a Polish school. However, should they receive the prescription that they may only establish a school upon my consent and in my presence, then I shall doubtlessly do it for them with the will and kindness that I am obliged to display, but then I also know what to do with the Polish school.” BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/1, c. 18–18 (verso).
- 58 R. Woźniakowski’s remarks must have been considered at the Public Education [‘Enlightenment’] Section in Vilnius in the course of preparing edicts Nos. 15 3283/246 – temporary service regulations for district school inspectors, and 15 384/247 – temporary service regulations for county school inspectors.

incompetent pedagogue and administrator), Lucjan Kwiek, the district's School Inspector, fundamentally defended the schools whose language of instruction was Russian. However, he did not in the least support the federative solution to the complex problem of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He was driven by motives different than those that propelled Kazimierz Wolbeck in the District of Brześć Litewski. To quote:

Jews, Russians, and those purporting to be Russians, desiderate to have schools of this sort. If we preserve the schools with Russian as the language of instruction, we will satisfy the toleration principle, which we ought to care about very much. If we abolish this language though, the local Russians will primarily raise the charge of forced Polishisation; this will not turn them into Poles, whilst all of them will lean towards Byelorussians. The Byelorussian movement is superficial at present, not encompassing broad masses, and as long as it produces no cultural values, we can approach it as a provincial movement and it is illegitimate to fight it. When, however, this movement boasts achievements in the cultural development of humankind, attainments in the intellectual, technical, and artistic domains, combat against it will be tougher, and will, in some way, represent the oppressing of a nationality whose physiognomy has already grown distinct. There is a considerable handful of intelligentsia amongst the local Russians who, by leaning towards the Byelorussians, can produce precisely this particular danger, preserve their singularity, and allow Russians to be treated as citizens of an alien state.⁵⁹

Kwiek was aware of the fact that Jews were important supporters of Russian education:

The right to open jargon schools will not change the situation, for the prevalent portion of the orthodox who are sitting here will not agree to jargon at school and will apply for schools with Polish as the language of instruction, to which we will have to consent and subsequently idly watch, or inefficiently fight, the parodying of Polish education, for we will be restrained from closing such schools by the serious peril of attracting the accusation of taming education in general. This being the case, I would allow Jews to continue running the schools with Russian as the instruction language. And I would even identify a considerable benefit for us because of it ... Making use of their international power, the Jews will benefit from the Russian revolution by at least having the Pale of Settlement abolished, and then a considerable portion of local Jews may be redirected to Russia ... preserving Russian schools for them would make their lives difficult in the Polish state, never bursting the threads tying them to Russia, and facilitating the decision on their part to emigrate to Russia for good.

59 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/1, c. 64–64 (verso): 'Address by Lucjan Kwiek, Inspector for Public Education ['Enlightenment'], to the Head of the Public Education ['Enlightenment'] Section of the ZCZW, dated 18th March 1920, regarding the existence of non-Polish schools.'

Kwiek went even further with his projects, postulating that Jews not be encouraged to learn the Polish language, Polish history or geography, instead being offered corresponding subjects related to Russia. Although the document suggests that Kwiek was by no means inspired by federative ideas (“tolerance will diversify, disperse and debilitate them”), the Minsk District Inspector soon resigned.⁶⁰ It will probably remain impossible to find out whether this resulted from the response of the followers of incorporation, or federation, within the ZCZW. Or, perhaps, the actual reason was the injured ambition of the author of the motion that had been ignored?

The discussion concerning the policy with respect to the Byelorussian education system was very tough indeed. Byelorussian schools meant a different thing to Byelorussian politicians than to the Poles. This discrepancy in the assessment of the situation is attested to by a number of records, which also enable us to reconstruct the motivation of Polish public opinion: the latter consistently believed that one who pretended to be a Russian yesterday (i.e. under Russia’s domination) could not be a Byelorussian. The situation was made even more complex because of the undoubted fact of Russia’s penetration into the area, which lent credibility to the local Polish society’s distrust of the ‘recent’ Byelorussians. “Muscovites posing as Byelorussians as so naming themselves” was a frequent thing. “This revealed itself, in particular, in the schooling action where Russian teachers with no command of Byelorussian petitioned for the opening of Byelorussian schools. Only in the County of Grodno are two or three Byelorussian schools in operation. The Orthodox people do not want Byelorussian schools. What they demand is Polish or Russian schools. They feel aggrieved by the Polish authorities preventing the Russian language from being a school subject.”⁶¹

It has to be emphasised that the ‘preventing’ was simply caused by non-funding of the Russian language in free-of-charge schools that did not employ Russian as the language of instruction. If the local people had brought along the teachers, paid for the space leased in a governmental building and for the education itself, as part of an Educational Society or otherwise, it would have indeed been possible. However, the Orthodox people believed that Russian lessons should be taught as part of free Polish or Byelorussian school education. At the

60 Based on *Dziennik Wileński* No. 109, 20th June 1920.

61 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/8, c. 242–249: ‘General report from the Grodno-and-Brześć [Litewski] District, until 1st December 1919.

same time, they would not opt for the Russian school that operated in parallel, for it had to be paid for.

Thus, education and schooling affairs became the major field of struggle between the followers of two political concepts related to the Eastern Territories: the one of Polonisation, and the one of respecting the peculiar character of the area and its people, proportionally to the power of the 'alien' factor. The conclusion is irresistible that in the search for a win-win situation, federation supporters used an argument against their Polish rivals that could be summarised thus: the cultural weakness of the non-Polish element implies that we will Polonise them with use of democratic methods recognised in the world, avoiding the method of annexation or partition, which we find disgraced, after all. This hypothesis would explain W. Jeśman's remark made to the Commissioner-General: "We are all seeking the same thing, are we not?"⁶² as well as the ferocity of the Byelorussians wringing money from the ZCZW, combined with their reluctance to account for the sums acquired for the specified purposes.

Even if this hypothesis holds true, it remains a matter of fact that Poland was a pioneer in championing Western culture in the East, and considered it legitimate to use the support of the Poles inhabiting these lands. Schools were rebuilt, and the education standard of the dwellers of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania significantly increased, regardless of the type of school attended by their offspring. As far as the legal standpoint is concerned, the principle of freedom of teaching was adopted and the right to be taught in one's mother tongue was observed. The Polish Treasury bore enormous costs: 2 million Marks in October 1919 to 9.5 million in January 1920, up to 12 million in July 1920. The elementary ('common') education, systemically supported by the ZCZW saw 120 % growth, though the curriculum recommendations of the Commissioner-General were not completely implemented. The potential of secondary education increased even more considerably. The new ranks of elementary-level graduates were growing up, while the political situation did not favour educating children outside the Borderlands. Those Lithuanians who had applied and accepted the subsidy (if allotted), allocated the money for education. Some behaved maliciously towards the sponsor, by refusing to fix two hours of Polish in the weekly curriculum, but such cases were incidental.

The political, not only territorial, considerations implied that Byelorussians received much more: after all, they were to be made the first link in the projected federation. It is possible that they were eager to make shortcuts in attaining

62 See Chapter III.

equality in rights with Poles, so as to level the disproportions they found awkward and bothering; hence their rush to form secondary schools.⁶³ This could not have been welcomed by the parents of Polish children, to whose minds only Polish or Jewish sons could, traditionally, expect in that area to obtain jobs requiring a secondary education. The locally strong group of Russian intelligentsia, who pretended to be Byelorussians – possibly for the reasons outlined above – did not speak Byelorussian. All this did not appeal to ZCZW officials, among many others. At the Byelorussian Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Minsk, one teacher taught less than nine students, on average; in the Byelorussian Intermediate School in the County of Słuck, the figure was one per 25. Minsk's Polish Eight-grade Philological Intermediate School for Boys had one teacher per 40 attending students. On average, in Minsk one teacher taught 16 students at Polish secondary schools, and 28 at Russian and Jewish schools. One therefore comes to the conclusion that either the Byelorussians were not capable of making use of the opportunities provided to them as a result of 'school concessions', or they identified equality in rights with their own common people being privileged. Resulting from their claims against their Polish partners, they provided their people with educational conditions better than the others could enjoy, using to this end the money from the common ZCZW treasury. This situation must have triggered ardent protests from the qualified teachers employed at Polish secondary schools.

In substantive terms, apart from the political context of the affair, it has to be admitted that they were right. The secondary schools projected by the Byelorussian elite across the districts concerned would not have been attended by students representing the required standard and capable of functionally using a uniform Byelorussian and, moreover, would not have had adequate teachers, textbooks, and curricula. Such facilities and resources could not be created by one political decision; the time and systematic work could not be circumvented. There was a danger, unfortunately confirmed by practice, that instead of genuine Byelorussian schools, their imitations would have been developed, staffed with Russian personnel.

According to the ZCZW's statistics, 800,000 primers and Polish-language textbooks were printed in total by July 1920, along with 1,500,000 composition books. The language used in Mathematics handbooks ought not to have aroused anybody's emotion, as long as the book fairly clearly communicated

63 The number of elementary school graduates was rather scarce at the time; the first such schools were set up by the Germans at the end of their occupation.

the knowledge prescribed by the curriculum. Compulsory Polish-language training must have proved less welcome. In any case, the basic numbers speak for themselves: altogether 193,596 pupils were taught in a total of 1,478 schools (including 2,508 'common'/elementary, 115 secondary, and 41 vocational) by 5,352 teachers, among whom were those who had completed one of the 56 teacher training courses run using the ZCZW's funds. The University of Vilnius, resurrected as the sixth tertiary school after Poland's regained independence and developed with considerable outlays, managed to attract as many as 503 students (including 34 Jewish).⁶⁴ Against 60 % of Polish schools locally, 40 % accounted for non-Polish schools⁶⁵ – all subsidised, with larger or smaller amounts received (directly or indirectly), by the Polish State Treasury.

Piłsudski ordered the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories to involve funds, which almost exceeded the Polish potential, in lifting the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania territory out of stagnancy, in the hope that the effort would be appreciated by the potential partners of the projected federation when the hour of self-determination came, heralded in the Proclamation to the residents. But the hour never came. The political opponents of the Chief of State evaluated the emerging Lithuanian and Byelorussian elites differently than he did. Those in the former Grand Duchy lands as well as those in Warsaw and Paris believed that the political line whose implementation was to be the task of the ZCZW (the Public Education ['Enlightenment'] Section being an integral part of the latter) was not beneficial to the Polish *raison d'état*. What should they have done, then, in face of the instructions received from their superior, which they considered adverse and even menacing to the welfare of the State? A significant part of Polish society that opposed the Chief of State's policies also faced this dilemma, and hence was prone to suggestions of politicians and to manipulations by the press and other means available. However, it must be strongly emphasised that the fundamental dispute over the legitimacy of Poland's future policy in the East split the nation into two camps, both nevertheless being driven by the noblest of motives. This is what the issue was about.

The Education ['Enlightenment'] Section attracted from October 1919 the elite of the Polish Borderlands intelligentsia, the vast majority of whom were negatively disposed towards the political novelties that might have implied unforeseeable consequences, primarily social ones, possibly menacing the old arrangement of things. The personnel were bound by the rules of professional

64 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/7/VIII, c. 47–52.

65 See Tables 6 to 17.

conduct; also, they would certainly be concerned for their jobs. The scarce control exercised by L. Zarzecki over the districts and the Commissioner-General's failure to oversee the Education Section, stemming from his underestimation of the importance of education and schooling, effectively favoured the skilful sabotaging of top-down directives by members of the staff. By means of the school compromise, Jerzy Osmołowski endeavoured to win over the settled Borderland elite whose attitude to him was hostile. His incentive might have been that he thereby sought opportunities to implement the entrusted policy. If this assumption is true, it is also true that the outcome did not match his intentions.

Table 6. Statistics of schools, teachers, and pupils/students residing in the District of Vilnius in the 1919/1920 school year, by ethnicity/nationality (complete)*

Number of:	Vilnius (city)	County of Vilnius	County of Grodno	County of Wilejka	County of Oszmiana Świątiany	County of Troki	County of Dzisna	County of Lida	County of Nowogródek	County of Brasław	Total
'common' (elementary) schools	128	188	79	92	12	62	89	116	60	35	929
secondary schools	14	1	4	1	.	1	-	3	1	.	26
vocational schools	6	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	.	.	13
teacher training seminaries	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	.	.	4
courses	4	32	-	1	1	-	-	-	5	.	56
pupils/students	21,302	12,950	8,961	5,187	827	4,102	3,266	7,267	3,679	1,574	80,481
teachers	732	236	269	128	17	108	112	177	102	38	2,173

* As of March 1920; 859 Polish and 968 non-Polish schools.

Source: Author's compilation based on BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, No. 1773/6/II, c. 72-76.

Table 7. Statistics of schools, teachers, and pupils/students residing in the District of Brześć Litewski in the 1919/1920 school year, by ethnicity/nationality (complete)*

Number of:	County of Wołkowysk	County of Litewski	County of Brześć	County of Kobryń	County of Prużany	County of Słonim	County of Pińsk	County of Baranowicze	County of Mozyrz	Total
'common' (elementary) schools	48	63	74	37	55	21	49	-	-	347
secondary schools	1	4	3	-	1	7	2	-	-	18
vocational schools	-	10	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	14
teacher training seminars	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
courses	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	28,427
pupils/students	3,142	4,141	6,895	2,509	3,065	4,422	4,253	-	-	727
teachers	69	136	140	63	75	134	110	-	-	-

* As of March 1920; 340 Polish and 379 non-Polish schools.
Source: As in Table 6.

Table 8. Statistics of schools, teachers, and pupils/students residing in the District of Minsk in the 1919/1920 school year, by ethnicity/nationality (complete)*

Number of:	County of Minsk	County of Bobrujsk	County of Borysów	County of Stuck	County of Ihumeń	County of Lepel (South)	Total
'common' (elementary) schools	291	150	155	221	306	21	1,123
secondary schools	32	5	13	11	10	7	71
vocational schools	5	-	4	4	1	4	14
teacher training seminaries	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
courses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
pupils/students	22,344	12,028	13,066	18,023	19,229	4,422	84,690
teachers	747	334	367	438	568	134	2,454

* As of March 1920; 279 Polish and 1,208 non-Polish schools.
Source: As in Table 6.

Table 9. 'Common' (elementary) schools in the District of Vilnius (as at 20th June 1920)

Schools (by language)	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of teachers
Polish	859	53,027	1,219
Byelorussian	15	878	21
Lithuanian	21	791	23
Russian	17	927	17
German	2	90	4
Jewish	121	14,337	174
Karaite	2	72	3
Latvian	1	40	1
Total	1,038	70,162	1,462

Source: Author's compilation based on BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, No. 1773/6/II, c. 2-5 (verte): 'Education and schools in the Eastern Territories'; *ibid.*, No. 17173/1: 'Education and school system in the Eastern Territories'; *ibid.*, No. 17173/1: 'Substantive report by the School Inspectorate of the District of Brześć [Litewski] for the entire period of operation, 3rd April 1919 to 23rd July 1920'.

Table 10. 'Common' (elementary) schools in the District of Brześć Litewski*

Schools (by language)	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of teachers
Polish	455 [*320]	32,000 [*20,956]	633 [*415]
Byelorussian	34 [*14]	- [*1,077]	- [*22]
Russian	76 [*7]	- [*419]	- [*22]
Jewish	several dozen [6*]	- [*906]	- [*25]
Total	600 [*347]	40,000 [*23,358]	(data unavailable)

* The statistics are quoted from a breakdown compiled in Brześć Litewski District in June 1920 [asterisks are put beside the data from the breakdown previously received by the Education/ 'Enlightenment' Section]: 489 schools, with 34,000 pupils attending, were subsidised by the Government.

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 11. 'Common' (elementary) schools in the District of Minsk

Schools (by language)	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of teachers
Polish	262	13,106	348
Byelorussian	194	10,417	271
Russian	643	42,541	906
Jewish	24	2,633	99
Total	1,123	68,697	1,624

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 12. Secondary schools in the District of Vilnius

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Society/association
City of Vilnius				
Polish	'King Sigismund Augustus' Eight-grade Intermediate School [<i>gimnazjum</i>] for Boys	586	27	Association of Polish Teachers
	'Joachim Lelewel' Eight-grade Intermediate School for Boys	355	19	Association of Polish Teachers
	Eight-grade Intermediate School of Humanities for Girls (with Latin instruction)	463	46	Association of Polish Teachers
	Eight-grade Intermediate School of Humanities for Girls (with Latin instruction)	428	27	Association of the Sisters of Nazareth
	'Józef Piłsudski' Four-grade Corps of Cadets			
Polish, in total:		1,832	119	
Byelorussian	Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School of Vilnius	240	24	–
Russian	Five-grade Philological Co-educational Intermediate School	168	11	Association of Secondary School Teachers
	Four-grade Philological Co-educational Intermediate School	750	31	Association for Propagation of Secondary Education
	Three-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	80	13	'Y. Gurevich' Society
	Co-educational Intermediate School	217	12	–
Russian, in total:		2,355	67	
Lithuanian	Eight-grade Co-educational Comprehensive Intermediate School of Vilnius No. 1	451	26	Lithuania's Ministry of Education
	Eight-grade Comprehensive Intermediate School for Girls	111	15	Educational Committee (affiliated to the Lithuanian Committee)

(Continued)

Table 12. Continued

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Society/association
Lithuanian, in total:		562	41	
Jewish	Eight-grade Co-educational Philological Intermediate School of Vilnius No. 1	190	21	Association of Secondary School Teachers
	Vilnius Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	360	18	Pedagogical Association
	Eight-grade Real Co-educational Intermediate School	450	24	
Jewish, in total:		200	15	P. Joffe
	Eight-grade Philological Intermediate School	1,208	78	
Countries in the District of Vilnius				
Polish	Eight-grade Intermediate School [<i>gimnazjum</i>] for Girls in Grodno	258	12	Association of the Sisters of Nazareth
	Eight-grade Intermediate School for Boys in Grodno	312	12	
	Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Lida	220	11	Association of Teachers in Lida
	Four-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Lida	135	6	Societies of Polish Secondary Schools in Lida
	Five-grade Intermediate School in Święciany	122	8	
	'J. Śniadecki Five-grade Real Intermediate School in Oszmiana	144	11	
	'St. Casimir' Five-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Nowa Wilejka	157	8	
	Real School in Mołodeczno	130	7	Wyzwolenie ['Liberation']
	'Adam Mickiewicz' Seven-grade Secondary School in Nowogródek	279	18	

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Society/association
Polish, in total:		1,757	93	
Russian	'E. Cypkinowa' Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School [<i>progimnazjum</i>] in Lida	105	6	(private-owned)
Jewish	Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Grodno	717	26	Social Welfare Council of Grodno
	Eight-grade Real Co-educational Intermediate School	400	48	Alb. Cylke
Jewish, in total:		1,117	48	

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 13. Secondary schools in the District of Brześć Litewski

Name of school	Number of		Society/association
	students	teachers	
Polish			
Eight-grade Intermediate School in Brześć Litewski	337	18	Intermediate School of Brześć Litewski
Eight-grade Intermediate School in Nieswież, County of Baranowicze	331	15	'Tadeusz Kościuszko'
Eight-grade Intermediate School in Kobryń	223	15	Intermediate School of Kobryń
Eight-grade Intermediate School in Wołkowysk	263	8	Intermediate School of Wołkowysk
Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School [progimnazjum] in Pińsk	108	7	Lower-level Intermediate School of Pińsk
Seven-grade Real School in Słonim	100	5	'Tadeusz Kościuszko'
Total:	1,372	78	
Russian, private-owned			
Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School [progimnazjum] in Brześć Litewski	58	5	owner: Mr Delatycki
Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School in Brześć Litewski	140	8	owner: Ms Aszkienazowa [Ashkenazowa]
Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School in Brześć Litewski	246	10	Association of Teachers
Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School in Baranowicze	211	10	owner: Mr Szulicki
Seven-grade Intermediate School in Nieswież, County of Baranowicze	221	13	owner: Mr Paliwoda
Seven-grade Intermediate School in Pińsk	640	23	owner: Mr Szczęsnownicz
Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Pińsk	113	14	owner: Mr Feigeman

Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Society/association
Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Kleck, County of Baranowicze	228	10	owner: Mr Salinkowicz
Seven-grade Co-educational Intermediate School in Łuminiec, County of Pińsk	402	15	owner: Mr Żukow [Zhukov]
Total:	2,319	108	
Jewish, private- owned	316	10	owner: Mr Kunica
Seven-grade Real Co-educational School in Słonim	111	8	owner: Mr Prybulski
Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School [<i>progimnazjum</i>] in Kobryń	427	18	
Total:			

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 14. Secondary schools in the District of Minsk

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Society/association
City of Minsk				
Polish	Eight-grade Philological Intermediate School for Boys	479	12	
	'Queen Jadwiga' Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	305	30	
	'Emilia Platerówna' Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	490	28	
	'Tadeusz Reytan' Eight-grade Real School for Boys	290	27	
Polish, in total:		1,564	97	
Byelorussian	Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	106	12	
Russian	Eight-grade Intermediate School for Boys	310	25	
	Seven-grade Real School for Boys	205	8	
	Intermediate School for Adults	60	3	
	Seven-grade Commercial School	76	15	
	Seven-grade Intermediate School for Girls	200	8	
	Eight-grade Philological Intermediate School for Girls	446	23	Elzbieta Rejman-Dolmatowa
	Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	250	10	
	Five-grade Intermediate Railway School for Boys	90	7	Lipawo-Romensk. [?]
	Six-grade Intermediate Railway School for Girls	85	6	Lipawo-Romensk. [?]
	Eight-grade (formerly, Governmental) Intermediate School	80	7	owner: P. Szyrokowa; in the afternoon, the school was one for boys

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of Number of	
		students	Society/association teachers
	Intermediate School for Girls	–	–
	Intermediate School for Adults	50	4
	Seven-grade Intermediate School for Adults	60	4
	Seven-grade Intermediate School for Girls	250	9
	Six-grade Intermediate School	120	8
Russian, in total:		2,532	147
Jewish	Intermediate School for Girls	170	15
	Eight-grade Intermediate School for Boys	300	11
	Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	170	6
	Four-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	700	15
	Three-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	120	5
	Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	160	6
Jewish, in total:		1,620	58
Counties of the District of Minsk			
Polish	County of Minsk	Iwieniec – Eight-grade Intermediate School	400 25

(Continued)

Table 14. Continued

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Number of Society/association
	Pierszaje – Eight-grade Intermediate School	350	20	
	Paków – Lower-level Intermediate School [<i>progimnazjum</i>]	280	12	
Total:		1,030	57	
County of Ihumeń	Ihumeń – Intermediate School	380	24	
	Bohuszowice – Lower-level Intermediate School	300	20	
	Smilowicze – Intermediate School	200	23	
Total:		880	64	
County of Borysów	Nowo-Borysów – Five-grade Lower-level Intermediate School	356	28	'Tadeusz Kościuszko'
	Łohojsk – Five-grade Lower-level Intermediate School	320	20	'Tadeusz Kościuszko'
	Doksyce – Lower-level Intermediate School	320	18	'Tadeusz Kościuszko'
Total:		996	66	
County of Bobrujsk	Bobrujsk – Eight-grade Intermediate School for Boys	350	25	
	Bobrujsk – Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	360	25	
Total:		710	50	
County of Stuck	Stuck – Intermediate School	380	24	
In total:		3,996	267	
County of Minsk	Intermediate School	280	8	
County of Ihumeń	Intermediate School	220	6	

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Society/association
	Intermediate School	150	6	
	Intermediate School	80	5	
	Intermediate School	240	6	
	Intermediate School	120	4	
	Intermediate School	100	6	
Total:		910	33	
County of Borysów	Borysów – Eight-grade Intermediate School for Boys	250	8	
	Borysów – Eight-grade Intermediate School for Girls	180	6	
	Borysów – Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	200	7	
	Borysów – Five-grade Lower-level Intermediate School [<i>progimnazjum</i>]	80	4	
	Nowo-Borysów – Eight-grade Co-educational Intermediate School	120	6	
	Łohojsk – Five-grade Lower-level Intermediate School	90	6	
	Dokrzyce – Lower-level Intermediate School	80	5	
	Ziembin – Four-grade Lower-level Intermediate School	70	4	
Total:		1,070	46	
County of Bobrujsk	Bobrujsk – Intermediate School	340	10	

(Continued)

Table 14. Continued

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers	Number of Society/association
County of Stuck	Stuck – Intermediate School	240	6	
	Stuck – Intermediate School	250	9	
	Stuck – Intermediate School	90	4	
	Stuck – Intermediate School	70	3	
	Stuck – Intermediate School	150	5	
	Stuck – Intermediate School	260	6	
	Stuck – Intermediate School	90	4	
	Kopyl – Intermediate School	100	4	
Total:		1,250	41	
Byelorussian	County of Stuck			
	Intermediate School	70	3	
Total:	Intermediate School	80	3	
		150	6	
County of Ihumeń	Intermediate School	160	4	
	Borysów – Eight-grade Intermediate School	250	6	
County of Borysów				
	Borysów – Eight-grade Intermediate School	80	3	
Total:		330	9	
County of Bobrujsk	Intermediate School	160	4	
	Intermediate School	100	4	
Total:		260	8	

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 15. Vocational schools in the District of Vilnius

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers
City of Vilnius			
Polish	Weaving Instructor Vocational School	7	2
	'Heart of Jesus' Charity Society's Handicraft Workshops	400	18
	'Temperance and Labour' Society's Handicraft School	32	6
	'E. Dmochowska' Vocational School for Girls	60	4
	'Mary Queen of the Polish Crown' Economic Horticulture School	62	7
	School of Commerce	80	8
	Total:	641	45
Jewish	School of Commerce	70	7
	Jewish Religious Community's Vocational School	80	11
	Kindergarten	150	12
	Total:	300	30

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 16. Vocational schools in the District of Brześć Litewski*

Schools (by language)	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers
–	Brześć Litewski – workshops (10, altogether) within ‘common’ [elementary] schools	360	20
–	Counties of Pińsk, Stolin, and Płotnica – workshops	38	2
	Total:	398	22
Jewish, private- owned	Pińsk – Tailoring and shoemaking school for boys	36	2
	Pińsk – Weaving, knitting and needlework school for girls	36	1
	Total:	72	3

* As stated in the report by Kazimierz Wolbeck, School Inspector of the District of Brześć Litewski, a teacher training seminary operating in Tarakań, County of Kobryń, attended by 40 students, along with a ‘preparatory/complementary school’ [*preperanda*] for girls at the Establishment of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Slonim (120 female students attending), a *preperanda* for boys in Wołkowysk (40 students), carpentry workshops at the ‘common’ school in Brześć, carpentry workshops in Stolin (for 20 students) and in Mała Płotnica, County of Pińsk (for 18); a household service school existed in Żyrowice, County of Slonim; there were carpentry workshops in Kobryń. The following school year was to see the launch of an agricultural school in Dubica, County of Brześć Litewski, a *preperanda* for boys run and under the custody of the Congregation of Marian Fathers in Raśna. In the County of Kobryń, the opening was envisioned of a ‘carpentry-and-turning and lock-smithery boarding school. A forestry school was to be opened in Białowieża; in Zdzięcioł, County of Slonim, an agricultural school was to be organised by the Agricultural Society. In Żyrowice, weaving, knitting and needlework workshops were prepared for opening; Korzedź, County of Wołkowysk, as was a basket-weaving school. An agricultural school was due to start in Świsłocz; in Horodne, County of Pińsk, a pottery school. The Bolshevik invasion prevented the launch of a forestry school in the County of Mozyrz and of a seminary for girls at the Benedictine Nuns’ monastery in Nieśwież, County of Baranowicze. A handicrafts school, with sections on carpentry, turning, and bibliopegy, was projected at the latter place as well.

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 17. Vocational schools in the District of Minsk

Schools (by language)	Located in:	Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers
Polish	Minsk	Six-grade Vocational School 'Labor'	56	6
		<i>Slojd</i> * courses	40	4
		Special School for Deaf Children (aged 7 to 11)	90	5
		Special School for Blind Children (aged 8 to 12)	60	4
	County of Borysów	Handicraft School	50	5
		Handicraft School	44	5
	Total:		340	29
Russian	Minsk	Minsk – Technical School	200	8
	County of Śluck	Śluck – Technical School	90	6
		Śluck – School of Commerce	75	5
		Śluck – Lower Vocational School	60	4
		Śluck – Lower Vocational School	58	4
	County of Borysów	Nowo-Borysów – Handicraft School	137	6
		Behomol – Handicraft School	90	5
	County of Ihumeń	Ihumeń – School of Agriculture	180	8
	Total:		880	46

* = (handicrafts)/do-it-yourself courses [Swedish, *slöjd*].

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 18: Polish teacher training colleges ('seminaries') in the City of Vilnius

Name of school	Number of students	Number of teachers
School and Children's Shelter Teacher Training Seminary	7	4
Sisters-of-Nazareth Vocational Seminary (run by Ms. Czarnocka)	9	10
Teacher Training Seminary (run by Ms. Jodko)	66	12
State Seminary	30	8
Total	112	34

Source: As in Table 9.

Table 19: Polish teacher training colleges ('seminaries') in Brześć Litewski

Name of school	No. of students	No. of teachers
Słonim – Female Teacher Training Seminary	120	8
Kobryń – Female Teacher Training Seminary	100	8
Total	220	16

Source: As in table 9.

Table 20: Training courses in the District of Vilnius

Location	Language of instruction	Course name	No. of students	No. of teachers
City of Wilno	Polish	Course in Technology, Mechanics & Construction Engineering, affiliated to the Association of Technicians and Technologists	50	5
		Secondary-level course in Technology	40	5
		Primary-level course in Technology	80	12
		Course in forestry	46	6
		Total:	216	28
Counties in Vilnius District	Jewish	Course in Technology, affiliated to the Jewish religious community	65	5
	(no data available)	Nowa Wilejka – Extramural General Education & Carpentry-and-Plumbing courses	65	4
		32 courses hosted at elementary schools in County of Vilnius	360	32
		14 courses at elementary schools in County of Oszmiana	224	16
		5 courses hosted at elementary schools in County of Nowogródek	--	--
		Total:	above 649	above 52

Source: as in Table 9.

CHAPTER VIII: THE ZCZW'S PROGRAMME IN THE LANDS OF LITHUANIA AND IN THE LANDS BYELORUSSIA

Staffing the department in charge of ethnic/national affairs

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, Krystyna Gomółka has found that this department's files disappeared during the evacuation. However, some materials stored at the Commissariat-General were unveiled following a meticulous investigation.¹

Copies of the program documents can mostly be found in the legacy of Marian Świechowski, kept at the present Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Moreover, a detailed study into the personnel section of the *Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories* has enabled us to determine the staffing of this ministry.

On 12th May 1919, Czesław Krupski was appointed Head of the Department of Ethnic Affairs and the General Press at the Commissariat-General. Bronisław Chybowski became the department's legal officer on 31st October 1919; on November 11, Stefania Maślińska, a functionary [*biuralistka*], joined the team. The surprisingly narrow staffing of such an important department leads us to believe that important decisions were made outside it.

January 1920 brought a reorganisation: according to the *Official Journal*, Marian Świechowski² became the senior officer [*starszy referent*] in the

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- 1 Some relevant material, not of primary importance, is stored at the Biblioteka Publiczna m.st Warszawy [Capital-City-of-Warsaw Public Library] (hereinafter, 'BPW'), Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], fond ZCZW; the reference Nos. include: No. 1657 (587 cards), No. 1662 (251), No. 1662 (100), No. 1667 (113), No. 1668 (82), No. 1773/3 (1134), No. 1773/4 (769), No. 1773/7 (54), No. 1773/12 (1088), No. 1773/13 (688), No. 1773/15 (358).
 - 2 Born in Samogitia to a landowning family, from 1917 Świechowski managed the Office for Lithuanian Affairs in Kraków; in 1918, he joined the troops fighting in Lwów, as an officer with the General Staff. Cf. biographical note (1455) by C. Brzoza, in J. Majchrowski, with contributions from G. Mazur and K. Stepan (eds.), *Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Kraków 1994.

transformed department, now known as the Department for Ethnic and Religious Affairs. However, he appears as Krupski's deputy in the written records of the time. The post, not recorded in the *Official Journal*, might have been supposed to sanction and strengthen the position of this man, who had been active in Lithuanian matters for at least two years.

Reorganised and renamed, the Department was strengthened in terms of staff numbers with the appointment of Tadeusz Kiersnowski as an officer [*referent*] on 12th February, Kazimierz Okulicz as a senior officer on 10th March, and Oktawia Zacharzewska as a shipping clerk on 27th March. Along with the last mentioned name, we can find information that the Department for Ethnic and Religious Affairs was situated within the Personal Secretariat of the Commissioner-General. Czesław Krupski was no longer in charge of press as a separate Press Department was set up, with Czesław Jankowski as Senior Officer and Manager in one (since 12th February 1920).

The study of the *Official Journal* also allows us to note that the first nomination recorded, back at the Board of Minsk Counties, was that of Stefan Knaap to the Office for Ethnic and Press Affairs.

In March 1920, the Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs at the District of Minsk had three sections: Organisational, Religious, and Press, employing a total of six officers, two translators (from Byelorussian and Yiddish), and two functionaries. The unit maintained constant relations with the inspectorates for schools, self-government (*resp.* local-government), social welfare, recruitment and, especially, the administrative inspectorate, county governors (*starosts*), and the municipal commissariat. In addition, it kept in permanent touch, both in writing and in person, with all the social organisations and associations.

The chancellery recorded all meetings, conventions, celebrations, concerts, and shows in which members of the Department workers were obliged to participate. Two female chancellery clerks were responsible for censoring films, which was quite a labour-intensive activity as the six cinemas in Minsk had a new repertoire posted twice a week. In addition, the Department reviewed social activists' applications for passes.³

Apart from the unreviewed employment application of Dionizy Bojarunas,⁴ no appointment can be found for the peer ethnic affairs department in the

3 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1667/11, c. 65–66: Memo of Władysław Raczkiewicz, Head of the District of Minsk, to Mr. Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories of 18th May 1920.

4 For a broader discussion, see Chapter III.

District of Brześć Litewski. The winding-up record for this district – which, incidentally, was the worst organised of the ZCZW departments – does not point to anybody in charge of ethnic affairs, which was obviously quite a severe mistake.⁵

In the District of Vilnius, only the Press Department functioned, with Ludwik Abramowicz as its manager; from October 1919, he was assisted by office clerk [*kancelistka*] Miss Maria Abrasonis.

According to Konrad Niedziałkowski, based on a report submitted in the course of the ZCZW's liquidation, until February 1920 ethnic and religious issues were consequently handled mostly by the General Department and the Administrative Department.⁶

The lands under the ZCZW's jurisdiction were a veritable melting pot of ethnicities/nationalities and religions. Non-Poles could not be expected to lean towards Poland on their own. These people needed to be convinced by everyday practice in the districts of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. All the more so as the public would inevitably compare the 'Polish offer' with its alternatives, proposed by political centres located north and east of the lands liberated (or occupied) by the Polish troops.

In practice, all of the ZCZW departments pursued their ethnic policy via their own activity. Provisioning for selected regions aroused, to a stronger or lesser extent, considerable dissatisfaction when products were delivered to regions less in need, but more 'Polish'. The organisation of healthcare, on the other hand, aroused little discontent, as it was conducted as uniformly as possible across the entire area. This approach is owed not only to the doctors' obligation to comply with their medical oath, but also to the fact that controlling an epidemic in a given area would be impossible if the criterion of nationality were to be prioritised, rather than the symptoms of illness.

Daily practices and routines in the Districts of Vilnius and Brześć Litewski (Western Byelorussia)

The policy pursued within the ZCZW jurisdiction in respect of ethnic groups

5 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/8, c. 360–361 (verso): Record on the winding-up of the District of Brześć [Litewski] (in Koźmin), 1st February 1921.

6 The District of Vilnius's Inspectorate for Nationalities, Religions and Press was established only on 1st February 1920; cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/1, c. 1–5: Report of the Inspectorate for Nationalities, Religions and Press, signed by Konrad Niedziałkowski, Head of the District of Vilnius.

The policy pursued within the ZCZW jurisdiction in respect of ethnic groups was probably heavily informed by the internal directives discussed below, never announced in public, in combination with the opinions of 'local personages' who drew inspiration from the Polish National Committee [KNP] in Paris and who were in parallel influenced by Warsaw public opinion and the MPs repeatedly visiting the Eastern Borderlands. The practical politics also depended greatly on the personal political convictions of individual officials of the administrative apparatus and on the position of these officials (established due to a number of reasons) in the local power structures. Given that the districts, counties and communes were close to one another only in a geographical sense, while constituting separate local communities, individual examples can be found, logically enough, to demonstrate in this discussion all sorts of arguments. In order to reliably depict the tendencies prevailing in a given area, a synthetic depiction of the various events and facts would therefore have to be compiled, thus enabling the proportions to be balanced correctly. However, a broader discussion of the situation in each of the districts concerned would go beyond the limits of this study. Amidst the many issues unique to each county, a common mechanism is observable and can be clearly illustrated via the example of the County of Wołkowysk, being one of the counties within the District of Brześć Litewski.

On 15th February 1919, Wołkowysk saw the arrival of representatives from the Polish Government: Mirosław Ciszewski,⁷ Mirosław Piotrowicz, and Jan Nitosławski.⁸ During week one in office, seven regional districts were set up,⁹ then turned into five as part of a reorganisation that lasted until the end of 1919. It should be noted that Wołkowysk County numbered 16 Roman-Catholic parishes and 35 Orthodox ones,¹⁰ which reflects the structure of the local community. In February 1919, the Gendarmerie, commanded by Colonel Ney, receded, and the security service was taken over by a police force composed of the county's inhabitants, led by the Chief Officer Gołonkiewicz who,

7 M. Ciszewski was in office as the county's commissioner until 9th April 1919, replaced for 12 months by Kazimierz Sulistrowski, who was followed, from 7th April 1920 onwards, by Włodzimierz Jellinek.

8 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1710, c. 1-14: Record on the winding-up of the Starosty of Wołkowysk, W. Pigłowski, Leszno, 8th December 1920.

9 Names of each region's head administrators in brackets: Izabelin (Konstanty Korsak), Łysków (Stanisław Sikora-Sikorski), Pieski (Stanisław Januszkiewicz), Porozów (Józef Jellinek), Zelwa (Piotr Błażejewicz), Świsłocz (Jerzy Biernacki), and Roś (W. Andrzejewicz).

10 Thirty-eight Orthodox popes evacuated themselves, of whom 11 returned.

in the opinion of Włodzimierz Jellinek, the Police Secretary for the County of Wołkowysk,¹¹ traced anti-state moves in a rather unusual way, playing cards at some of the affluent Jews' houses. His subordinates are reported to have been "completely oblivious to the knowledge of most elementary duties of a police officer, as they were mostly former soldiers of the Russian army, peons by profession, and, to make things worse, with little command of Polish."¹² The reports of the Borderland Guard detail other interesting events and the sentiments prevailing in the county. As we are told, the county treasury, set up on 18th February at the county's commissariat, was locally the first administrative unit of the ZCZW (Head Administrator Tadeusz Bronic).

On 5th March, provisioning clerk Bronisław Przekiszewski began his duties; on 28th March, the food supply office was established, to be headed by Kazimierz Wimbor. On the same day, the position of school inspector was filled by Stanisław Cier. The Sections [*Referats*] of Agriculture, Police, Treasury, and Food Supply began operating in March 1919, along with the School Inspectorate and the Veterinary Department. On 1st March, the magistrates court began operating in Wołkowysk County, and in Grodno on 25th March.

On 13th April, the first meeting of the County Welfare Council [abbr. ROP] took place, on the initiative of the Executive Board of the Central Welfare Council [RGO]. In June 1919, the Sanitary Department, the county physician and the magistrates court in Świsłocz were already in place. We also learn that some 10,000 people in the county had signed the memorial on accession to Poland before the Vilnius Proclamation was announced. This was opposed, including in an armed way (on 11th/12th April), by the local Jews and Orthodox Christians.¹³

Under the commercial leadership of Mr Fedorowicz, a District Co-operative Association of Wołkowysk was established (with eight and, soon afterwards, 11 branches). The Co-operative was chaired by Kazimierz Bisping, who also managed the Agricultural Association and was a significant figure in the county's community.

As we learn, Commissioner Kazimierz Sulistrowski agreed under pressure (who exerted it on him remains unknown) to convene the local dietine [*sejmik*] assembly on Pentecost, while the People's National Union [*Związek*

11 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1711, c. 25–30: Report on the operations of the Police Department of the County of Wołkowysk for the year[s] 1919 and 1920, 13th December 1920, Leszno Poznańskie, signed by Włodzimierz Jellinek.

12 Ibid.

13 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1690, c. 178–179: Report of the Borderland Guard as at mid-June 1919.

Ludowo-Narodowy; abbr. ZLN] sent over their activist, Nowacki, tasked with gaining influence over the quasi-political National Committee. The Committee, however, was not interested in cooperating with the ZLN emissary.¹⁴

The speech delivered at the same time by Central Welfare Council delegate Dziejanowski, on the possibility of incorporating the county into Byelorussia and the necessity of establishing Russian schools under the guidance of Orthodox priests with the support of state funds, caused indignation among the ROP, which decided to use all means so that in the future no-one would express such views on behalf of the institution.¹⁵

The subsequent report indicated that the sentiments prevailing among the people were strange, as perceived by the Borderland Guard emissary: "demoralised by a certain affluence and privileged by their position, [the Poles] are an anti-state element: they are reluctant to pay taxes."¹⁶

As to the Jews: "economic welfare has corrupted them. Having grown disappointed with our rule (taxes and the like), their attitude towards Poland is presently cooler than in March 1919 ... the kahal in Wołkowysk are not willing to give their signatures in favour of Poland, saying that America will set in here ... The Byelorussians appear acquiescent, obedient, fearing the Bolsheviks; the Orthodox are longing for the old tsarist Russia."¹⁷

Operating in the county were also the Association of Landowners and the Landed Society for Mutual Credit, both presided over by T. Sieheń. L. Benoit headed the People's House and Mr Kapłan chaired the Jewish People's Reading Room. The Polish Educational Society and Polish Women's Club were active. There were as many as nine charity organisations in the district, including three Polish and four Jewish.¹⁸

14 Ibid., No. 1713, c. 29–30: Report by Stanisław Podwiński of the Borderland Guard for 16th June to 2nd July 1919.

15 Ibid.

16 The tax revenues in the County of Wołkowysk were as follows: land tax – 9,323.52; livestock tax – 428,967.55; patent tax – 48,941.20; spectacle, pageant and entertainment tax – 186.50; beverage and year tax – 223,008.31; tobacco tax – 297,065.80; casing tax – 1,390; matches tax – 3,316; stamp duty – 18,766; court claim fee – 27,769. (The amounts are given probably in Marks. In the territory under the ZCZW's rule, several currencies functioned in parallel; taxes were usually reckoned in Marks, but at times were collected in tsarist Roubles, at unfavourable exchange rates.)

17 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1713, c. 28: Report by Stanisław Podwiński of the Borderland Guard for 6th July to 13th August 1919.

18 County Child Care Committee (F. Gawęcka); County Welfare Council; the Red Cross, Branch of Wołkowysk (Ms Kozłowska); Jewish Committee for Distribution

Another important message with regard to the County of Wolkowysk is that the aforementioned Kazimierz Bisping, as a representative of the People's Council of Grodno and Nowogródek Lands, received a nomination from the Commissioner-General as Electoral Commissioner for the communal self-government. Having consulted the County Commissioner, he handed over the matter of the elections to the Borderland Guard, while formally retaining the position of superior. Bisping's behaviour was unique. The members of the People's Council of Grodno Land were constantly in bitter conflict with the Borderland Guard emissaries. It cannot be ruled out that the personal attitude of a local authority such as Bisping, undoubtedly loyal to the ideals of the ZCZW, forced the Wolkowysk County supporters of the national camp to apply the 'hostile takeover' option in relation to the Borderland Guard. On 5th August, the National Committee co-opted three religious men (Dean Łarasowicz and the priests Marcin Burak and Klan) plus three peasant farmers.

I have not been able to find the minutes of the related deliberations, but their outcome is known: the National Committee was to cooperate, together with the Borderland Guard, with the newly-established 'Committee for the Incorporation of the Eastern Borderlands into Poland' (no less and no more).

In addition, since March 1919 local Catholic priests had been acting in favour of the county's incorporation into Poland; only Fr. Szyszko pursued pro-Byelorussian agitation, without success. The peasants sceptically referred to the Byelorussian language as 'neither local, nor Russian, nor Polish, but God knows how [orig., *Boh vedae iak* (in Byelorussian)]:'¹⁹

The Orthodox, acquiescent and obedient towards the Polish authorities counted on a collapse of Bolshevism and reinstatement of tsarist Russia, while not getting involved themselves in the development of events, whereas the Catholic people – based on the observation of a Borderland Guard emissary – considered themselves privileged. It is possible that such moods appeared as a result of the unity manifested outwardly by local parish priests and commanders of the Polish Army. The National Committee soon ceased to exist. It was merged with the 28-man delegation elected for Warsaw, which included 19 peasant farmers, four priests (Fr. Burak among them), a member of the National Council and a

of American Contributions (Chairman: Mr Efros); Jewish asylum for the elderly (Chairman: Mr Chejfec), and the Jewish Shelter for Poor Children (Chairman: Mr Szlosberg).

19 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1713, c. 23–25: General report by Władysław Kastory, Borderland Guard instructor, 12th August 1919.

member of ZLN, three '[landed] citizens' (including one on behalf of the ZLN), and two municipality representatives (including one on behalf of the ZLN). Kazimierz Bisping²⁰ was not elected to the delegation, which deprived him of any real influence on the situation in the county.

On 26 October, a county convention of the People's National Union was held, with the active participation of Fr. Burak. On 2nd December, an organisational meeting of the People's and National Union club took place in Wołkowysk. The People's Council was established despite the National Democrats' objection to the existence of People's Councils in general. The position of head of the Executive Department was assumed by the Council's chairman, Jan Muszalski. The County Club of the People's and National Union was established and joined by forty members (landowners, clergymen, intelligentsia, and peasants – the later approx. 10 %–12 %). K. Bisping became Chairman, the members being Marcin Poczobut, Jan Meysztowicz, Fr. Marcin Burak and Cyprian Sorejko.²¹

The thitherto-cautious Kazimierz Bisping therefore reconciled with the National Democrats. In accordance with the new political line, the educational matters in Wołkowysk District were also arranged "in the face of the inappropriate position by the School Inspector Cier on the teaching of Orthodox religion in public schools, the Orthodox priests agitated against Poland,"²² and the 'healing' of relations was influenced by the orders of the Inspector Jakubsza, who had arrived from Vilnius.

What stems from the established facts is that the county was an area of evident expansion of the emissaries of the People's National Union, and the resistance of local authorities, undoubtedly including Kazimierz Bisping, was weakened by the use of slogans guiding the issuance of the Proclamation by the non-Poles (staffing of the police).

Polish circles also ignored the fact that Byelorussians were twice as numerous as Poles and should therefore have had the right to learn their religion in the language of their choice, on equal terms with local Poles; this attitude was not conducive to the harmonious coexistence of different nationalities living in the county. The position of the Polish community in Wołkowysk County was also

20 Ibid., c. 18–22: Report of the Borderland Guard, 24th October to 30th November 1919.

21 Ibid., c. 11–17: Report of the Borderland Guard from the County of Wołkowysk for 1st December 1919 to 5th January 1920.

22 School Inspector Stanisław Cier referred to the Commissioner-General's circular of 10th December 1919 (not found to date), which granted the Orthodox religion the status of compulsory subject. He probably meant those schools where Orthodox students amounted to two-thirds. (For a broader discussion, see Chap. VII.)

adopted by the emissaries of the Borderland Guard. Influenced by the Sejm's decision, Kazimierz Bisping ultimately changed his behaviour. To continue functioning in his milieu after 25th November 1919, Bisping started to chair the association he had definitely not supported before. Other similar situations could be found in the counties of the District of Vilnius.

Daily practices and routines in the District of Minsk (Eastern Byelorussia)

The situation in the District of Minsk was somewhat different.²³ Unlike in Brześć Litewski and Vilnius Districts, National Democracy did not exist as an organisation; only individuals were active. The best-known National Democrats locally included Cichocki, a headmaster with the *gimnazjum* (grammar school), Dworzaczek, and Trajdos, who was the most prominent ND activist in Minsk. (If he were identical to the lawyer Mieczysław Trajdos, a new field for research would open up.) During the German occupation, the District Council in Minsk gained a more important position than the Polish Council of Minsk Land. After the entry of the Bolshevik authorities, the District Council turned into the Union of Polish Councils and Organisations, and established the Executive Committee, which prompted the Bolshevik authorities to counteract.

In secret voting, the Main Council was elected, which included Bishop Zygmunt Łoziński, Mr Izalewicz, Olgierd Jeleński, Witold Jan[?] Świda, Mr Pietrzak, and Dr Offenberga. After the Polish troops entered Minsk, the Main Council dissolved to resume its democratic activity in the cooperative field after a month, with a changed and substantially reduced composition (Dr Offenberga, Pietrzak, Dobraszyc, Polikowski, and Bishop Łoziński). Olgierd Jeleński initiated the establishment of the Social Work Club, which was partly joined by the Main Council and the Executive Committee. Instead of one strong organisation, two weaker ones were created.

The Polish Council of Minsk Land, for its part, allied with the 3,000-strong Christian Democracy [ChD], which declared its democratism and enjoyed support from the clergy (the activists included Fr. Ussas and Fr. Edward Szwejnica). One might risk claiming that ChD performed the same role in Minsk District as the ZLN did in districts closer to Poland. Christian Democracy was presided over by Mr Szczepański, and its leading activists were Zienkowicz and Kopczyński.

23 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1692, c. 92–94: Political report. Polish relations. District of Minsk. J. Witkowska, Minsk, 14th September 1919.

The organisation demonstrated a hostile attitude towards Byelorussians and was unfavourable to the federation idea.

Strikingly enough, ChD was the only one to have survived the Bolshevik period as a legal organisation. It is all the more surprising that the 'Stanisław Staszic' Labour Union, established late in 1917 and ideologically unclear, which endeavoured to build a Polish cooperative, was severely persecuted – initially by the Germans and then by the Bolsheviks, before it eventually fell. Among the 33 Polish organisations active in Minsk,²⁴ the 'Józef Piłsudski' Union continued the activities of the right-wing Polish Women's Club, Society of the Friends of Polish Soldiers, and 'Wyzwolenie' [Liberation], then immersed in chaos. The Polish Socialist Party–Revolutionary Fraction [PPS-FR] was active in Minsk as well; its leaders were Gnoiński, Więnczysław Badzian, Jakobini, and Pietrusiewicz/Petrusewicz. "As part of the conversation with the Sejm deputies, the Faction exponents emphasised their trust towards the Polish Government and pledged that they would set the class struggle aside."²⁵

However, the implementation of the Chief of State's policies in the District of Minsk was significantly hampered not by Poles of right-wing views but by the Byelorussians themselves. Byelorussian activists (Fr. Cihota – leader of the Byelorussian ChD, Fr. Abrashkovicz, Paweł Aleksyuk, Pupko, Yazep Lyosik [Jazep Losik], and Akhremovich) did not form an ideologically unified group and awaited directives from their senior activists scattered around the world. They were unanimous in only one respect: "All the Byelorussians are in favour of delaying the plebiscite. They demand congresses and other means of canvassing. However, they lack power. And money."²⁶

24 The Polish Council of Minsk Land, Executive Committee, District Council, Polish Military Organisation, Social Work Club, Union of Christian Democracy, Polish Socialist Party, 'Wyzwolenie' [Liberation], 'J. Piłsudski' Union, Polish Educational Society, Teachers' Union, Parents' Committee, Charity Society, Agricultural Society, Agrarian Friendly Society, Mutual Credit Society, Landowners' Union, Medical Society, 'Labour', 'Zjednoczenie' Cooperatives' Union, 'Sokół', 'Ognisko Polskie' [Polish Centre], 'S. Staszic' Labour Union, Prisoner Care Society, Scout Troop, Society of the Friends of Science, Society for Fraternal Aid, Female Landowners' Club, 'J. Piłsudski' Polish Women's Club, Railroad Workers' Union, Society for the Care of Historical Monuments, Agricultural Syndicate, Polish Workers' Union.

25 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1692, c. 92–4 (as in fn. 23).

26 Ibid., c. 96–97: Political report. Byelorussian relations. District of Minsk. J. Witkowska, Minsk, 14th September 1919.

The Jews in Minsk ensured the parliamentary delegation of their friendly attitude not only towards the Polish authorities, but also towards Polish statehood. They demanded freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and broadly understood tolerance. They asked for schools with Yiddish or Hebrew as the language of instruction and – as the tables in Chapter VII demonstrate – were not refused.²⁷

The scattered Russians were united by the removal of the Russian language from schools, which resulted from the establishment of Byelorussian schools in lieu of Russian ones, in accordance with the suggestions of the Byelorussians themselves. However, this group remained under influence of the Russian *Minskiy Kurier* periodical, whose editor-in-chief, Olgiński (a penname), was seen in Minsk as friendly towards the Poles.²⁸

General assumptions of Polish policies and their determinants between February and August 1919

The first document on the country's Eastern policy, which bears the signature of Ludwik Kolankowski, is Ignacy Jan Paderewski's (as Foreign Minister) reply to the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kowno/Kaunas, countersigned by him on 12th February 1919, and concerning the note of the Lithuanian Government of 4 January 1919: The reply states:

The Polish Government has always stood, and still does stand, for the recognition of the right of nations to decide their own destiny. It fully recognises this right in respect of the Lithuanian people, in particular. However, given that the Government of Lithuania is acting on behalf of the Lithuanian State, which extends, beside the territories undoubtedly Lithuanian, to lands inhabited by the Byelorussian and Polish populations, which not only had not agreed to their inclusion in the Lithuanian State, but have often, through a number of resolutions and declarations, expressed protests against the same, the Government of Poland cannot recognise the Lithuanian State in the form and within the limits that the present Government of Lithuania would like to see it in. The Polish Government believes that the question of the borders between the possible Lithuanian State and the Polish State should be regulated on the basis of the freely expressed will

27 Ibid., c. 97: Political report. Jewish relations. District of Minsk. J. Witkowska, Minsk, 14th September 1919.

28 Ibid., c. 97: Political report. Russian relations. District of Minsk. J. Witkowska, Minsk, 14th September 1919r.

of the population living in the disputed territories, to which the Peace Congress will probably accede.²⁹

Characteristically enough, the *Official Journal* published neither the April Proclamation nor any of the subsequent Legislative Sejm's resolutions concerning the issues of the ZCZW's policies. The establishment and scope of competence of the department coordinating the policies towards all the nationalities living in the territories under the jurisdiction of the newly-established administrative unit should also have been stated. It seems that the Administration should have done so in view of the purpose for which it had been appointed. No separate information on the creation of a specific ZCZW ministry of foreign affairs was announced, either before the proclamation's publication or immediately after its announcement. The department in charge of ethnic issues functioned according to organisational charts as a regular body handling current business.

In light of what has already been said (see the chapter on personnel), it is understandable that during Ludwik Kolankowski's term there was no dedicated division to coordinating the activities of the administration in the field of ethnic and religious matters. The lack of such information during Jerzy Osmołowski's term, who declared his loyalty to the political line of the Chief of State, is, however, intriguing. This oversight by the Commissioner-General was at the very least a mistake, perhaps due to fear of the public's reaction?

Contrary to official declarations, the Commissioner-General of the ZCZW was not only the administrator of the area entrusted to him (as strongly emphasised in Jerzy Osmołowski's practice), but also an institution charged with implementing the Eastern policy planned by Józef Piłsudski.

The 'opening balance' of the problem is characterised by a dichotomy (as is the case in the other chapters). For one thing, among the papers left by Osmołowski is a note by A. Żółtowski dated 28th March 1919, which (as the annotation says) was handed in to Ciechanowski to be used during his trip to Paris together with Prime Minister Ignacy J. Paderewski. The note clearly states that in March 1919, Poland intended to recognise a separate Lithuanian state without hesitation, realising that safeguarding the interests of the Polish minority was a must.³⁰

29 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1658, c. 59 (the author holds a photocopy of a duplicate, featuring a receipt stamp of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs.] Political Department, of 9th May 19[19]).

30 "13. Poland shall unhesitatingly recognise a separate Lithuanian State. In such State, the Polish minority shall nonetheless hold an enormous sum of interests. In the Governorate [*Guberniya*] of Kowno, Polish private property equalled 35 % of the Governorate's total area, and 54 % of the private property. The Polish population

For another thing, the section created around the same time for L. Kolankowski proposed making the eastern Byelorussian territory an autonomous entity oriented against Russia, while the “western territory [of Byelorussia] would be tactically [*sic*] incorporated into Poland.” This document,³¹ concerning the political line proposed for the ZCZW with regard to Byelorussian territory, appears fundamentally similar to the earlier German plans regarding the territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth mentioned in Chapter I, which preceded it.

Two studies by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Department of Lithuanian and Byelorussian Affairs, Political Section, prepared before the liberation of Vilnius, are of fundamental importance to Poland’s Eastern policy of the period: ‘On the need for political and agitation acts in the Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland’³² and the ‘Memorial [memorandum] for L. Kolankowski, Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories’, entitled *The Byelorussian question*.³³ The former called for taking action to awaken the spirit of Polishness, under the helm of the Polish state and using its funds, but via autonomous and independent social organisations. In addition, the possibility of transferring the activities of the Borderland Guard to the Lithuanian and Byelorussian lands was flagged.

The Poles, torn apart by an internal dispute regarding the shape of Polish politics, were unanimous in one thing: the Byelorussian movement should be put within a frame that would at least not constitute a threat to Polish interests. This is the way politics works, and such a standpoint is understandable.

Poland’s attitude towards the Byelorussian question resulted from an assessment of the political situation at that time. “As for state independence, the Byelorussian leaders themselves have no permanent guidelines in this respect. At

holds almost a monopoly in education, as has been made apparent in Kowno, with attempts at organising the State authorities and even the military. Lithuania, moreover, is situated on the way to the sea, whereas unrestrained access to it has to be stipulated for the Polish-Byelorussian lands.’ BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/2, c. 41: Pro memoria re. the affairs of Lithuania. Notes handed to Mr Ciechanowski for use in their trip to Paris with President [of Ministers] Paderewski, 28th March 1919; signed by A. Żółtowski.

- 31 Information available at: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1682, c. 25–26.
- 32 Lietuvos mokslų akademijos biblioteka (hereinafter, ‘LMAB’), Fond 168–58, lap. 1: ‘On the need for political and agitation acts in the Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland.’
- 33 LMAB, Fond 168–58, lap. 4: The Byelorussian question. Memorial for L. Kolankowski, Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories prior to the seizure of Vilnius.

one moment, they support a federation with Russia, and then they accept a union with Lithuania under the aegis of the Taryba, which limits their aspirations to being a local self-government. The fact that in Grodno, for example, five different Byelorussian national representations are currently aspiring to the role of superior management of Byelorussian politics, all being expressions of the political ambitions of individuals, proves a discrepancy between the aspirations of the intelligentsia and their detachment from reality.³⁴

The Poles did not intend to imitate the policies of the partitioning states, as it was well known that this method was ineffective. Byelorussian territory was not to be divided between Poland and Russia. What is more, the Byelorussians' desire for self-reliance was to be supported, in the interests of Poland. However, it was considered advisable to boost this sense of individuality only where assimilation was out of the question. The State, created from a matter showing a chance to assimilate, was to be opposed to Russia.

The inhabitants of the Byelorussian lands vastly differed from one another. According to the latter aforementioned study, it was not in Poland's interest to create or maintain a Byelorussian movement that would not be supported by the masses in the western part of Byelorussia that were inclined towards Poland. These areas were to be treated as Polish; they were to be merged with the Polish State based on premises derived from the analysis of local landed voters' statistics.³⁵

Such a scenario was also detrimental to the anticipated opposition – the one from the Polish Supreme Council, with its anti-Byelorussian stance aroused by the Germans. The Council hailed from Grodno, a city favourable to the former Kingdom, and could not be forced in these circumstances to accept any equal relationship with Byelorussia or Lithuania.

The Orthodox counties of Grodno Land and the adjacent ones of Minsk Land were to be colonised at once. On the one hand, the notion of 'colonisation' was comprehended as a quasi-agricultural one, carrying the intention of pacifying the moods of the overpopulated Polish countryside; on the other, this irrelevant element, potentially dangerous to the former Congress Kingdom, was intended to strengthen the Polish element in what was referred to as the Eastern

34 Ibid.

35 In the former Governorates of Vilnius and Grodno and in the four western counties of the Governorate of Minsk (those of Minsk, Nowogródek, Słuck, and Pińsk), the Catholic Poles' vs. the Orthodox ratio was 50.8 % to 40.1 %. The Orthodox consisted of Russians, Byelorussians, and Poleshuks (i.e. people of Polesia, a weakly characteristic group in ethnical terms).

Borderlands (*Kresy*). Important in this planning was the fear that Russia would take over the entire eastern part of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and (a scenario that could not be excluded in 1919) and grant broad autonomy to Byelorussian aspiring for independence, which would inevitably result in the development of a movement resolutely hostile to Poland.

It was, therefore, proposed to create an autonomous Byelorussian entity in the Orthodox territories of Belarus and, by tying this territory to Poland and subjecting it to its influence, to eliminate the possibility of the development of anti-Polish sentiments in this area.

Piłsudski mistakenly hoped that Byelorussians would concentrate their state-forming activities in Poland only, and that they would establish their Piedmont there, as had been the case with the Ruthenians in Eastern Galicia.

The implementation of the basic agenda was envisaged in relation to Byelorussians only after the seizure of Minsk and after shifting the front line beyond the Berezina, but the decision not to support Byelorussian publications in Latin script seemed unavoidable. There were no plans to support the Byelorussian movement in Grodno and Vilnius Lands; the Catholic population would be made to live with only Polish prints.

Instead, in order to impress the Orthodox population, a specially subsidised section in the Borderland Guard was to be established. The idea of a union with Poland was also actively popularised among the Jewish population; a periodical promoting this idea in Yiddish was supposed to endear this group.

In Warsaw, most likely at the Foreign Ministry's Lithuanian and Byelorussian Affairs Department, two alternative schemes were being prepared. In the longer term, Lithuania was expected to be reunited with Poland through a military and economic union (after all, Lithuania agreed to such an arrangement with Germany), which would lead in the future to a union with Latvia and Polish Livonia – in a word, a union of nations straddling the Baltic coast, or in areas naturally inclined towards that coast.

For the sake of this union, Poland would be ready to dismiss the postulate to link Western Byelorussia with the Polish state, instead consenting to the inclusion in the union of autonomous national areas federalised, as a whole, with Poland.

It was moreover planned that Byelorussia would take over the border areas Poland sought to absorb in the hope that a federation would be brought about. It was decided that the Byelorussian leadership bodies would be officially recognised, and received as such in Warsaw, which would give the Polish team an opportunity to continue its policy in this respect. This scenario was hard to accept for the Poles of Grodno, though.

The Polish guidelines for negotiations with Byelorussians were specified as follows: "Poland shall assist in the formation of an autonomous, and highly independent, Byelorussian state area in the eastern extent of White Ruthenia and guarantee a broad local government in the western part of the country. The Byelorussians shall agree to a union of Western Byelorussia, as an autonomous area, with the State of Poland, [which would be] less strict in the event that its incorporation into Poland might only hinder the potential arrangement with the Eastern Byelorussia and ethnographic Lithuania."³⁶

A directive was also established to treat Western Byelorussia as a "Polish country, which must be incorporated into the Polish state before this agreement is concluded." Further negotiations were to be conducted on Byelorussian soil, possibly in Grodno. I. J. Paderewski and August Zaleski adhered to the federative option, of which Bronisław Krzyżanowski wrote to Piłsudski on 15th April from Paris.³⁷

Paderewski proposed to co-opt 'true Lithuanians' to the projected government, which was reminiscent of the Lithuanians' 1917 proposal that Poles should participate in the Lithuanian National Council. Should, however, no agreement have been reached with the other nationalities living in historical Lithuania, it was considered necessary to include Western Belarus in Poland; this, clearly, would have invalidated all of the agreements made with the Byelorussians.³⁸

Consequently, the lot of Byelorussia depended on the policies of the other partners in the envisaged union, especially Lithuania. Efficiently obstructing the entire endeavour, Kowno/Kaunas was the keystone of the entire intricate structure of the Intermarium. Meanwhile, the responsibility towards Byelorussian contractors for the consequences of Lithuanian (or, possibly, German) decisions fell on Poland.

36 LMAB, Fond 168–58, lap. 4 (as in fn. 33).

37 "I met Messrs Paderewski and Augustyn [*sic*] Zaleski today, and we all stood, or rather, found ourselves standing on federative ground. We have also come to the conclusion that the formation of a new government in Lithuania ought to be strived for – one that would counteract the Taryba – yet, true Lithuanians should sit on such a government as well." The letter was found by Dorota Cisowska-Hydzik at the Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., fond 'General Adjutancy of the High Command' (hereinafter, 'AGND'), Group II B: Ukraine–Russia–Lithuania, file 16, April–June 1919.

38 LMAB, Fond 168–58, lap. 8: The Byelorussian question. Memorial for L. Kolankowski, Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories prior to the seizure of Vilnius. Conclusions.

On 23rd March 1919, delegates of the Byelorussian National Borderland Council handed the Polish Government a declaration aiming for a close union between Belarus and Poland.³⁹ In his reference to Iwanowski's account, Oleg Łatyszonek wrongly discredits this act: "Persuaded by S. Iwanowski, he [i.e. Kazimierz Ćwirko-Godycki] wrote, in the name of a fictitious Byelorussian Convention of Nowogródek Land, a memorandum regarding the Byelorussian cause, submitted to Paderewski, whereby he opted for a merger of Byelorussia with Poland." Yet, page 12 of the account being referred to does not tell us that the memorandum was fictitious: "At that time, I arranged in Grodno a delegation of Byelorussians for the Belweder [i.e. Chief of State's residence in Warsaw] with an expression of loyalty. The delegation was headed by a certain Ćwirko-Godycki from Słuck Land. The arrival of this delegation was reported on by Warsaw newspapers, and when Ćwirko-Godycki was back in Grodno, he was arrested by the authorities and kept in the local prison. I received the order from the Head Staff to get Ćwirko-Godycki released." First, animation does not stand for fictitiousness of a venture; second, Ćwirko-Godycki was treated seriously when in Warsaw. The other records would also deny the category of 'fictitiousness' in place of 'non-representative'.

The Byelorussian National Borderland Council [*Białoruska Kresowa Narodowa Rada*] was composed of (among other things): (i) a council called 'Selanskaya Byelorusskaya Rada', consisting of local Byelorussians tinted with [= inclined towards] left socialist Russian revolutionaries, increasingly susceptible to Bolshevik slogans and money as "the Bolsheviks are approaching nearer and nearer"; (ii) a 'Byelorussian Committee of Grodno' [*Grodenskiy Byelorusskiy Komitet*], composed of "Byelorussian stateholders and functioning as an agency of a loose group of people seeking to become involved in politics"; and, (iii) a 'Gubernatorial Administration of Grodno' [*Grodenskaya Gubernialnaya Uprava*], "being a mostly Russian team hiding in its bosom reactionary and Russificational elements."⁴⁰

39 As in fn. 31.

40 This information, as well as the commentary reading, "It would be interesting to clarify why Łuckiewicz's group (the national [original *narodnych*] ministers' cabinet) is taking part in this ['Gubernatorial Administration of Grodno'], and what is this organisation's relation to the Byelorussian National Borderland Council (Ćwirko-Godycki, Janson) which stands on the ground of a liaison with Poland", is contained in the 'Remarks to the Commissioner-General's Reply given to the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno Land during a personal audience on 10th May 1919': BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 1–2.

The chance opened by the Byelorussian Council's submission was not taken advantage of in Warsaw. The almost parallel supervision of the Polish Chief Council [PRN] of Grodno Land, skilfully provoked by the Germans, was not a favourable circumstance. The Germans threatened the Poles that they would use the Lithuanian army, whilst the Byelorussian regiments were, after all, officially financed by Lithuania, a country then under Germany's influence.⁴¹

Almost simultaneously with the Byelorussian National Borderland Council's Declaration of 23rd March 1919, an extensive letter from the Polish Chief Council, dated 30th March 1919, requesting for the country to be placed under the management and protection of the Polish Government, was submitted to the Department of Polish Eastern Territories.

The signatories of the Council's proposition⁴² intended to safeguard the interests of Poland as well as their own interests, as they were concerned about "facing accomplished facts which are ominous to us, ones whose fictitiousness would always be understandable to us and the Polish Government, yet all the same difficult to explain before the adjudicators less familiar with our affairs. ... This matter is promoted by the Germans with perseverance and a visible system."⁴³

- 41 The German disposition to pass the courts in Grodno into Lithuanian hands aroused indignation among the Poles. In addition to an official military memo from the Board of the County of Grodno which suggested that in order to maintain order, the Germans would refrain from perpetrating any violent acts, including a forcible takeover of the courts, Mr Schweinitz, who signed it, communicated on the same day to Lord Mayor Listowski that if the municipality did not cede the judicature, the Government of Lithuania would violently take possession of the courts, supported to this end by their military force, whereas the German occupation authorities would pose no obstacle to these developments. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/11, c. 145 [translation]: Military Board of the County of Grodno. Sec. I No. 279. To the Municipal Office of the City of Grodno. Grodno 26th March 1919, signed by v. Schweinitz, Head of the County, Rittmeister.
- 42 The memo was signed by the Rev. Leon Żebrowski (ChD), Commissioner-Chairman; Stanisław Iwanowski (statehooder in Russia, Polish Commissioner in Grodno), Vice Chairman; A. Żaboklicki, Secretary of PRN (a socialist) and J. Cytarzyński, section clerk.
- 43 "Immediately after the pretences to Grodno and Grodno Land from the government residing in Kowno and nominating itself as 'Lithuanian', the Germans started, quite openly, to support the cause with their disposable power. After Jazep Varonka, Lithuanian Minister for Byelorussian Affairs, arrived in Grodno, the Germans, in order to remove for him all the obstacles for his specious canvassing venture, started harassing, by all means possible, the emerging buds of the Polish armed force at home

It is somewhat ironic that the speech of 30th March, which disavowed the declaration of the Byelorussian National Borderland Council of 23rd March 1919, proved advantageous in the long term to those against whom the members of the Chief Council wanted to speak. The Germans and the Russians alike could not, at any cost, allow a Byelorussian-Polish agreement to come to life, and this was probably the reaction of the Poles in Grodno that they expected.

The Polish Chief Council's extensive address of 30th March 1919 was concluded with a terrifying analysis of the situation:

We are now in danger, in political terms, of reinforcing the fiction of the Lithuanian government recognised by the Germans in this country, of giving the city and fortress of Grodno to armed rascals, who have titled themselves 'Byelorussian regiments of the Lithuanian government', and of giving power and influence back to the Russifiers, who have now hastened crowdedly to the service of the Lithuanian Government; in social terms, we are threatened by complete anarchy among and demoralisation of the masses as a result of impunity, corruption and the dark elements in the voluntary German army occupying our country; and finally, in economic terms, our country is facing a disaster of inconceivable dimensions.⁴⁴

whilst on the other hand they endeavoured, with unheard-of terror, to reject the people's masses and to kill all the potential to grow self-organised and self-defended. ... It is only now that all the dark elements, together with the Germans, set about strenuously organising the Lithuanian government's military, under the name of Byelorussian regiments. This work was undertaken by all the former oppressors and Russifiers of our land; former Russian officials and officers, demesne proprietors, owning the estates once torn away from the Poles by the Russian Government, all have joined in the call. This handful of people, scarce as it really is, have resolved to reinstate the Russian yoke in this country, with help from the Germans. The commanding officers with those troops are Russian, the Command is Russian too, and so are the spirit and the endeavours – obviously, save for the soldiers, who had been driven into these ranks for the sole reason of seeking meals and clothing ... these soldiers are shod and dressed in German boots and clothes, armed with German light guns and machine guns, are standing sentinel across the town ... the number of these soldiers is too small for them to efficiently oppose the seizure of Grodno by any army, whereas the purpose behind the existence of these armed troops is to take the town over, indeed with support and secret help from the Germans, and to violently seize power for the Lithuanian government, so that subsequently, in the phase of the Polish army marching in, this fictitious act might become the foundation and so that the Polish cause might be harmed in all the areas. The plan for this action has been developed in detail, and its execution has just begun." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/11, c. 144–144 (verso): Address of the Polish Chief Council of Grodno Land, of 30th March 1919, No. 174.

44 Ibid., c. 147.

Therefore, in Minsk, as in Vilnius, a few months after the act of capitulation was signed, the 'losing' Germans were Europe's arms of the law. They played their game, unfortunately, with the local Polish card.

There was a climate of behind-the-scenes actions by the Byelorussian Council, dedicated to the development and upkeep of Byelorussian-Ukrainian relations.⁴⁵

On 10th May 1919, a Delegation of the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno, representing itself as a social (rather than governmental) organisation, introduced itself to Jerzy Osmałowski, the Commissioner-General. The Council represented a total of 11 Byelorussian organisations: the Teachers' Union, the 'Byelorussian Cottage' Cultural and Educational Association, the 'Bat'kaushchina' ['Fatherland'] Cultural and Educational Association, the *Selyanska* [Peasant] County Council, the Byelorussian *Uprava* [Administration], the Byelorussian Committee, the Fugitives' Committee, the Students' Association, the Byelorussian Socialist Hromada 1893, the Byelorussian Party of the S-Rs [Socialists-Revolutionaries], and the Byelorussian Party of People's Socialists.⁴⁶

Osmałowski, whom Piłsudski had tasked with 'working out the details', i.e. obtaining something from the Byelorussians, simply promised them everything that they wanted, without demanding anything in return. In his talks with the delegation, he failed to show any negotiating talent.

The agreements settled in May 1919, in which the Polish party displayed its abundant goodwill, were simply not fine-tuned by him, the effects of which became evident in time.

The Byelorussian delegation was extremely well prepared to present its expectations to their Polish partners. Paweł Aleksiuik, Chairman of the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno,⁴⁷ Fiodor Wernikowski [Vernikovskiy], member

45 These relations were initiated in 1904 by Metropolitan Bishop Andrzej Szeptycki, during his stay (in a civilian disguise) in Byelorussia. At the exhibition in Sluck, he conferred with the 'engrailing' Łuckiewicz.

46 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 5-5 (verso).

47 According to the Commissariat-General, as of 10th May 1919 Aleksiuik was a socialist and a sincere Byelorussian by conviction. An enemy of Russia, he adhered to the idea of an independent Byelorussian republic. In the days before the Polish Army marched in, he came into contact with the Byelorussian (formerly, Russian) *Uprava*, an organisation composed of Black-Hundredist 'Muscovites' who dreamed of a '*Edinaya Velikaya Rossiya* [large unified Russia]'; probably propelled by a financial incentive. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 1-2: Remarks to the Commissioner-General's Reply given to the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno Land during a personal audience on 10th May 1919.

of the Delegation team,⁴⁸ and Secretary Włodzimierz Zirkowicz⁴⁹ submitted a signed memorandum concerning the situation and needs of the Byelorussian population.⁵⁰ They postulated that the communal and rural local-government committees, organised by aggregations of Byelorussian exiles returning in the autumn of 1918, should be maintained until the implementation of the Józef Piłsudski's programme, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, dated 22nd April 1919.

The Delegation expected that the ZCZW would settle the relations in a spirit of respect for the rights and care of the returnees [*povretentsy*], and Osmołowski gave them such an assurance. The Byelorussians also desired a permission for cooperation with the other Byelorussians organisations (from the eastern part of Byelorussia) and expected Poland to solve the Byelorussian issues; specifically, to take care of provisioning and supplies, bring aid to the refugees, provide timber for reconstruction, take care of the development of Byelorussian schools, provide sanitary assistance, open food cooperatives, and even to arrange for a building insurance scheme. As their contribution, the Delegation declared that they would convene the Congress of Byelorussians (without specifying a date) and pursue cultural, educational and publishing activities (without specifying a source of funding).⁵¹

A social organisation (not a governmental one), the Delegation obtained far-reaching promises from the Chief of the Polish State, by virtue of the Commissioner-General of the ZCZW, without any binding commitments on its part. During the conversation, Osmołowski confirmed that the Polish policies had been outlined in the Commander-in-Chief's Proclamation, while certain

48 Wernikowski *vel* Wienkowski, an activist from Minsk Land, purported to be a socialist and considered himself, 'as it were', a Byelorussian, his aspirations gravitating towards Russia. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 1–2 (as in fn. 47).

49 As per the findings of A. Czarniakiewicz, Zirkowicz was also known as Zienkiewicz, Zianko, or Zinkiewicz; a member of the Byelorussian (formerly, Russian) *Uprava* "that is now headed by [Orthodox] Pope Korczyński, the notorious Black-Hundredist and Pole-devourer, a Muscovite who has nothing at all to do with Byelorussian descent." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 1–2 (as in fn. 47 and 48).

50 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 4 (a duplicate).

51 Three newspapers were to be published in Grodno: *Byalorus'*, *Bat'kaushchina*, and *Zorka*.

inconsistencies in the Sejm proceedings could be explained as a misunderstanding, which “will soon be resolved.”⁵²

He did warn his guests that, although the administration in times of war is bound to entail certain burdens, the ZCZW's primary task was to alleviate the inconveniences and bring support, “in the first place to those who have nothing, i.e. the returning refugees and the urban areas.” The concern of the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno delegates about the lot of Byelorussian self-governments (local governments) was alleviated by the ascertainment that the ZCZW's activities would be based on self-government.

The request to take care of the Byelorussian education and school system met with approval “under the condition that this would stem from the actual needs.” The fact that Piłsudski's policy (identical to that of the Education [literally, ‘Enlightenment’] Department headed by W. Lichtarowicz, and opposite to the policy pursued by L. Zarzecki's ‘Enlightenment’ Section set up through reorganisation) favoured Byelorussian education can be convincingly demonstrated by my detailed analyses of the number and proportions of students and teachers in schools of all types and levels in all the districts of the ZCZW (with relevant tables attached).⁵³

Therefore, this promise also had an absolutely measurable coverage in facts. Osmołowski assured the Delegation team members (an aspect that transpired to be very significant in the future) that freedom of meetings and conventions was ensured in the area subordinate to the ZCZW, the recording of losses had commenced, and that support was envisioned for the Orthodox clergy.⁵⁴

In accordance with its promises, the Polish party was willing to give while counting on the gratitude and commonsense of the beneficiaries. Despite the fact that the Polish team did not limit themselves to declarations, the Byelorussian team proposed borders that made protest from the Polish side unavoidable.⁵⁵

52 For the Legislative Sejm's attitude to the issue of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's lands, see J. Gierowska-Kałaur, ‘Lenkijos Respublikos Istatymu leidziamasis Seimas irbuvusios Lietuvos Didziosios Kunigaikstystes zemių problema’, in *1920–1922 metų parlamentine patris: sprendimu politika, tikslai, aplinkybes. Konferencija Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo Konstitucijossalejje*, Vilnius 2000, pp. 41–65.

53 See Chapter VII.

54 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 3 (verso): Remarks to the Commissioner-General's Reply given to the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno during a personal audience on 10th May 1919.

55 Namely, from Druskienniki, via Kopciowo and the Augustów Canal, along the Nieta [Netta] River Augustów, then along the Bóbr River (the borderline of the Governorate of Łomża), Suchowola, Korycin, Knyszyn, Suraż, and along the Narew River, via

The protest would be a cue for the Byelorussian party to revise their claims. After all, it was the Byelorussians who sought Polish support (the Poles would not have sought support from Byelorussian politicians). Osmołowski avoided all the subjects potentially controversial to the Byelorussians. Further developments lead me to believe that the Poles refraining from discussions could be falsely interpreted by the Byelorussian delegates as acceptance. Was it not that Osmołowski's mistake in May 1919 led to a situation that was then exploited by the prospective Byelorussian contractors (or, possibly, by those who were behind them), accustomed by the previous Byelorussian experience of receiving without paying?

The adoption of such an assumption would explain the entire policy pursued later on by the Byelorussians' towards the ZCZW. Due to mistakes made during the May negotiations, Osmołowski restricted himself to the position of philanthropic donor. Unfortunately, this also made the situation substantially more difficult not only for him but also for Józef Piłsudski. From then on, the Byelorussians would perceive the Commander-in-Chief (whom they sometimes identified with the High Command), rather than the very unpolitical Commissioner-General, as their only partner in talks: they perceived him as the one who was supposed to act as the link between them and Józef Piłsudski himself. As a consequence, the issue of the formation of Byelorussian troops would practically bypass the Commissariat-General.

The strictly confidential report by Marian Świechowski, a General Staff officer at that time, on the basic principles of Poland's policy in the Lithuanian-and-Byelorussian lands, was dated 31st July 1919.⁵⁶ It worded the opinion that only the renunciation by the Poles of an exclusive right to own Vilnius would ensure the connection of all areas of the Grand Duchy, both Lithuanian and Byelorussian, and create a barrier separating Russia from Poland from the sea to the Pripyat/Prypeć river. Świechowski predicted that the Lithuanians would agree to a union with Poland only if it did not carry a threat of Polish supremacy. He believed that the Byelorussians would have to agree to western Byelorussia's incorporation into Poland and to have a centre whereat their movement would crystallise in the eastern territory of their country only. He considered the organisation of the Lithuanian-and-Byelorussian lands in the form of autonomous

Boćki, up to the County of Brześć. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/1, c. 5.

56 *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich* [hereinafter, 'DiM'], Vol. II, Warsaw 1961, doc. 173, p. 314.

ethnic areas – Lithuanian, Polish, Byelorussian, and perhaps even Latvian – to be an optimal solution. The idea was to be based on the Commander-in-Chief's Proclamation, which was the programme foundation for the ZCZW. In parallel, Świechowski took into consideration the minimum programme as an emergency option: should the federation not be created, Poland would incorporate the areas that would opt for it.

This option was actually similar to the Polish National Committee's programme. One obstacle to its implementation was the still-open possibility of realising the Polish-Lithuanian agreement. After the liberation of Vilnius and before the capture of Minsk, another programming document was compiled: a strictly confidential agenda of external and internal policies towards Lithuania.⁵⁷

As it is impossible to identify the author, I tend to assume that it was created in the circles of the Borderland Guard. The fact that a copy was found in Świechowski's papers counts as an authorisation. The external policy involved an attempt to reach an agreement on the basis of a clearly crystallised programme of the federation of peoples of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania to be established on a territorial basis (Lithuanian, Polish, and Byelorussian areas to be included), and to bind this federation to Poland via several conventions.

In parallel, it was resolved that the Polish population in ethnographic Lithuania would be organised, with particular emphasis on the Kaunas region, by means of the Borderland Guard and the Polish Military Organisation [POW] (to be controlled). Should no agreement be reached with the Taryba before its session was convened, the local population would have been prompted to rise in order to facilitate an armed intervention and hold elections, thereby eliminating the influence from the Taryba.

This particular point could have discredited Poland in the eyes of the Entente. A Polish consulate was to be established in Kaunas to oversee the interests of the Polish population and to monitor political relations there. The Lithuanians were supposed to be attracted by a Lithuanian magazine subsidised by Poles with a pro-Polish orientation. Propaganda actions were also envisaged. The Information Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to be revived by pursuing publishing and other activities. As a result, numerous maps and studies were developed for the Congress Work Office and for so-called press inspiration purposes.

57 A duplicate (undated, no author named, no signature) was found among Marian Świechowski's files. LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 65–66.

The Kowno/Kaunas issue

Kowno/Kaunas was the key to a rearrangement of the relations between the ethnicities of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. In 1919, all the offices in Kovnian Lithuania were organised on German and Russian models. The key posts were held by Lithuanians, supported by German instructors, while the less prominent positions were occupied by Russians, Jews and Poles.

The young Lithuanian state was struggling with serious financial problems. The State's loan certificates issued in Kovnian Lithuania were not widely purchased,⁵⁸ which in consequence did not allow the new Lithuanian authorities to complete, even with minimum success, their attempts to become independent from foreign countries. Traditionally, their principal sponsor was Germany.

The society of Lithuania approached the Government and the Taryba as the institutions concerned about their own interest.⁵⁹ The rather weak position of the Lithuanian authorities was strengthened only in the autumn of 1919 by the recognition of the Kaunas-based Government by England. However, this decision was preceded by certain important events.

The Polish Committee of Kowno Land had been established in the autumn of 1918. One of its early successes was the result of the elections to the Kaunas City Council in December 1918, held under a five-point electoral law. It transpired that in Kaunas, despite the manipulation consisting in the annexation of Aleksota (Lithuanian suburbs) to the constituency, there were as many as 43 % of Poles, compared to only 17 % of Lithuanians. According to Ignacy Sokołowski, the Committee's Chairman, the other successes included the elections to the Polish Congress in Vilnius in December 1918, together with the decision made by voting whereby the Poles in the Kaunas region could only participate in Polish congresses. The latter move, undoubtedly designed as a manifestation of patriotic feelings, unnecessarily limited the possibilities for political manoeuvre by the Poles. As a result of the implementation of the second resolution of December 1918, the position of the Poles further weakened in February 1919, with two members of the Polish Committee being removed due to their participation in the Lithuanian Conference. March 1919 saw another act of self-destruction,

58 The period's local saying went: "*Pirk bonus – bus Smetonu duonos*", i.e. "Buy the coupons – Smetona ['transliterated' by local Poles as 'Śmietana'='dairy cream'] will get his bread." LMAB, Fond 168–25, lap. 255–258: Report by a Borderland Guard instructor, authenticated by Józef Małowieski, of 17th October 1919, entitled 'The vital state-of-affairs in Lithuania'.

59 Ibid.

prompted by an ad-hoc rally. None of the members newly elected to the Committee was of a conciliatory attitude towards the Kaunas Government of Lithuania. This did not encourage dialogue and the awareness of the later fate of the Poles of Kaunas does not absolve them from criticism of their actions. Regardless of who came up with the idea, this principle was enacted by the Poles.

The Polish population of Kaunas was by far a majority, up to 75 % in the County of Kaunas. In this context, it is understandable that the Polish Committee advocated full annexation of Kowno/Kaunas by Poland, although the circumstances were not favourable for the manifestation of this opinion. The 'Memorial on the ethnic relations of the Kaunas region' contained detailed data on the Polish element in the town and the parishes⁶⁰ in the southern belt of the Kaunas region.⁶¹

The census made by 'competent persons,' most probably Polish priests, confirmed and expanded the findings of Edward Maliszewski (*Polacy i polskość na Litwie i Rusi*, Warsaw 1914). In view of the reluctance of the French military mission towards accepting this memorandum in April 1919, Ignacy Sokołowski personally handed a copy of it to the head of the American military mission in mid-May 1919. In Sokołowski's words, the memorandum demanded a plebiscite that could reveal the inclinations and aspirations of the Polish population in the various parts of the Kaunas region.

The Polish residents in Kaunas region were severely harassed by the Lithuanian authorities. Punitive expeditions in response to the common failure to pay taxes only reached Polish villages (one example being Bobty).

The ministries were headed by either Lithuanian nationalists or those who feared them. As a result, local Poles were required to use Lithuanian in official contacts and communication, which for most of them was incomprehensible. The Russians, on the other hand, were allowed to speak Russian. All ministerial forms and official documents were printed in Lithuanian only, and register books were kept in this language. Fees were charged for translations. All this took

60 See Table 21 (ethnic composition in parishes).

61 "The composition of the population, as it was shown by the election to the Municipal Council in December 1918, carried out based upon proportional voting, gender notwithstanding, [was the following:] of the voting, Poles 42 %; Jews 31 %; Lithuanians 17 %; Germans 8.5 %; Russians 1.5 % ... [as for] the quantitative ratio of Poles versus Lithuanians, this very figure equals 72 to 28. This ratio is confirmable by a breakdown of the number of children of either sex attending elementary schools: namely, there are 1,311 such Polish children, against fewer-than-300 Lithuanian, which in percentage terms is 82 % and 18 %, respectively." The memorial [*resp.* memorandum] of relevance. LMAB, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 103, lap. 2-5; also, see *ibid.*, Fond 168-22, lap. 67.

place in a country where many parishes had a Polish majority. Manning Polish parishes with Lithuanian priests, who sometimes “happened not to manage to speak Polish”, was common practice.⁶²

As the Poles were increasingly successful in the war effort, the county-level administration established by the ZCZW came across parish committees set up inside the country by Lithuanian clergymen demonstrating their anti-Polish attitudes. Otherwise, it was known that resistance offered by the Polish parishes under the jurisdiction of Kovnian Lithuania led to no success.⁶³ In the Holy Trinity parish in Kaunas, purely Polish as it was, Bishop Franciszek Karewicz appointed Fr. Januszewicz, a well-known Lithuanian chauvinist, to replace the then-late Polish parson. The protesting delegation of parishioners was not allowed to speak; instead, an armed unit of Lithuanian Hussars was summoned. This situation inevitably aggravated the conflict. The parish committees on both sides of the demarcation line were partially Polish and partially Lithuanian. The Lithuanians combated the Polish committees; the ZCZW officials, instead of directing Lithuanian committees towards a common cause, resorted to dissolving them. Earlier on, the Poles in Kaunas had initiated a boycott of Lithuanian organisations. The ZCZW was boycotted by the Lithuanians.

The Poles of Kaunas attempted to solve the issue on their own, since they were the first to be affected by its consequences. The Committee prepared an ‘Address to the Chief of State from the Poles of Kaunas Region’ and a ‘Memorial’ (handed to Stanisław Staniszewski, head of the Polish military mission in Kaunas) containing a plan to appoint a ‘Provisional Coalition Government in Vilnius’ as the capital of historical Lithuania. Such a coalition government would consist of ten members, including three Poles, three Lithuanians, three Byelorussians, and one Jew. It should be appreciated that the propositions made by the Poles in the ‘Memorial’, apart from the annexation of Kaunas and the areas that they considered unquestionably Polish, contained the idea of convening a plebiscite in order to reveal the aspirations of broader layers of the Kaunas population regarding the political future of this country.

They were not hostile to Lithuanians, because they knew that the Lithuanian people were not hostile to the idea of a union with Poland. The Polish public in

62 In Daugi, a dean priest called Mironas did not want to receive confessions in Polish, and married Polish couples in Lithuanian. A young woman named Jadwiga Chodykin was once told by him to leave the church as she was praying in Polish.

63 For instance, in the purely Polish parish of Łapa, the church was closed for two months.

Vilnius, however, was informed by the press – contrary to the facts presented by the Chairman of the Polish Committee of Kowno Land⁶⁴ – only of the request regarding the annexation of Kaunas by Poland along with the entire southern strip up to the Dubissa River.⁶⁵

As a result of accepting the French suggestion,⁶⁶ the 'Memorial of the Polish Committee of Kowno Land', which in fact disavowed the then-Kaunas Government and proposed the establishment of a Provisional Coalition Government based in Vilnius, remained unheard of in Warsaw. The French suggestion was accepted by Piłsudski and thus deprived the Polish Committee's offer of any importance. One may wonder whether this was not a mistake by the Chief of State. From then on, the activity of Poles from the Kaunas region proved only destructive. The disappointed Polish Committee deluded itself that the coalition, "moved by a sincere desire to bring order and justice", would send its delegation to Lithuania; and declared its will to cooperate in order to "create optimal conditions for all the peoples"⁶⁷ – which, eventually, did not happen.

Given that the Poles in Kaunas took an active part in the local administration, joined the ranks of the Lithuanian army, and the Polish schools were subsidised by the Lithuanian Government,⁶⁸ the reasons behind the boycott of the young Lithuanian state need to be considered in detail. The main among them might have been the political resentment for the 'brothers' Lithuanians, who formed a minority not only in Vilnius but also in Kaunas, and whose political elites did not associate the future of Lithuania with the resurrected Polish state (in consequence of a voluntary choice, it had been their own state prior to the Partitions)

64 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 460: Report by Ignacy Sokołowski, Chairman of the Polish Committee of Kowno Land, 2nd August 1919.

65 With 42 % Polish inhabitants (17 % Lithuanians), Kowno was a Polish town. The Poles occupied 75 % of the southern strip. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1688/2/2, c. 18.

66 Colonel Constantin Reboul, heading the French military mission in Kaunas, openly declared to Stanisław Staniszewski, Commander of the Polish military mission, that the French diplomatic service had been endeavouring, for more than two months by then, to incline Lithuania to consider the need to enter into a union with Poland, for otherwise the former would be intercepted by the Germans [*sic*], or by Russia. For a good cause, Reboul appealed to the Poles for forbearance and patience with respect to the untactful Lithuanians.

67 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archivas [hereinafter, 'LCVA'], Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 103, lap. 2–5.

68 LMAB, Fond 168–25, lap. 255–258 (as in fn. 58).

and oscillated between Germany and Russia – the two partitioning powers of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The rush of a young state to retrieve whatever could be retrieved by shrewd action was still underappreciated. The avalanche of petty yet gnawing Lithuanian administrative orders which turned the Poles in the Kaunas region from landlords and hosts into intruders was not beneficial to a conciliation between Poles and Lithuanians.

The Lithuanian national security force consisted of cooperating militias and a gendarmerie. It was headed by the Lithuanian writer Liudas Gira, whom different sources of the period unanimously referred to as one who was extraordinarily conscientious in organising raids against Poles. A Borderland Guard instructor described the situation under his rule as follows: “Not only is he clever enough, but he is aided by even smarter Germans, Russians, and Jews, all excellent in this matter. Their espionage against Poles is so far-reaching that nothing can be done there at all ... and it is no surprise, since we are talking about just a few counties, while they have spies for the whole of Russia, and so sophisticated.”⁶⁹

It remains a matter of conjecture as to what extent this ‘international personnel’ of the Lithuanian security service could have influenced political developments in the area, but the search for answers to this inquiry goes beyond the framework of a study on the ZCZW.

However, the activity of this service must have been stimulated by the rumour spread in April 1919 among military circles in Kaunas that an agreement with the Poles would be possible after the coup d’état expected to take place in Kaunas. The question of who spread the rumour will probably remain unanswered. Regardless of who was the advisor to the young Lithuanian administration, the latter remains responsible for the adoption of a sharp anti-Polish line. A well-known Lithuanian chauvinist, Dr. Šlugas, was appointed head of the District of Kaunas.

The town’s commander, Mikucki, issued an ordinance on the compulsory hanging of Lithuanian signboards and nameplates in the first place, effective 3rd March 1919. The Polish Eagle in the hall of the ‘Sokół’ Gymnastics Society was taken off the wall. Orders were announced in three languages (Lithuanian, German and Russian), with the notable omission of Polish. The commander of the County of Marijampolė introduced collective responsibility of families whose members had enlisted in the Polish Army; administrative and police offices were staffed with Lithuanians, Jews, or Russians, only to avoid engaging Poles.

69 Ibid.

These officials, although fluent in Polish in private circumstances, would immediately switch to Russian in official relations, only because the non-Lithuanian-speaking Poles hated it. This definitely was not a policy of dialogue.

In October 1919, the Lithuanian units were described very positively by Józef Małowieski, a Borderland Guard instructor.⁷⁰ Several military incidents occurred. In Varëna/Orany, for instance, the conflict was purely of a demonstrative and neighbourly nature. A scuffle occurred between 12 soldiers of the Lithuanian army and one policeman, on the one hand, and Lieutenant Szafrąński supported by several uhlans, on the other.⁷¹

This incident, however, as well as others of this scale, provided excellent material for an extensive propaganda campaign, for both parties. The stories attracted numerous listeners on both sides. Mutual prejudice soared and the atmosphere was not conducive to patience and understanding among Polish society, nor to reflection on the Lithuanian side.

As could have been easily predicted, the Polish Committee of Kowno Land did not alter its stance in the political and social situation prevailing in the middle of 1919. Consistently avoiding cooperation with the Lithuanians, the Committee relentlessly demanded in the international forum that a plebiscite be conducted in the Lithuanian territory.

The price the Poles had to pay for handing the memorandum to the American mission proved high. The Lithuanians forced Ignacy Sokołowski to leave the Kaunas region in June. Sokołowski, as well as the Committee itself, were undoubtedly guided by noble motives. Apart from their initial mistake in December 1918, which consisted in issuing a ban on the participation of Poles in non-Polish organisations, and from the substantive content of the political offer

70 "The Lithuanian army is scarce. The soldiers are uniformed, well-trained, and disciplined. They fulfil their duty across the posts perfectly. The higher command is composed of Lithuanians only. The old cadre of officers from the old Russian army, formed of diverse nationalities such as Poles, Jews, and Russians, has presently been powerfully supplied by a new one, issued by the first Lithuanian *juncker* school. These are mostly Lithuanians, with a spirit inimical towards us ... The Lithuanian army is, for the most part, disciplined, apolitical, and reliable to their commanders' orders. LMAB, Fond 168–25, lap. 255–258 (as in fn. 58 and 68).

71 A manuscript is available entitled 'Report of the Plenipotentiary to the Head of 4th District [*Rewir*] of the County of Troki', No. 12, of 16th June 1919, describing in detail the circumstances of the dissolution of the parish committee in Orany. LMAB, Fond 168–19, lap. 13–14.

finally rejected by the Lithuanians in November 1919,⁷² which was an attempt at self-correction, the Committee's efforts did not bring any profit to the Poles in Lithuania or Warsaw, nor to Lithuanians, but instead they benefited all the opponents of the revival of the Polish-Lithuanian alliance.

As the self-correction thought was not taken up, the application of the essentially self-destructive resolution of December 1918 remained the only practical option. This only contributed to a growing mutual distance and did not benefit the Polish-Lithuanian conciliation at all.

The situation was far from stable. Initially, Lithuanian politicians who were reluctant towards Poland and Poles did not find support among the people inhabiting of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, who saw Poles as their neighbours. However, local feuds began to escalate. The events that took place in *Merecz/Merkinė* can be cited here as an example.⁷³ In retaliation for the abduction of the clergymen, the Lithuanian command immediately arrested 40 local Poles, and since they could not be accused of anything, they were ordered to clean rooms full of faeces with their bare hands and simultaneously sing the religious-patriotic chant *Boże coś Polskę* ['God, Thou surrounded Poland for so many centuries/With the grandeur of might and glory ...'].

This incident shocked not only the Poles but even the local Lithuanians and Jews.⁷⁴ True, Poles knew that the hostile attitude towards them in Lithuania had been provoked artificially, and that the resulting ferment was skilfully taken advantage of by the Germans, but this awareness did not alleviate the sense of sorrow and the negative emotions towards Lithuanians.

Paradoxically, at that very moment Lithuanians achieved a goal that they had been pursuing with determination for a long time – at the expense of Poles, and

72 See below: Reply from exponents of Lithuanian society to the Declaration of the Polish Delegation in Kowno in November 1919.

73 On 7th, 8th, and 9th July 1919, *Merecz* was subdued by two Polish squadrons. While withdrawing, the Polish troops took with themselves two priests who were negative to Poles – namely, Rylikowski (Rybikowski), a parish priest, and Bakszyn (Bakszyc), precisely in revenge for their attitude. In *Merecz*, the Polish village head Janulis and his son were beaten with ramrods on their naked bodies because they had loudly declared they were Polish. They endured 25 ramrod blows. The punishment was meted out opposite the parsonage's windows in which the priests Rybikowski and Bakszyc stood, commenting loudly with a smile of satisfaction, 'Yea, that's what the Poles need to get.' LMAB, Fond 13, Ap. I B. 103, c. 10. Note on the incident in *Merecz*, 8th and 9th July 1919, for the attention of the Borderland Guard in Vilnius.

74 Ibid.

in favour of former common enemies. They in fact obtained the desired recognition of their own separateness from Poles. The local feuds caused by Lithuanian short-term actions obscured the far-sighted perspective of so-called great politics to both sides, Lithuanians and Poles alike.

On 10th July 1919, representatives of Poles from the parishes of Olita/Alytus, Merez, Daugi/Daugai, Oława/Alovė, and Niedzingi/Nedzingė requested the Polish Government to rescue them. They did not want to be “turned by the new authorities into Lithuanians.” Having waited in vain for the Polish army, they asked the Polish authorities to defend their cause and not let thousands of Poles be mistreated and oppressed. “We have here no Polish religious service, no schools, no newspapers, and now we are threatened that speaking Polish will soon be forbidden, too. We can neither gather nor congress on our own affairs, as we are persecuted and punished for such things. We do not want to be treated as slaves here; we are ashamed to admit it, but they are beating us here. Few of us have any riches, and since we are simple hard-working people, tied to our ploughs and so on, this is why they disregard us here.”⁷⁵ This shocking letter was signed by eight people⁷⁶ who, for the sake of the cause, risked exposure to repression in the event of the document falling into the wrong hands.

Highly esteemed by his political opponents in Kaunas region, Ignacy Sokołowski was formally eliminated from events; it cannot be precluded, though, that somebody cared about his appearance in Vilnius. After he left, he became an ‘external’ person to the Kaunas region, rather than one who was experiencing the chicaneries ‘on the spot’. This must have altered his position, primarily in the perception of many commiserating Lithuanians.

In July 1919, the Commissariat-General of the ZCZW was still located in Warsaw. There was a discussion in Warsaw as to whether Vilnius, serving thus far as a provincial centre, or Grodno, should become the seat of the Commissariat-General instead. In any case, the Borderland Guard, headed by Juliusz Narkowicz, had already operated in Vilnius.⁷⁷

On 20 July 1919, the Guard held a Polish rally attended by some 2,000 people. They were attracted to the subject of Polish-Lithuanian relations in the Kaunas region and in the Polish-Lithuanian borderland unanimity reigned only on the

75 LCVA, Fond 13, Ap. 1 B. 103, lap. 8–9: To the High Government at Warsaw. Annex No. 3.

76 The signatories were Michał Jecz (Jocz), Władysław Chedyrin, Romuald Węckowicz, Waław Tyczyński, R. Malinowski, Konstanty Bernatowicz, Benedykt Sadzewicz, and Józef Chmielewski.

77 J. Narkowicz managed the Vilnius district of the Borderland Guard.

opinion that the anti-Polish regulations were inspired by Berlin. The assembly concluded that all the governments created by the Germans (in Belgium, Poland and Ukraine) had collapsed. The only one left standing was the Lithuanian government, which followed an anti-Polish policy against the wishes of its people.⁷⁸

At the rally of the Workers' League, which boasted 18,000 members, the president of the League put to a vote the resolution on the abandonment of publishing provocative titles in Polish for 'Lithuanian-Russian-German' money. Cablegrams were sent not only to the Chief of State and the Legislative Sejm in Warsaw, but also to the KNP.

However, despite the manifestations of these noble attitudes, Sokołowski met with great disappointment in Vilnius. The 'Interim Polish National Council' (TPRN) was already a fiction. After the fallout among the representatives of Grodno, its core consisted of members from Vilnius Land, busy with matters other than the Kaunas region, i.e. with preparing their own petition to the Big Four.

Sokołowski's reports and requests were also ignored by the Committee for the Defence of the Eastern Borderlands. Concerned with his mission, Sokołowski knocked on all possible doors, alas unsuccessfully. The fate of the Poles who remained in the Kaunas region gradually became a 'yesterday's news' and lost its appeal as shocking events that would encourage radical action.

Lonely and bitter, Sokołowski considered it necessary to establish a 'Committee for the Defence of Polish Affairs in Kaunas Region' in Vilnius, following the model of the Armenian and Macedonian committees.⁷⁹ The body was composed of members of the Polish Democratic Party in Lithuania,⁸⁰ the Conservative-Liberal Party,⁸¹ the National Democratic Party,⁸² the Christian Democratic

78 In some of the communes in the County of Troki, the Lithuanians forbade the use of the Polish language in spite of 'Polish' authorities existing. Penalties were imposed not only for the hanging of the Polish national emblem: fines were handed out for red-and-white decorative elements, Eagle emblems were torn off from the caps, Third-of-May celebrations were banned, Poles were not allowed to get in touch with the French mission; and, lastly, J. Sokołowski was expelled in June 1919 from Kaunas for his contacts with the US mission. The ambience of threat intensified because of the resolution of the Jewish Bund-men postulating a struggle against the Poles.

79 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/1, c. 5: Cast of the Kowno Poles Defence Committee.

80 Namely, Krzyżanowski, Jundził, and Narkiewicz.

81 Marian Plater, Władysław Meysztowicz, and Stanisław Kognowicki.

82 Władysław [?] Stypułkowski.

Party,⁸³ the National Club,⁸⁴ the Peasant Party,⁸⁵ the Committee of Kowno Land,⁸⁶ the Democratic Union in Lithuania,⁸⁷ a representative of the National Council,⁸⁸ plus a group without party affiliation⁸⁹ and an 'SD' (possibly Social Democrats). The Committee was, though, the body of a 'salon-café' or couch sort, having neither money nor actual influence on the course of events.

In a letter to the Commissioner-General for Eastern Territories, sojourning in Warsaw on 2nd August 1919,⁹⁰ Sokołowski postulated that the Committee be duly supported by the Commissioner in exchange for unconditional subordination to the aims and policy of the 'Military Administration of Lithuania.' Sokołowski could not have known about the conflict of competences between Jerzy Osmołowski and the military authorities, while Osmołowski probably felt offended for being treated as subordinate to the Military Administration.

Sokołowski expected that, in addition to adequate funds, he would receive directives of conduct adapted to the emerging political configurations, and that he would be given access to political information collected by military agencies in relation to the Kaunas region. Meeting these expectations would place Sokołowski in the role of a 'Commissioner-General for Kaunas Region.' Significantly, Ignacy Sokołowski expressed his conviction that he should address the Big Four and the newly formed Court of the League of Nations directly, omitting Warsaw.

This concept was, for one thing, subordinated to the idea of self-determination, whilst for another it caused more splits among the Poles inhabiting the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In his letter to Osmołowski of 2nd August, Sokołowski declared his readiness to appear in person at every call.

However, it is difficult to determine whether the ZCZW was involved in the preparations for the instigation of an uprising in Kaunas. (Piotr Łossowski

83 Mr Engel, a barrister.

84 Michał Brensztejn and Kozicki.

85 Stefan Mickiewicz and Mr Hałko.

86 The Polish Committee of Kowno Land was formed of the following parties and factions: the Polish Progressive Club, National Democracy, the Polish Workers' Party, 'Peasant Activists', Christian Democracy, and the Polish Party of Social Order. On behalf of the Kowno Land Committee, the Kowno Poles' Defence Committee was joined by Ignacy Sokołowski and Mr Żółtowski.

87 Tomasz Zan.

88 Jan [?] Wimbor, as a representative of the National Council.

89 Messrs Węclawicz, Montwiłł, and Rouba.

90 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/12/1, c. 460 (as in fn. 64).

devoted an extensive study, almost 40 years ago, to the Polish attempt at a coup in Kaunas, based on a detailed analysis of the records found in Polish archives.)⁹¹

As we know, from 25th to 27th August 1919, Leon Wasilewski, with Piłsudski's approval, held meetings with Jurgis Aukstolaitis and Stanisław Narutowicz. Candidates for the future government were decided, and Wasilewski penned a declaration for the government-to-be; the date of the coup in Kaunas was set as 28th/29th August. After the arrival of Cavalry Captain Stanisław Radziwiłł, aide to the Commander-in-Chief, Wasilewski postponed the launch of the uprising to 31st August/1st September, and the courier immediately returned to Warsaw (citing the need to exchange the Roubles he brought with him to Marks as the official reason). However, some conspirators in several POW districts began to implement the cancelled variant. On the night of 27th/28th August, communications between Kaunas and the rest of the country were interrupted when the telegraphic poles were cut down.

In the morning of 28th August, officers of the Lithuanian General Staff intercepted. They had the opportunity to perform the coup according to their wishes, but failed to do so. Those who had previously declared their accession to the government agreed upon by Wasilewski and Narutowicz withdrew their participation. This reluctance turned events against the Poles.⁹²

Incriminating evidence was found in the garden of one of the Niekrasz brothers, in hiding places under the floor and in the attic. According to the weekly *Vienybe* ['Unity'] based in Kaunas,⁹³ the Lithuanian authorities deciphered, with use of a cipher key [*sic*], about 300 names. The organisers of the 'coup' were identified as almost exclusively 'landed citizens' and lesser noblemen, POW and Niemen Riflemen [so-named after the Niemen/Neman River]. They had allegedly been receiving funds via the Borderland Guard. It is a fact that until August 1919, the Borderland Guard, subsidised by the ZCZW, would have included the item 'Kaunas Region' in its budget.⁹⁴

The entirety of Lithuania was divided into Borderland Guard districts, each of which had an assigned commandant and a deputy commandant. The Lithuanian

91 P. Łossowski, 'Próba przewrotu polskiego w Kownie w sierpniu 1919 roku', *Najnowsze Dzieje Polski: materiały i studia z okresu 1914–1939*, Vol. VIII, 1964, 51–73.

92 P. Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 69–73.

93 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 534a. The journal published an extensive report on the meeting of the Kaunas Taryba on 16th December 1919, at which the August coup was debated; No. 51, 25th December 1919 (extract).

94 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999.

authorities captured 95 people, of whom 91 (including the leaders: Niekrasz, Ejsmont, and Kudzewicz) were prosecuted under Article 126 of the Criminal Code. One hundred and fifty documents fell into Lithuanian hands, including reports on Lithuanian officials who favoured Poles.⁹⁵

However, Poland's failure was not only due to external factors. It cannot be ruled out that the 'Kaunas uprising', nipped in the bud, was the result of a political provocation directed against the Chief of State's policy. After all, POW had already failed to follow his recommendation to maintain peace in the Suwałki region.⁹⁶

The failure might have also resulted from neglect within the ZCZW. The ZCZW fond at the City-of-Warsaw Public Library contains descriptions of the major Lithuanian personages then staying in and outside Lithuania. Dr Juzoas Gabrys, who stayed in touch with Bronisław Krzyżanowski in Paris, is portrayed in a highly positive light: "an outstanding Lithuanian patriot; the guide of, and main secretary to, the 'Union of Nationalities', which is chaired by the French Minister of War Painlevé; known across Lithuania, he has organised the influential Lithuanian Delegation of the general National Council in Switzerland."⁹⁷

Jerzy Osmołowski's documents contain prompts allowing the claim that on 24th August 1919, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the Civil Administration instructions contrary to the policy of the Chief of State; the latter, following French advice, sought to calm Lithuanian emotions. It was Narutowicz and Aukstuolaitis, returning from Warsaw in the evening, who informed Wasilewski on 25th August 1919 that Piłsudski had finally accepted the plan of the coup.⁹⁸

The answer to this thought-provoking fact might be found, perhaps, in Bronisław Krzyżanowski's letter sent from Paris to the Chief of State and to Foreign Minister I. J. Paderewski, of which Krzyżanowski notified in his subsequent letter from Paris, dated 21st August.⁹⁹

95 Extract from the weekly *Vienybe*, No. 51, 25th December 1919: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 534a: An extensive report on the meeting of the Taryba of Kaunas held 16th December 1919.

96 P.Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*, p. 66.

97 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/1.

98 P. Łossowski, 'Próba przewrotu ...', p. 63, his, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*, p. 69.

99 Quote: "Fr. Wiskont ... is to visit the Chief of State. He intends and is willing to – providing that he is telling the truth, for he is a crafty and prudent man – heavily contribute towards a possibly strict liaison between Lithuania and Poland. His ambition needs to be heightened. He is daydreaming about a bishop's chair, and he is, frankly speaking, worthy of it; he cannot be given any other than the Samogitian one, but how to fix it for him now, I do not know. So far, Gabrys did not stop at Paris on his way

Juzoas Gabrys openly stated to Krzyżanowski, on 15th August 1919, that:

in the first days of September, he would visit Lithuania proper, and the present Government will overthrow the Taryba and Smetona, and that this would happen, as he says, without a single drop of blood being shed; that he would then govern alone in Lithuanian Lithuania or, if circumstances so require, a triumvirate would come to power ... an appeal to the people, in which they shall condemn the conduct of the pro-German Government, the abuse, the indolence, the anti-Polish policies ... in parallel, a ministry shall be created to which Poles shall be invited ... after the formation of the Government, Gabrys would attempt to talk to the Chief of State on the convening of a Constituent Assembly in Vilnius, from all over Lithuania, divided into the historical zones of Lithuania, Poland and Byelorussia.¹⁰⁰

This information reached Piłsudski only on 3rd September. An analysis of the content of this letter leads to the assumption that Krzyżanowski had consented to Gabrys's proposal.¹⁰¹

to London; at least, he would not have visited my place. I have the honour to request Your Excellency for a few words about whether they consider my arrival, early in September, to Vilnius as a demanded thing or not. As for my opinion, I believe that it is better to be in Vilnius, just in case – the only thing being that there is no-one to replace [me]. Gutowski is out of the question: he might just be fit for labouring against Russia, but not against the Taryba ... I have no possibility to recommend anything to Count Łubieński. He is not, as so is the case with Gutowski, clued in to what every single thing I deal with in here; and, secondly, he is a former member of the National Committee and a Dmowski-ite, and he always spoke against federation: all this, taken together, is a deterrent to the nationalities with which one has to deal here. One cannot rely on a change at the core of Lithuania. And yet, if things be as I supposed in my preceding letters, an apparatus needs to be put in place here to intercept the Taryba delegation immediately. I think I am needed in Lithuania these days.” This letter, written by Bronisław Krzyżanowski on 21st August, in Paris, to the Chief of State, the President of the Council of Ministers, and Minister Władysław Skrzyński, was found by Dorota Cisowska-Hydzik at the Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., fond AGND, Group II B: Russia–Lithuania–Ukraine–Bohemia/Czech lands, file 18/1: Memo 1354/T2, r. 1 (received at the Adjutancy General on 24th August 1919) [a photocopy, from the collection of D. Cisowska-Hydzik is held by the author].

100 Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., fond AGND, Group II B: Russia–Lithuania–Ukraine–Bohemia/Czech lands, file 18/1: Letter from B. Krzyżanowski, Paris, 15th August 1919 (received at the Adjutancy General on 3rd September 1919) [a photocopy, from the collection of D. Cisowska-Hydzik, is held by the author].

101 In his letter of 15th August 1919, Krzyżanowski forwarded Gabrys's request to give a clear indication to the Poles of Kowno to join the government projected after the Lithuanian coup. After its formation, Gabrys intended to seek agreement to have the Constituent Assembly convoked in Vilnius, at which attendees would represent

Through the intermediary of Krzyżanowski, Gabrys asked to convince the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister, and the Chief of State to take part in the September coup in Kaunas, devised by the Lithuanians.

Krzyżanowski forwarded the request but suggested that “a wink be given immediately to the Poles of Kaunas region so that they did not shun the joining of a new government, in the event that the old one collapses; so that they even contribute to the knocking down of the old Government, and agree upon the conditions with the followers of Gabrys in a firm fashion.”¹⁰²

This correspondence arrived at the General Adjutant Office on 3rd September 1919. The developments in Kaunas make one presume that the ‘wink’ was given earlier on, in fact.

The correspondence dated 21st August, which reached the General Adjutant Office on 24th August 1919 – the day Piłsudski finally approved the plan – states, among others: “We cannot rely on changes in Lithuania proper. However, if what I had expected in my previous letters were to happen, an apparatus [i.e., essentially a cabinet] would be required to be in place on the spot to take over the Taryba delegation.”¹⁰³ This letter, without the context of the preceding one, could have confused the Chief of State.

As Krzyżanowski stated in his letter dated 21st August 1919, the correspondence intended for the Chief of State, the ‘President of the Ministers’, and Minister Władysław Skrzyński, was sent in two copies: one for the Chief of State, in a package of letters from the Press Office, and one for Minister Skrzyński, via August Zaleski.¹⁰⁴

The question remains, which copy did Paderewski use? The fundamental research question is whether the extensive nine-page correspondence of 15th August, described as ‘the most confidential’, reached Minister Skrzyński only on

the entire historical Lithuania as split into three basic parts: Lithuanian, Polish, and Byelorussian; also, to establish a common Ministry of War, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a customs union. Cf. Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., AGND, Memo 1402/T2, [a photocopy, from the collection of D. Cisowska-Hydzik, is held by the author].

102 In B. Krzyżanowski’s opinion, the participation of Poles in the ‘core Government of Lithuania’ would be dominant, for formal reasons, based upon the parity principle, which ought to satisfy the National Democrats.

103 Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., fond AGND, Group II B: Russia–Lithuania–Ukraine–Bohemia/Czech lands: B. Krzyżanowski’s letter to the Chief of State, Memo 1354/T2, r. 1 (as in fn. 99).

104 Ibid.

3rd September. Did all the addressees genuinely find out its contents at the same time? The fact is that the letters addressed to the Chief of State were received at the General Adjutant's Office with surprising irregularity: the one dated 15th August arrived only on 3rd September; the one of 21st August, on 24th August; and the one dated 26th August, only on 5th September 1919.

It is possible that, once delivered by the courier, the letters were only forwarded to Skrzyński, who made use of his knowledge in a way he considered optimal. The date of Gabrys's planned address, i.e. the beginning of September, appears in two memos which reached Piłsudski after the deadline. The letter received on 24th August does not mention a specific date for the planned Lithuanian address. It is also possible that a supporter of the national camp inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Press Office had made every effort to ensure that the extremely important correspondence of 15th August would never reach the Chief of State on time.

The delay would allow the harmonious implementation of the Polish-Lithuanian coup to be prevented, which, according to popular belief, would lead to a federation of the two countries based on the principle of equal rights.

All of the Poles from the Kaunas region – save for Stanisław Kognowicki, Director of the Wileński Bank Handlowy, and Dr Girdwojć – opted for Lithuanian statehood at the summer convention. From the Polish standpoint, the scenario proposed by Gabrys could be implemented.¹⁰⁵

There were some respectable and influential groups among the Poles that would never have thought about accepting such a scenario. Was the acceleration of the fixed date of a rising meant to emphasise who the host in Lithuania was, by way of accomplished facts? There are three basic and plausible scenarios of the events referred to as 'the Kowno/Kaunas uprising' (in fact a Lithuanian coup d'état inspired by the Belweder Palace).

105 B. Krzyżanowski recommended getting in touch with Stanisław Sokołowski, an acquaintance of Zygmunt Nagrodzki from Vilnius. Sokołowski probably stayed at Franciszek Kończa's house in Łukinia, Wilkomierz County. He warned Stanisław Montwiłł (not to be confused with his namesake Władysław), who was friends with Zygmunt Jundziłł, against Stanisław Kognowicki ("he is disliked by all shades of Lithuanians") as well as Franciszek Kończa ("a decent man he, not even an opponent of agrarian reform, but as they say, he's a hen who cannot keep silence"), Michał Junowicz ("the only Taryba-ised Pole"), and the Polish Committee at Kaunas ("who it is composed of, I don't know. It is some new organisation. It commenced its life by expressing its willingness to have Kowno and Kowno County as part of Poland, whilst they are apparently n[atational]-d[emocrats], as the Borderland Guard is [*sic*])."

First of all, we should consider whether we witness here not really an overestimation of Gabrys's role, but rather a far-reaching provocation by some forces present in the region that would prevent the possible agreement between Poland and Lithuania from happening. The fact that the contractor was a dummy can be confirmed by Gabrys's expenses, registered by Krzyżanowski, which basically should not have been legitimate (a house near Vevey, wages, a life of revelry, breakfasts with Michał Tyszkiewicz). The situation in Lithuania may have raised some concerns among the groups interested in exercising actual power in Lithuania. Among Lithuanian military circles, the idea of reorganising the western policies by means of a coup d'état appeared even before the beginning of the August mission by Leon Wasilewski and Major Tadeusz Zbigniew Kasprzycki.

However, if Gabrys sought contact with Dmowski in Paris in the early spring of 1919, the suspicions of him being an agent seemed doubtful to his contemporaries. In addition, other information found during my query attests to the high estimation of Gabrys the man and his and political role among the Poles of the time.¹⁰⁶

It was rather the parallel campaign of Fr. Wiskont (Antanas Viskontas)¹⁰⁷ who, independently from Gabrys, tried to involve Poles in the formation of a

106 Gabrys was portrayed, among the 24 outstanding Lithuanian activists, by an unidentified member of the Commissariat-General staff, as follows: "Dr Gabrys, an eminent Lithuanian patriot, the guide and chief secretary to the 'Union of Nationalities', which was chaired by the French Minister of War Painlevé, living in a close relationship with G., known across Lithuania, he has organised the influential Lithuanian Delegation of the General National Council in Switzerland." Fr. Wiskont is absent in these portrayals, made probably for the Lithuanian and Byelorussian Affairs Department of the Polish Foreign Ministry. It is astonishing that Wiskont never heard of Gabrys's designs: in line with the previously quoted account by Krzyżanowski, Gabrys "intended to give Wiskont a position, despite his having been in a bad relationship with him until today [i.e. 15th August]. As for Gabrys, he in general opposes the constructing of a state with the use of cassocks, to which he refers with great revulsion and irony."

107 "[Wiskont] read out to me, the other day, his petty disquisition (a series of arguments) in reply to the complaint of the Revs. Łaukajtis, Bielaukus, and Naujakas concerning Sejny, which has already been received at the Ministry, via the Press Office. He proposes a solution in it: namely, an agreement with Poland and overthrowing the existing Lithuanian Government ... recently, he met with disregard, in a rather drastic form, regarding the evaluation of his labours in Rome - there, together with Alfred Tyszkiewicz, he endeavoured that the Vatican grant independence to Lithuania [i.e., recognising the country's independence] ... as he says, he is going to Vilnius in order to contribute to the establishment there of a Lithuanian government composed of all

Lithuanian government consisting of all the nationalities – not in Kaunas, however, but in Vilnius – which gives grounds to suppose that certain forces attempted to weaken the significance and momentum of the Lithuanian action initiated by Gabrys.

According to details provided by Krzyżanowski, in August 1919 the actual power in Lithuania was held by Naruszewicz, Vice President of the Taryba, and Fr. Żylus, who advocated a new Lithuanian policy described as ‘*Klein aber mein*’, i.e. independence from all neighbours.

From the viewpoint of Polish Eastern policy, it seems that Gabrys fulfilled all of the conditions for a Lithuanian partner in the Polish-Lithuanian federation. This is certainly how he was perceived by his Polish contemporaries, which is extremely important to the situation. He was acting in consultation with London. (The British activity in July to September 1919 in Lithuania is the subject of Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa’s study.) For the purpose hereof, only a few findings need to be mentioned.

First, Captain Brodie, a member of the British mission to Riga, promised that he would attempt to persuade the Lithuanian Government to enter into alliance with Poland. In the Lithuanian territory federalised with Poland, the United Kingdom was to receive the same concessions as the Lithuanian Government was to provide it with.¹⁰⁸

The failed attempt at a coup in Lithuania facilitated to the Lithuanians a closer relationship with the UK. On 25th September, the British Government sent 21 British officers, headed by General F. P. Crozier, to act as instructors in the Lithuanian army.

At the same time, the agreement between Piłsudski and British envoys to the East was increasingly questionable. The British standpoint on Polish policy in Eastern affairs was subject to temporary fluctuations in the second week of September.

the nationalities – and so he is asking support from me and the party I am a member of. But, as I have already mentioned, he is a shrewd, cunning, and crafty man. He knows nothing of Gabrys’s designs – these things might coincide. I can feel that Fr. W. may be beneficial to us; the only unwelcome thing would be the Vilnius N[atational]-D[emocrats] committing a blunder. This is what I am quite afraid of.” Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., fond AGND, Group II B: Russia–Lithuania–Ukraine–Bohemia/Czech lands, file 18/1 (as in fn. 100).

108 M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska-Wielka Brytania w latach 1918–1923*, Warsaw 1975, p. 132.

On the basis of a conversation with John Duncan Gregory, who was inquiring about the plans for the Polish Eastern policy, on 11th September Eustachy Sapieha concluded that, should the Polish Government be in favour of the federal concept, it would easily gain the support of the UK.

The change in the UK's position in relation to Poland could probably have originated from the British assessment of the reliability of both participants in the Lithuanian-Polish coup d'état planned with the help of London.

Secondly, it has to be considered whether one of the reasons for the change in Britain's position was the loss of credibility by the Polish side as a result of the failure to comply with the arrangements. It is possible that this situation may have been caused by the Polish counteraction at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Someone in the Ministry with national convictions might have known the entire content of Gabrys's proposal as early as in late August; that is, before the Chief of State, by reading Krzyżanowski's correspondence.

Gabrys strongly emphasised that he envisioned a strict alliance for 50 years only with a democratic Poland. In his letter that reached Piłsudski after the "Kaunas Uprising" (in fact a Lithuanian coup d'état), Krzyżanowski referred very clearly to Gabrys's position: "Should power in Poland pass into the hands of national democrats, should Piłsudski resign or be removed, or, should Poland be thrown at Dmowski's feet – he would not accept it as such, and he would fight alongside its enemies."¹⁰⁹

For Roman Dmowski's supporters, this would be an unacceptable situation. The prospect would have emerged, disturbing for the national camp, that the Lithuanians and those Poles who advocated the federative idea might put into practice a policy to deny the politicians associated with the KNP an opportunity to take power. Osmołowski's files regarding the Administration's operations contain a striking handwritten note in pencil, possibly a duplicate, signed on 24th August 1919¹¹⁰ by Władysław Sołtan, a barrister from Riga, who acted as a courier.¹¹¹ It contains a report on his talk

109 Józef Piłsudski Institute in N.Y.C., fond AGND: B. Krzyżanowski's letter to the Chief of State, Memo 1402/T2: Paris, 15th August 1919 [a photocopy from the collection of D. Cisowska-Hydzik, is held by the author].

110 Ibid.

111 Central Archives of Modern Records [hereinafter, 'AAN'], Collection of elaborations and copies/duplicates of documents related to Poland's relations with Latvia, the Lithuanian Soviet Republic, Gdansk, and Ukraine, ref. No. 2, Vol. 1, doc. 10: Memorial [memorandum] by W. Sołtan re. Latvia, 10th July 1919.

with Zdzisław Okęcki, who was employed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹¹²

Called to report at the Ministry, Soltan was told that the formation of any agency of the Ministry in Lithuania was not a recommended option. “The action should”, instead, “be conducted by the [Civil] Administration of the Eastern Territories” with use of secret agents and with participation of POW and the Borderland Guard (in Krzyżanowski’s opinion, both organisations were National Democratic). It is worth emphasising that the word ‘should’ suggests that the action had not previously been carried out by the ZCZW. With the promise that the venture would be co-funded by it, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called for haste and sent a secret list of persons ready to act.¹¹³

The list, which divided the Kaunas region into seven counties, specified 49 names of Polish activists in Lithuania whose services could possibly be used¹¹⁴

112 Zdzisław Okęcki (1874–1944) was Director of the Political and Diplomatic Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (envoy to Belgrade in 1921–8 and to Tokyo in 1928–30). Stanisław Patek requested the Chief of State to share the news received from him in Paris with Okęcki as well as with Leopold Skulski. See W. Suleja, ‘Dwa listy Stanisława Patka do Józefa Piłsudskiego z Paryża ze stycznia 1920 roku. Przygotowywanie wyprawy kijowskiej’, in *Idea Europy i Polska w XIX-XX wieku. Księga ofiarowana dr. Adolfowi Juzwence, dyrektorowi Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, z okazji 60-lecia urodzin*, Wrocław 1999, pp. 41–48.

113 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/1, c. 10.

114 In the County of Kaunas, the following declared their willingness to work: Ignacy Sokołowski, Stanisław Kognowicki[!], Michał Junowicz, attorney-at-law[!], and Jan Wimbor, public prosecutor, all temporary residing in Vilnius; moreover: Edward Kudrewicz and Marian Babiański of Kiejdany. Stanisław Montwiłł, temporarily residing in Antokol (district of Vilnius); Stanisław Kozakowski, temporarily in Warsaw; Mr Jankowski of Trapkuny; Ksawery Pruszyński of Hajdamańce; Dr Piotr Mackiewicz, Józef Narkiewicz, and Stanisław Michałowski – all from Wilkomierz. In the County of Poniewież, Zygmunt Szwojnicki of Borkłojnie Poniewieskie, Marian Michniewicz of Anetowo Poniewieskie, Marian Gościewicz of Michelmont Goszczuński, Józef Baniewicz of Johaniszkiele, Kazimierz Zawisza of Jatajnie Poniewieskie, as well as Butrym and Teodor Ludkiewicz all declared their readiness to join. From the County of Jeziorosy, readiness was declared by Kazimierz Świątecki of Kowno/Kaunas, Oskar Rutkowski of Szakale, Karol Zaborski of Bogdanów Ponedel, Józef Salmonowicz of Podziśnie, Piotr Rosen of Gaczany/Jużynty, and Jan Rosen of Vilnius. Those willing to act in the County of Šiauliai [Szawle] included Władysław Komar of Bejsagoła, Dr Cuft from Warsaw, Kazimierz Łukomski of Šiauliai, Marcjjan Janowicz of Kaunas (a minister), Czesław Milwid of Šiauliai, Mrs Dołobowska of Kurhany, and Feliks Raczkowski from Vilnius. In the County of Rosienie, those willing to work were Eugeniusz Romer from Cytowiany, Władysław Wielhorski, Mr Przciszewski, Jan

and was confidential. According to Krzyżanowski's suggestion in his letter of 15th August, the first to be mentioned was Stanisław Sokołowski. However, two names were mentioned that Krzyżanowski has disqualified: Stanisław Kognowicki, whom the Lithuanians did not like, and Michał [?] Junowicz, a 'Taryba-ised' man. It might have been so that the national camp, having intercepted the information, took steps, by way of *faits accomplis*, to avoid being eliminated from the Polish-Polish fight for power.

Thirdly, the Borderland Guard's information allows the following hypothesis. In a report by an anonymous Guard instructor from the Kaunas region, dated 17th October 1919 Józef Małowieski (who authenticated the report) stated that: "the documents for certain trusted individuals, issued in Warsaw or Vilnius with a need behind them but needlessly brought to that place" fell into the hands of Liudas Gira, who immediately handed them over to the Entente mission.¹¹⁵ The imprudence of the Poles also contributed to the outcome: "particularly, the talkativeness, here [Kaunas] as well as there [possibly Vilnius/Warsaw], caused that many people have strongly discredited themselves and inflicted severe detriment to the Polish cause."¹¹⁶

The account puts the undisputed blame for the failure for the defeat of the August 1919 Kaunas uprising on the Poles themselves. "I have also noticed the fact", we are told, "that the most dangerous element there are those Poles who do nothing and still want to know everything. Those gentlemen¹¹⁷ are travelling to get the news as far as to Vilnius, at times. And, since they know that doing nothing is a sin, so, to avoid sinning, they are putting words out all around. Falling to this category are mainly the ladies, to whom Liudas Gira has much to owe and thus is aware of everything. He has learned, for instance, as much as that the Niekraszs [i.e. Niekrasz brothers], amidst the dark of the night, buried in a small kettle by the tree the documents Gira was in utmost need of."¹¹⁸

Was it not, after all, also about the indiscretion of the Poles occupying high positions in the ZCZW? Or was it, perhaps, about the Borderland Guard, which

Iwanowicz from Podgaje/Kielmy, and Jan Gruzewski, a military man from Lida. In the County of Telsze: Aleksander Tyszkiewicz and Wincenty Parczewski of Kretynga, and the barrister Józef Bronisz. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1683/1, c. 11.

115 LMAB, Fond 168-25, lap. 255-258 (as in fn. 58, 68, and 70).

116 Ibid.

117 Franciszek Kończka might be meant here (see fn. 71).

118 LMAB, Fond 168-25, lap. 255-258 (as in fn. 58, 68, 70, and 115).

in the Kaunas District supported the KNP's agenda?¹¹⁹ Perhaps some elements from these hypotheses should be compiled in a different combination?

Let us leave aside the investigation, significantly hindered after 80 years, as to whether this was a political provocation that took advantage of the feverish and exalted moods; whether, indeed, someone from the Poles in Kaunas¹²⁰ could have been an informer for the Lithuanians (Piotr Dowkont-Wróblewski¹²¹ was considered such), or perhaps someone from Vilnius had unintentionally sent to Kaunas the documents discrediting Poland internationally. Instead, we will focus on what documents could have been of interest to the Entente.

Let us stress that the author of the report from the Kowno region did not mean the census of Poles from Kaunas, against whom persecution began immediately. The Lithuanian security service might have taken the document 'On the need for political and agitation action in the Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland'¹²² and the top confidential 'Agenda of external and internal policies towards Lithuania.'¹²³

It is not impossible that these two documents (or information about documents of similar importance) were hidden in the Niekrasz brothers' cauldron. It was the brothers who, out of a temperament being "more fit for military than social activities",¹²⁴ secured the papers entrusted to them, in what in their opinion was the optimum manner. Determining who had handed them these incriminating materials for safekeeping exceeds the research capabilities of contemporary

119 See fn. 71.

120 "Of the Poles: Fr. Pacewicz, a prelate, who is Chairman of the Educational Society in Kowno. The Rev. Prof. Laus is Chairman of the Workers' Society in Kowno; he is the best Pole, so devoted to the Polish cause, diligent and tactful. Fr. Maciejewski, prefect of the Polish grammar school and a courageous defender of the Polish cause in Lithuania, will daringly face the Lithuanians down; Junowicz, a good Pole, although his concessions to the Lithuanians prove excessive. The two Niekrasz brothers, they are more fit for military than social activities. Mrs Stankiewicz, the feeder and custodian of the Polish prisoners, takes beside this an active part in the cultural and educational work. Miss Wańkowicz and Miss Brzozowska are spirited and devoted to the Polish cause with their whole souls. She [possibly, the latter one] has recently been detained and imprisoned, for a second time." LMAB, Fond 168-25, lap. 255-258 (as in fn. 58, 68, 70, 115, and 118).

121 Łossowski, *Konflikt polsko-litewski ...*, 76-8.

122 LMAB, Fond 168-58, lap. 1 (as in fn. 32).

123 A duplicate (undated, no author named, no signature) was found among Marian Świechowski's files. LMAB, Fond 168-22, lap. 65-66 (cf. fn. 57).

124 LMAB, Fond 168-25, lap. 255-258 (as in fn. 58, 68, 70, 115, 118, and 120).

historians. However, documents of this particular sort should have been kept, primarily, at the secret administrative office of the Commissioner-General.

The events in Kowno were a defeat for the Poles not only in military terms. They also reinforced the Lithuanian Commission in Paris before the Entente. And such a turn of events was perfectly suited to both the Germans' and the Russians' objectives. The latent Lithuanian animosities towards Poles had begun to manifest themselves cumulatively, and it is precisely from the August uprising failed that we can speak of Lithuanian violence against Poles. Relations in Lithuania changed. Poles were now commonly treated as enemies of independent Lithuania; not neighbours, but intruders. Yet, contrary to established opinion, this was not the immediate response.

It should be clearly stressed that the unveiling of Polish preparations for the possible implementation in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania of a political line alternative to Józef Piłsudski's programme worded in the Vilnius Proclamation, was not only in the interests of the young Lithuanian state but above all in the interests of those who sought to prevent the fundamental goal of Polish policy; namely, the Polish-Lithuanian alliance. Their objective was eventually achieved; unfortunately, the torment of Poles was the price.

For verification purposes, in the course of further research we should put forward the hypothesis that the defeat of the Polish-Lithuanian coup, which was 'projected' in cooperation with Juozas Gabrys for September 1919 (as is evident from Bronisław Krzyżanowski's correspondence), was the result of disloyalty by the Poles, which precipitated the outbreak of the rising, trying to provoke it at the end of August, in order to pre-empt the Lithuanians as co-organisers and place them in the face of a *fait accompli*, probably with the aim of securing a stronger position in negotiations with their Lithuanian counterparts.

The fact that the Lithuanians had been considering the coup since Gabrys was forced to leave Kaunas as a result of his misunderstanding with Antanas Smetona in the context of foreign policy, was written in the 'Information from Kaunas on Lithuanian relations' of May 1919. As its anonymous author stated, describing the Lithuanian army, "The Lithuanians complain that the Germans keep betraying them by reporting on the deployment of Lithuanian troops to the Bolsheviks. Military circles are talking about a coup d'état, which, when completed, will enable communication with the Poles."¹²⁵

125 A photocopy, from the BPW collection, is held by the author.

The same author stated that: “the Poles in Kaunas are unconditionally hostile to the Lithuanian Government; they demand that Kaunas be incorporated into the Polish State.”¹²⁶

Perhaps because of such news, Piłsudski eventually¹²⁷ approved the scenario of the premature commencement of the uprising, which allows us to assume that he was not the author of the idea. Granting this approval was a mistake, possibly due to a lack of complete information from Krzyżanowski.

The shocked Lithuanians did not immediately proceed to persecute of all the Poles in Lithuania, as is evidenced by the aforementioned confidential report of the Borderland Guard instructor of 17th October 1919, which was rewritten by hand (not a standard practice at the time) by J. Małowieski, Head of the Borderland Guard’s Vilnius District, and additionally authenticated by the round seal of the Lithuanian Agency of the Organisational Department of the Borderland Guard.¹²⁸

According to the report, Poles were still in the ranks of the army (“the Poles in the Lithuanian army, although feeling a great affection for Poland, do not reveal their feelings towards Lithuanians and behave in the most correct way) and in administrative positions (“I have found that the Poles in Lithuanian offices fulfil their duties very conscientiously”); moreover, Polish schools functioned, including primary and secondary ones, which until August 1919 were subsidised by the Lithuanian Government. (“Polish schools are not lacking. Only textbooks and teachers are in deficit. A Polish teacher is very much needed at the grammar school in Kaunas.”) There were no Polish businesses, nor Polish cooperatives and machinery rings – not because of a ban, but because of a lack of Polish initiative. In many places, however, Polish educational societies were active.

The report by the Borderland Guard instructor of October 1919 also explains the gradually growing aversion towards Poles among the then-friendly Lithuanian population: “all Lithuanian newspapers are calling for the seizure of land from citizens; but not without the guilt of the citizens. For instance, Mr. Zawisza, Count Tyszkiewicz’s steward at the Red Manor near Kaunas, is selling the forest to the Germans on this very day, which outrages the people – not only in respect of Tyszkiewicz but Poles in general. And this is what the other citizens are also doing, as far as I have heard.”

126 A photocopy, from the BPW collection, is held by the author.

127 P. Łossowski, ‘Próba przewrotu w Kownie ...’, 63.

128 A photocopy, from the BPW collection, is held by the author.

However, the most essential excerpt that explains the roots of the Kaunas rising of 1919 is the following: "In general, the Lithuanian army is quite disciplined, apolitical, and attentive to the orders of its command. If, for example, the recent coup d'état projected by a certain [Lithuanian – JG-K's note] political party there had succeeded and a new government had emerged, the army would surely have proved loyal to this new government as well."¹²⁹

The failed August 1919 uprising, regardless of whether it was triggered prematurely due to a provocation that Leon Wasilewski might have tried to prevent at the last minute (he cancelled the orders given prematurely because of the bad currency brought from Warsaw by Stanisław Radziwiłł), or a coincidence, the self-ignition of feverish moods, or finally the betrayal of someone entangled in a provocation by the Lithuanian or other security services – marked the closure of an extremely important stage in Polish-Lithuanian opportunities for cooperation. In some way, it embarrassed the policy adopted based on the Vilnius Proclamation.

Two years after the August uprising, Aleksander Meysztowicz wrote a short literary text about the Polish policy pursued in Kaunas region with a telling title: *Wasted Opportunities [Zmarnowane okazje]*.¹³⁰

A careful study of an excerpt from this text, in the context of the facts established above, shows the "uprising" in a new light. According to Meysztowicz, the first of the four wasted opportunities for Poland to consolidate itself in the Kaunas region was that:

in the autumn of 1919, when the Lithuanian Government was weak, there were hardly any troops and a coup was being prepared. ... The coup would have been successful had it not been for the incompetent command in Vilnius. The date of the assassination attempt was unnecessarily postponed, without warning all the conspirators. One of the conspiring units, unaware of the postponed date, had cut the telephone wires near Kowno on the previously fixed date. This aroused the suspicions of the Kowno Government, which realised what was going on and prevented the plot from happening, and also stole lists of the conspirators from the Wilnian offices.

Heavy repressions and persecutions then began in the Kaunas region. It seemed that, when organising the coup, the Polish authorities should have foreseen what they would do if the coup was successful or not, and it seemed that in the event of failure, the Polish army should have captured Kowno Land in order to put an end to the persecution.

129 LMAB, Fond 168–25, lap. 255–258 (as in fn. 58, 68, 70, 115, 118 and 124).

130 LMAB, Fond 292–81, lap. 1–17: Aleksander Meysztowicz, *Zmarnowane okazje*, 13th August 1921.

This was the opinion of the Polish people of Kowno Land. And there was time for this. But the Polish troops did not march towards Kowno and Poland thus lost her first opportunity to establish herself in the region ... The fact that we have proved unable to take advantage of either the circumstances that we had arranged for ourselves, nor of the several occasions to occupy Lithuania that we were offered by fate, leads to the sad conclusion that even if we were to be offered such opportunities again, we would not be able to take them in any case.

There must be some internal reasons for this.¹³¹

Among these reasons, Meysztowicz mentioned, as he put it, the pernicious Polish belief in Thomas Woodrow Wilson's precepts, which led to Lithuanians reaching for the Polish Vilnius, rather than Poles reaching for the Polish Kowno. The text in question, excellent in literary terms, requires a comment from a historian.

Was not the 'incompetent command' actually a controversy between the endangered POW and the endangered Borderland Guard, on the one hand, and Leon Wasilewski and the other supporters of the federation with Lithuanians on the other? The coup was not 'postponed', but rather precipitated in view of the opinion of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and ultimately approved by the Commander-in-Chief. The findings indicate that approval was granted without access to the full information intended for him.

Moreover, much would have been clarified by a determination who in reality endeavoured to postpone the outbreak of the uprising – the initially fixed date not being September, as agreed with Juzoas Gabrys, but August, as agreed with Jurgis Aukstolaitis, Stanisław Narutowicz, and Silvestras Žukauskas (Pol. Sylwester Żukowski).

The August date was 'marked' according to the suggestion given by Zdzisław Okęcki of the Polish Foreign Ministry. If Gabrys had discovered that the initiative was taken over by the followers of National Democracy, then – according to his statement, which Krzyżanowski mentioned in his letter of 15th August¹³² – he immediately abandoned the intention of a coup, thus effectively supporting the government that he wanted to overthrow. This would also explain the remarkable effectiveness of the Lithuanians.

The second hypothesis becomes even more plausible in the light of item four of the 'Polish State's position with respect to Lithuania', which states: "By sending its delegates to Kowno in August 1919 so that they took part in the deliberations with the Lithuanian Government, the Polish State proposed to it

131 Ibid.

132 The one that reached Piłsudski on 3rd September.

that the question of state affiliation of the population in Lithuania be resolved by way of a decision to be made by the representatives of all the inhabitants of the country, to be elected pursuant to the most-democratic [statute], with impartiality of the election guaranteed."¹³³

The Polish authorities had the right not to prepare a scenario in the event of failure. The coup was supposed to be a Polish-Lithuanian action, its objective was to support the new Lithuanian Government, headed by Gabrys. Therefore, logically, failure could not occur. Piłsudski had simply not foreseen a Polish counteraction against his policy – which, after all, was the Chief of State's policy – or the fact that an attempt to intercept the initiative by individuals inspired by Polish opponents of federation would lead to the annihilation of the joint Polish-Lithuanian plan. Without deciding whether the "Kaunas uprising" executed together with Gabrys in September would have had a chance to succeed, it needs to be stated that such a scenario was seen as a serious threat by the national camp supporters.

The selection of Bronisław Krzyżanowski's correspondence reaching the Chief of State in the crucial period of preparing for the coup resulted in a situation tragic in its consequences, as perfectly outlined by Piotr Łossowski: "The absurdity of the entire situation lay in the fact that in both Vilnius and Warsaw, serious discussions and plans were conducted with people who did not actually represent anyone."¹³⁴

The premature outbreak of the uprising, with the use by federation enemies of POW and the Borderland Guard in Kaunas, prevented the implementation of the federation agenda, and gave priority to the execution of the minimum option; namely, the incorporation of whatever possible into Poland.

The distribution of the Polish population in the southern part of Kaunas region adjacent to the Governorate of Vilna (the County of Kaunas and the southern parts of the Counties of Wiłkomierz and Jeziorosy), based on parish censuses carried out by local social organisations, was as follows:

The population of Kaunas by ethnicity/nation based on the general, proportional Municipal Council election (regardless of the sex) is broken down in the following table.

133 LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 2 (verso).

134 Łossowski, 'Próba przewrotu w Kownie ...'

Table 21. Distribution of Poles in southern part of Kaunas region adjacent to Governorate of Vilna (based on parish censuses).

Parish	Catholic population	Population of Poles (%)
Kaunas/Kowno	28,000	75
Rumszyszki	4,600	25
Korniałów	3,750	80
Kiejdany (county)	4,015	65
Kiejdany (town)	1,900	90
Jaswojnie	7,681	60
Poniwieżyk	2,000	50
Żejmy	5,500	75
Skomile	6,766	95
Janów and Kułna	2,695	85
Wędziagoła	4,000	95
Łopie	3,050	90
Boby and Moniszkańce	3,371	70
Łabunów	1 925	80
Datnów	5,000	80
Dryświaty	16,851	90
Brasław, Belmenti, Opsa	15,939	95
Plusy and Widze	7,600	95
Zawierz	8,106	95
Czekiszki	4,460	40
Kroki and Peczele	8 439	[data unavailable]
Pacunele	2,000	90
Wodokty	3,000	95
Krakinów	5,500	40
Surwiliszki	4,567	25
Opitołoki, Szaty, Siesiki, Dzirewałtów, Pobojsko	18,856	60
Upniki and Wieprze	6,000	50
Wiłkomierz	5,667	50
Bukańce	1,760	60
Ponatery	3,075	50
Czerwony Dwór [Red Manor]	4,132	40
Wilki and Średniki	9,234	30
Jeziorasy [Jeziorosy] [before 1918, Nowoaleksandrowsk]	6,600	90

(Continued)

Table 21. Continued

Parish	Catholic population	Population of Poles (%)
Szełwa	2,750	95
Iłkuksza, Ellema, Łankiesa	1,000	75
Ejregoła	4,000	25

Source: LMAB, Fond. 168, 22 lap. 67–67 (verso).

Table 22. National/ethnic proportions, based on general, proportional Municipal Council election (%).

Nationality/ethnicity	Vote, %
Poles	42
Jews	31
Lithuanians	17
Germans	8.5
Russians	1.5

Source: As in Table 21.

General premises of Polish policy and its determinants in September to December 1919

The Lithuanian trump card

After the events of August 1919 in Kaunas, a radical change of attitude occurred among the Polish population. On 20th September 1919, less than a month after the Polish pogrom in Kowno, Marian Świechowski submitted a note to the Chief of State and the Commissioner-General, in Warsaw, entitled 'For a prompt military intervention in ethnographic Lithuania'.¹³⁵

The author assumed that immediately after the coup, the Lithuanian Government merely pretended to be inclined to reconcile with Poland, in order to gain time. The Lithuanian governmental action was championed by Catholic priests who, in Świechowski's words, exhorted from church pulpits the slaughter of Poles and, at the same time, the theft of Polish property. The damage was to

¹³⁵ LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 222–224: 'For a prompt military intervention in ethnographic Lithuania.'

be done by numerous detentions, the utmost importance being attached to the action against those Lithuanians who, whilst in opposition to the Taryba, were leaning towards a union with Poland.

As it follows from the above findings, in a critical situation the Kovnian Poles, disorganised and disoriented by the turn of events (the uprising having been decreed and then cancelled) provoked with their patriotic attitude a rightful grief among the Lithuanians supporting the pro-Polish policy, who were probably much better informed about the findings, and treated the conduct of the Poles as an act of faithlessness. What is worse, they were discouraged from pursuing Polish-Lithuanian cooperation.

The authorities in Warsaw, which of course had no idea of the circumstances surrounding the coup, were aware that the Lithuanian Government was seeking to develop a tradition of armed struggle against Poland – one that would not only be the bonding agent of the politically emerging nation, but would also tear down the last bridges between Lithuanians and Poles. In this particular situation, paradoxically, the immediate intervention of Polish troops could have saved the Polish-Lithuanian alliance. The secret of the possible success of such a Polish military action lay, Świechowski believed, in the psyche of the people inhabiting ethnographic Lithuania. The people who were still sceptical about the Lithuanian administration had immense appreciation for their disciplined and apolitical army. “If, for example, the attempt on the Government, as recently projected by a certain political party, had been a success, and a new government formed, then the army would certainly have become loyal to this new government”, the Borderland Guard emissary stated in his report entitled ‘The vital state of affairs in Lithuania.’¹³⁶

Świechowski was aware of the dire political situation, reaching the point where the Polish state, which had been an important player in the region’s history – save for the time of the Partitions – was apparently becoming an object of history. Thus, he acted in two ways. On the one hand, he sent a copy of his request for an intervention to a person who “seemingly enjoys the full trust of the Chief in these matters – [and whose] judgment will be conclusive here. Sir, Dear! Please tip the scales for an immediate intervention with a prompt announcement of an election being called, and save the situation – before it is lost: before the English take command there.”¹³⁷

136 LMAB, Fond 168–25, lap. 255–258: (see fn. 58, 68, 70, 115, 118, 124, and 129).

137 LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 228–230: M. Świechowski to [Leon Wasilewski,] Esquire, after 20th September 1919.

The addressee was Leon Wasilewski. Despite, or perhaps because of, the August events in Kaunas, Wasilewski decided to stay in Vilnius. In his report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he declared to “undertake the work of gradual preparation of grounds to capture the decisive factors of Lithuania for Poland, directly and indirectly.”¹³⁸

On the other hand, Świechowski, who was not initially a supporter of annexation, found incorporation to be the only way out of the Polish-Lithuanian stalemate. In his letter to Wasilewski, he was under no illusions regarding the prospects of the Polish-Lithuanian negotiations he was conducting. He relied in his opinion on the personal knowledge of Wasilewski's counterpart, who was his colleague from the Polish Circle in Odessa and who was officially recognised by England. The man still used the surname of Ślezewicz at the time (later, he became known as Mykolas Sleževičius). In 1919, Świechowski described him as a closed and stubborn man. “I wrote to him. I presented the entire project of federation of three autonomous national areas, with Vilnius as their joint capital. To no avail, of course ... The only way out of this vicious circle of mutual bearbaiting, which ought to leave no trace in the psychology of the masses in the future, is to radically cut off this festering ulcer in the reciprocal relations. Armed intervention – the overthrow of the Taryba – the appointment of a provisional government composed of individuals favourable to us – holding an election and summoning the constituent assembly in Vilnius ... there will be some screaming for the time being, as if pulling out a tooth, but it will generally bring relief.”¹³⁹

After August 1919, Świechowski was aware that Polish military intervention should take place. He also knew that if, given the new situation in Polish-Lithuanian relations, it should happen too late, the Polish Eastern policy founded upon ethnographic Lithuania and Kaunas would collapse.¹⁴⁰ Hence, he made an appeal ‘To Mr Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories’, on 29th October 1919.¹⁴¹

138 AAN, Leon Wasilewski file, ref. No. B 1579: L. Wasilewski's report on a special mission to Kowno (August–November 1919). For a broader discussion, see B. Stokowska, *Litwa, Białoruś, Ukraina w myśli politycznej Leona Wasilewskiego*, Kraków 1998, pp. 125–126.

139 LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 228–230 (as in fn. 137).

140 Ibid.

141 LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 170–171 (verso): M. Świechowski, ‘To Mr. Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories’, Warsaw, 29th October 1919.

In Kaunas, the attack by Pavel Bermond-Avalov's troops and the Lithuanian Government's flight to Vilnius was expected. Świechowski realised that the situation would evolve differently.

The Lithuanian Government, even if forced to flee, will not ask the Poles for help. Any request would entail obligations indeed – in this particular case, it is consent to the union and renunciation of Vilnius – but the Lithuanian political elite will not do so voluntarily, and cannot do so anyway ... unwilling to bind their hands in this respect for the future. Seeing that there is no other way out, the leadership in Lithuania are willing to submit to Poland under the pressure of force, after filing a platonic protest. And this is exactly all about the psychological moment of such 'protest' ... they are, namely, perfectly aware that for Poland, it is also a matter of life and death not to allow the Germans or Muscovites to establish themselves in Kaunas.¹⁴²

The aforementioned recognition of Sleževičius's government by England did not help the Polish cause; an English legion was organised there to defend Lithuania's independence. The first 3,000 Englishmen (or Americans) were expected in Kaunas in as early as at the end of September, with a target number of 30,000 foreign soldiers to be deployed alongside the German troops still stationed there. Such a course of events was obviously intended to effectively prevent any possible intervention by Poland.¹⁴³

Świechowski predicted that Bermond-Avalov would stall. In the event of Ferdinand Foch's positive response to the request to dispatch the French mission, as a coalition mission to the allied Russian army of Bermond-Avalov, he envisaged blocking the possibility of a Polish presence in Lithuania, and thus crossing out the entire plan of Poland's union with Lithuania. According to the information available to him, Bermond-Avalov, fortified in Samogitia (apart from Kaunas), with the Entente's mission at his side, would await the planned meeting of the League of Nations, which was to be joined by a representative of 'the great and undivided' Russia. Świechowski had no illusions that the League would not protest against the occupation of territories formally belonging to Russia by the 'Russian' troops of Bermond-Avalov.

A simple consequence of these moves, in all probability, would be the surrender of the Lithuanian Government to Russia, in the full majesty of international law. The League of Nations, convened at the request of the Council of Five made to Thomas Woodrow Wilson before the ratification of the peace treaty by

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

the United States, would legitimise the *faits accomplis*, thus finally terminating the Polish cause in Lithuania.

Świechowski concluded his speech of 29th October 1919, with a dramatic appeal: "In view of the upcoming assembly of the League of Nations; in view of the expected arrival of a coalition missions to Bermond-Avalov; in view of the forthcoming elections to the Sejm [i.e. Seimas] in Kowno; in view of the futility of waiting for the Lithuanians to voluntarily enter a union with us – immediate intervention is a must – the future of our entire Eastern policy and our entire position of power depends upon it."¹⁴⁴

As we know, in October 1919 a different concept prevailed. It seems that in the new situation generated by the August events, this was an erroneous decision by the Chief of State. By then, he was left with no choice but to begin implementing the National Democrats' concept of the future of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory. Following the failure of the mission of Józef Albin Herbaczewski (Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas), Leon Wasilewski attempted – no doubt in agreement with Piłsudski – to form a government with the support of the Lithuanian opposition.

He sought support from Antanas Viskantas, Jurgis Aukstuolaitis, and Major Klemens Woitienkunas/Klemensas Vaitiekūnas. A group of Poles travelled to Kaunas for this purpose. It is characteristic that Czesław Krupski was certainly not pleased with the composition of the 'private delegation' formed by Wasilewski. He doubted whether, despite the assurances of a strict instruction in force presented to him by Wasilewski, they would manage to "remain within these frames."¹⁴⁵ He considered Ludwik Abramowicz's candidacy problematic due to the fact that he was a full-time official of the Commissariat-General. Why such a demonstration of the Administration's apolitical nature in in-house correspondence between high officials of the ZCZW?

The fact is that Leon Wasilewski, who was in Vilnius in the autumn of 1919, avoided discussing matters of fundamental importance in respect of the Eastern policy with the Commissioner-General (even if he did not avoid any contact with him), definitely preferring conversations with Czesław Krupski, Head of the ZCZW's Department of Ethnic Affairs instead. Krupski would subsequently forward relevant information to the Commissioner-General, in confidential letters.

Such an intricate procedure of reporting on the last chance mission in Polish-Lithuanian relations may be evidence of either the ZCZW being treated as a

144 Ibid.

145 Stefan Mickiewicz and Aleksander Babiański were meant there.

purely administrative apparatus, which is rather doubtful in the case of Piłsudski's closest confidant in Eastern affairs, or of tarnished trust in Osmołowski, known for his unbridled eloquence and frivolity. Perhaps this practice arose from a grudge against the Commissary General, which went back to the roots of the events of August 1919 in Kaunas?

It is quite characteristic that in this phase of Polish activity, the Commissioner-General would find out about the plans and moves in which he did not partake at all from reports by his own employees, submitted to him in writing on a top-secret basis. This practice might have, perhaps, aroused from some grudge against the Commissioner-General, which went back to the roots of the August 1919 events in Kaunas.

Based on this rather abnormal situation, we can precisely determine the composition of the seven-member delegation of representatives of Polish political parties in Lithuania, which – while staying in close contact with Leon Wasilewski and Captain Walery Sławek – travelled to Kaunas on 16th November. Its members included Witold Abramowicz, Zygmunt Rewkowski and Aleksander Babiański (Democrat), Stanisław Bagiński and Aleksander Gasztowt (Social Democrats), Stefan Mickiewicz (peasant activist), and Antoni Węgierski.

The response presented in Kaunas in November 1919 by the exponents of Lithuanian society to the proposal of the representatives of the Polish parties of Lithuania¹⁴⁶ was outright devastating.

Poland, the neighbouring state that was temporarily occupying Lithuanian lands, was accused of stirring up one part of Lithuanian society against another. Moreover, ignoring the provisions of the Vilnius Proclamation, the ZCZW was charged with mistreating Lithuanian statehood and the principle of self-determination. The Lithuanians demanded the release of all Lithuanian citizens from the Polish army.¹⁴⁷

They requested the winding up and banning of the Borderland Guard, the Niemen Riflemen and the Committee for the Defence of the Borderlands. Disregarding the curriculum of the educational policy of the ZCZW, they demanded something that could already function, and did function, wherever

146 I have not found the text of the Polish proposition.

147 According to the statistics I have broken down, the Vilnius Inspectorate alone hired a total of 14 Lithuanians between June and October 1919. Cf. J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Zespół akt "Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodniej" w zbiorach Biblioteki Publicznej m.st. Warszawy', in *Biblioteka na Koszykowej 1907–1997. Zbiór prac poświęconych Bibliotece Publicznej m.st. Warszawy – Bibliotece Głównej*, Warsaw 1999, p. 116 (including table in Chapter 4 of the study).

the people expressed such a wish; namely, the wish to establish schools that taught in the Lithuanian language. Virtually unknown to the ZCZW's administration, Lithuanian was to be given equal rights in all offices of the Administration, even though the Lithuanians accounted for a negligible percentage of the population in the areas covered by it. The establishment of the Commission for the rectification of the demarcation line was considered by the Lithuanians to be the competence of the Lithuanian Government and of the 'state and the High Command of the occupying state'; in other words, they refused to recognise the ZCZW.

The Lithuanians rejected all Polish demands. They opposed the establishment of a representation to the Kaunas-based Government for the defence of the interests of the Polish community in the Kaunas region, which was deprived of the right to self-determination. It was all the more painful that neither the Byelorussians nor the Jews were denied this right. The Poles, on the other hand, were defiantly "offered the simplest solution: the inclusion of representatives of this community into the Lithuanian Government."¹⁴⁸

It was proposed that the Polish Government make use of the right to appoint its diplomatic representative to the Lithuanian Government to defend the interests of Polish citizens of the Republic of Poland. This would, obviously, have entailed formal recognition of the Lithuanian Government by Poland. The Polish initiative ultimately fizzled out. All in all, this can be regarded as the Lithuanian response to Kaunas in August 1919.

Still in November, the Taryba determined the division of the claimed territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania into ten districts,¹⁴⁹ which included some territories administered by the ZCZW.

As a consequence, the regulations of the Lithuanian Government regarding, for instance, the parcelling of land into colonies, reached the communes recognising the jurisdiction of the ZCZW. This, obviously, aroused specific

148 LMAB, Fond 168–22, lap. 219–221: Reply from exponents of Lithuanian society to the Declaration of the Polish Delegation in Kowno in November 1919 [cf. fn. 72].

149 Mariampol/*Marijampolė* (Counties of Mariampol, Sejny, Suwałki, Olita/Alytus), Kaunas, Rosienie/Raseiniai (Counties of szacki, Wołkowysk, Kaunas, Troki-Koszedary/Trakai-Kaišiadorys), Telsze/Telšiai (Counties of Telsze, Kretynga/Kretingas, Kiejdany/*Kėdainiai*), Poniewież/Panevėžys (Szawle/Šiauliai, Birże/Biržai, Poniewież, Wiłkomierz/Ukmergė), Uciana/Utena (Counties of Rakiszki/Rokiškės, Jeziorosy/Zarasai, Uciana, Wiłkomierz/Ukmergė), Vilnius/Vilnius (Counties of Vilnius, Święciany/Švenčionys), Lida (Counties of Oszmiana, Lida, Wołkowysk), Białystok (Counties of Białowieża, Bielsk Podlaski, Białystok), Grodno (Counties of Sokółka, Grodno, Augustów); after *Głos Litwy* newspaper, issue of 28th November 1919.

emotions not only among peasants, but also among the ZCZW officials and politicians in Warsaw.¹⁵⁰

The anti-Polish ‘Proclamation to the society’ signed by the Szawle/Šiauliai-based Association of Lithuania, with its central board headquartered in Kaunas, was distributed.

Despite Paderewski’s efforts in London, England de facto recognised Lithuania’s independence in December, and France accepted letters from the Lithuanian deputy Oskaras Milašius/Oskar Miłosz.¹⁵¹

The Lithuanian delegation ceased to exist in Paris on 1st December 1919, but some of its commissions continued to operate. Lithuanian missions functioned in Sweden, Denmark (Christiania), France, Germany, England, and the Vatican. These developments once again confirmed Świechowski’s diagnosis of 20th September 1919, who described the policies of the Lithuanian Government of Šleževičius as those of a ‘thick’ mind, from the standpoint of federation advocates. It was commonly explained in Poland that Kaunas’s policies were guided by the German hand.

The Byelorussian trump card

In September 1919, Marian Świechowski still believed in a practical solution to the Byelorussian-Polish question that would be based on a territorial delineation of spheres of influence, reserving space for the Polish one in the west and Byelorussian in the east. His concept was as follows: “The area up to the Berezina River is too large to be incorporated into Poland as exclusively Polish, while too small for such a territorial delineation of Polish and Byelorussian influence to be possible.”¹⁵²

In view of the reluctance of the local Poles towards sharing authority in this area with the Byelorussians, only the second option remained applicable. The Polish troops had to occupy a larger area, liberate the rest of Byelorussia, and only then put the originally propagated principle into practice. In order to implement it, the following plan had to be carried out: “As we will be able to go further on only under the slogan of Byelorussian interests, we must already assist them [i.e. the Byelorussians] in organising themselves and bring them to cooperate

150 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 496.

151 The Chief of the French Staff was interested in Lithuania’s military needs.

152 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/1, c. 26–27: Motion regarding the appointment in the District of Minsk of Byelorussians (including) for administrative positions, 1st September 1919, [singd by] Marian Świechowski.

in administering the areas currently held in the Minsk region, thus creating a crystallising [i.e. promising] core for an autonomous, strictly Byelorussian area.”¹⁵³

As a result, on 1st September 1919 Świechowski requested the immediate appointment of Byelorussians in the Minsk area not only to the judiciary but also to strictly administrative bodies. Świechowski suggested appointing a Byelorussian as deputy district commissioner and adopting the principle that the deputy commissioner in each county be a Byelorussian. He did not rule out that Poles could be the deputies of Byelorussians. He hoped that hard organic work would contribute to a greater moderation in Byelorussian demands whilst also prompting some of the intelligentsia from Vilnius to relocate to the east. Considering that the main occupation of the Byelorussian elite was constant criticism of the lack of Polish pro-Byelorussian measures, entrusting them with a particular task would have apparently become an asset for Poland in the international forum.¹⁵⁴

The project did not enter into force due to a lack of willing Byelorussian candidates. Founding the Civil Administration apparatus on Polish elements was a necessity, as already remarked in the chapter on personnel. Osmołowski described the situation as follows: “Of Byelorussians able and willing to take office, there were none. ... There are no Byelorussians prepared for state service, except a dozen-or-so [*sic*].”¹⁵⁵

In response to the permanent insistence of the Administration that Byelorussians nominate their people as starosts and senior officials, the ZCZW has obtained the following candidacies: [Mr] Wojewódzki, a Pole of the landed gentry (he was appointed a starost in Ihumeń, present-day Chervyen'), [Mr] Tarashkyevich, a young Byelorussian aged 25–26 (he was awarded a class VI [emolument], and stepped down after a week, offended at not obtaining class IV); Roman Skirmunt, a Pole of the landed gentry, who declined the nomination; and, Lubicz-Majewski, headmaster of the school in Zambrów, a Byelorussian by conviction and origin, who immediately assumed a high position in the Byelorussian School Council. After a few weeks in office in Minsk, he arrived in Vilnius and submitted a report ‘On the need to dissolve of the Byelorussian Council’ and cessation of funding which was used for purposes other than those intended, mostly personal.¹⁵⁶

153 Ibid.

154 Such a move would have rejected the arguments of Antoni Łuckiewicz, who was expected to pay a visit to Warsaw assumedly at the invitation of the Foreign Ministry.

155 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/5/IV, c. 55–55 (verso): Remarks to the memorial of the Supreme Council of the Byelorussian People's Republic, confidential [July 1920].

156 Ibid.

On 19th September 1919, Józef Piłsudski was welcomed in Minsk by delegations from 44 organisations, including the chairman of the Byelorussian National Committee, Mr Pruszyński. Piłsudski responded to him in Byelorussian, promising broad freedom and autonomy; in return, he only demanded one thing from the Byelorussians: loyalty.

On 22nd October, in spite of the stance of local Poles, Piłsudski signed a decree on the establishment of the Byelorussian army.¹⁵⁷

The clearly unequivocal reluctance of the local Polish society towards the creation of any kind of Byelorussian military formations with the decisive assistance of Poland was deeply motivated by the early 1919 experiences in Grodno.¹⁵⁸

Therefore, considering the context of Polish-Byelorussian and internal Polish relations, the Byelorussians were offered quite a great deal. Nevertheless, in 1919 they persisted in demonstrating disappointment.¹⁵⁹ The Byelorussian nationalists from Minsk published their political demands in the preliminary issue of the daily *Byalorus'* of 3rd December 1919.¹⁶⁰

157 Oleg Łatyszonek (for details, see References). For more recent literature, see J. Gierowska-Kałuża, 'Białoruska Komisja Wojskowa w świetle materiałów przechowywanych w Fondzie Trofejnym w Moskwie,' *Nowy Prometeusz*, No.11, 2018, pp. 129–242; her, 'W kwestii rzekomo spóźnionej decyzji Józefa Piłsudskiego o powołaniu Białoruskiej Komisji Wojskowej,' *Nowy Prometeusz*, No. 10, 2016, pp. 97–112.

158 Things were spiced up by the official enunciation whereby a commission for recording war affairs would be set up on behalf of the Lithuanian Government, with the announced discretion in the valuation of losses; a separate rescript proclaimed the entire former Governorate of Grodno as part of the Lithuanian state.

159 They expected an infantry division; what they received was two battalions reduced to one. Such reduction opened the possibility to improving the tough staffing situation of this single battalion, but this fact was commonly underestimated. Nobody wanted to understand that a national division cannot be formed by way of a political decision – let alone the funds, which would have had to be raised other than from the Byelorussian treasury.

160 In effect, the editorial in *Byalorus'* of 3rd December 1919 announced as follows: "Byelorussia shall never be a province of Poland. She may only be an equal-in-rights and free ally of Poland, for this is our shared interest. This ought to be understood, and labour should be done in this very direction. Superimposing Polish statehood on White Ruthenia might only trigger an explosion of national discontent, and throw Byelorussia into the arms of Moscow. It is in Poland's state interest to recognise the independence of Byelorussia, and pursue the policy along these lines. Now – or never! Down with plebiscites." Leading article in *Byalorus'* daily, 3rd December 1919; quoted after: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1663/7/II,

It was marked with a hint of blackmail. Since this enunciation received no reaction from the more moderate Byelorussians, the conclusion remains that the principle behind the Byelorussian elite's policies was to derive as much benefit as possible from the practice of intimidating Poland with the possibility of a policies-Russian agreement. The Commissariat-General of the ZCZW was in possession of extracts from the minutes of meetings of the 'Novaya Vayskavaya Kamisiya' ('New Military Commission') of 4th to 9th *sneznya* (December) 1919, concerning the so-called Sholkov Operation. It should be considered whether this was not a false flag deliberately planted on Poles in order to discredit Byelorussians.¹⁶¹

However, we cannot ignore the impact on the situation of those Byelorussians who bound the future of their country with their eastern neighbour, controlled by followers of a radically different social system. This system eliminated, by definition, the community of local Poles, who were perfectly aware of the horror of the situation. The Polish state was the weakest aspiring player in the Russian-German game on the Byelorussian board in 1919. The Byelorussian elite knew

c. 150: Press report re. the contents of the periodical *Byalorus'* [date, place, no author mentioned].

- 161 Five members formed the 'Byalorussko Vyaskovo-Vayskavaya Kommissya-Gurtok' [Byelorussian Rural Military Commission-District], including Sholkov, Kudetska, Kovalenko, Valkovych, and A'svyatsinsky. Although the body compiled no statute, the basic postulate was to take the entire land away 'ad pomyeshchikov' ['from the landowners'], capitalists and bourgeois/petty capitalists [*buržujs*] and hand it over to the nation. It is striking, though, why financial support, to be used in the struggle against the Poles and with those Byelorussians who were leading the nation to doom (at a rather high amount of 'nekolki [around] dziesiątek tisyachi rublei' ['some ten-thousand Roubles', in a blend of Byelorussian and Polish], was sought at Princess Radziwiłł's in Warsaw, who was to be visited by Comrade Sholkov, authorised to this end by Comrades Starshyn', Syabra, and Pisar to represent all Byelorussia. However, Sholkov did not go to Warsaw on the planned date as the 'Charodnyi skhod' ['magical meeting'] was fixed for 13th *sneznya* [December]. The matter might be explained by the record concerning the instruction of Sholkov, the group's leader, to prevent the 'tsapershnaya' [first] Military Commission from operating and, in the first place, from being set up. The last two items (4. and 5.) of the record dated 9th December 1919 referred to the attitude towards the Bolsheviks, but they gave mutually opposite recommendations (provided that the copy is reliable): item 4 instructed to go 'na sustroch' [in the direction] against those Bolsheviks who would help the organisation 'grashni', whereas item 5 exhorted them to 'trip the Bolsheviks up', for "our *bat'kas* [fathers] have *uzhe* [already] suffered from their *usierauna* [compatriots], *aktsopyer* [let alone] from the Poles." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1663/7b, c. 128-129.

well that the idea of Polish-Byelorussian collaboration was, in fact, the only way out of the stalemate for Poland. The question remains, why did they not understand that it was the same for Byelorussia? And why did they not understand how weak a pawn they themselves were? The abundance of Byelorussian organisations entailed their weakness. Regardless of German intrigue, it was also unclear to Polish society who the Byelorussians wanted to bet on. Only one thing was beyond doubt: the Byelorussians wanted to form an army, this time with money from Poland and not Lithuania – but without any obligations placed upon it. Such a regiment, well-organised and equipped (by Poland and not Byelorussia, at a considerable cost) could ‘rebel’ at a moment least expected by their sponsor.

In fact, the political line of the Byelorussians was not clearly defined all along. The question remains: to what extent was this so because of an objective factor (weakness), and to what extent was this because of the tactic adopted by Byelorussian politicians? Or perhaps the dominant factor was the absence of political foresight or common sense necessary to assess the situation correctly and reach a decision with regard to the Byelorussian, and not German or Russian, *raison d'état*?

The Polish party did fulfil its obligations towards the Byelorussians; the ZCZW approved the submitted statutes of the associations.¹⁶²

The Polish theatre audience was deprived of three Polish performances a week in favour of amateur Byelorussian theatre shows, which no one attended. A similar situation occurred in relation to the press. The Polish periodical edited by the Rev. Edward Szwejnica was suspended due to insufficient subsidies, whereas the ZCZW had money available for the Byelorussians. The latter would take it, and kept on displaying their dissatisfaction with having received ‘too little’.

As a result, the ZCZW's pro-Byelorussian policy, implicitly underestimated by the Byelorussians, was perceived among local Poles as hostile to Polish interests and provoked increasingly heated resistance from the Polish society that provided the clerical staff for the ZCZW. The conjecture could be suggested that the rise in negative moods among the Polish community in the Eastern Territories was even caused by the Byelorussians' response to the friendly Polish gestures.

162 The drafts submitted provoked consideration, at least. The official correspondence between Czesław Krupski and the Agency of the Commissariat-General regarding the statute of Polish-Byelorussian Society makes it clear that phrases vaguely determining the legal/political stance of ‘self-determining’ Byelorussia and the postulated leaning of Poland towards Byelorussia triggered objections amongst the Poles.

The December 1919 crisis was unintentionally triggered by Władysław Racziewicz, Head of the District of Minsk, who cannot be accused of any lack of kindness towards the Byelorussian people. Racziewicz's confidential report of 18th November 1919 informed the Commissioner of the Eastern Territories in Vilnius of a session of the Council of the Byelorussian Republic, held on 12th November 1919 in Minsk and chaired by Yazep Lyosik, Chairman and the Marshal (speaker) of the Council in one, which had taken place without the required permission of the district authorities. Lyosik had been notified of the need to obtain authorisation from the district authorities for such deliberations beforehand, on 2nd October 1919.¹⁶³

According to Racziewicz's report, Osmołowski did not inform him of his oral (but recorded) pledge of freedom of assembly granted to Byelorussians on 10th May 1919. Called in for an explanation, Lyosik only appeared for an approval for the following Council meeting. The responsibilities of Racziewicz, who was summoned – by an unfortunate coincidence – on that very day to Vilnius by Osmołowski, were performed by Cezary Jeleński. Upon leaving, the district's head left him an instruction to prevent any further meetings of the Council unless a written permit from competent authorities was produced by Council members. The Byelorussians did not possess such documents.¹⁶⁴

Lyosik sought consent from Jeleński, claiming that the Chief of State had essentially been allowed to hold Council sessions. However, he was not able to present the relevant document, which Osmołowski had never issued.

Despite the intervention of Lt. S. Wojewódzki, the political officer for Byelorussian affairs, who happened to be present in Minsk and submitted a written statement confirming that he had been informed of the intentions of the Chief of State not to disturb the Council, Jeleński followed the recommendation of Racziewicz, his direct superior. He ordered Lyosik to apply to the higher authorities for authorisation. The crisis escalated, leading to the arrest of some of the Byelorussians.

Neither Racziewicz nor Jeleński were affected by any disciplinary measures whatsoever, which leads to the supposition that responsibility for the fateful

163 The official report on the meeting was published by the ZCZW-sponsored *Byalorus'* (issue No. 22).

164 Racziewicz forbade the periodicals from including any mentions or reports related to the Council's activities until the legality of its sessions was favourably resolved by the authorities.

misunderstanding was not theirs. The one to blame was Osmołowski, who had failed to notify Raczkiewicz of his own oral obligations given to the Byelorussians.

Taking advantage of the heated atmosphere, Yazep Varonka immediately brought up the issue of the disarmament (at the request of the Byelorussian Grodno Council) of the 1st Byelorussian Grodno Regiment and the arrest of its commander, Antonov. In early December, Varonka requested the heads of the allied missions in Lithuania, Colonels Constantin Reboul and H. Rewan, to form a commission of inquiry on behalf of the Entente to explain the reasons for the disarmament.¹⁶⁵ This step complicated Poland's situation in the international arena, allowing the Poles to assume that they were not expected to be the political partners of the Byelorussians. And so it was perceived by Polish public opinion.

On the night of Saturday/Sunday, 13th/14th December, an illegal meeting took place in Minsk between several members of the Council of the Republic of Byelorussia, members of the Revolutionary Socialist and Federalist Socialist groups. Raczkiewicz was well informed of it, as is evidenced by his extensive, strictly confidential manuscript report submitted to the Commissioner-General.¹⁶⁶ The meeting lasted only 12 minutes.¹⁶⁷

A new cast of the Council Presidium and the Cabinet of Ministers were elected and notified to the public in *Bulletin No. 1* of 14th December 1919, with the permission of wartime censorship of 15th December 1919. The *Bulletin* was signed by the Information Office of the Council of the *Belaruskaya Narodnaya Respublika* (the Byelorussian People's Republic).¹⁶⁸ The Presidium was composed of: Pyotr Krecheuski, Chairman; Vasil Zacharka [Zakharka] and Pelageya Badunova, his Deputies; Navum Kozich and Y. Mamonka, Secretaries. The new cast of the National Ministers of the *Narodnye Ministry Belaruskoi Respubliki* (People's Ministers of the Byelorussian Republic) included Vaclau Lastouski

165 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/III, c. 92, PBK 187/4th December 1919.

166 *Ibid.*, No. 1627/2, c. 80. The memo was recorded at the Commissariat-General only on 17th February 1920.

167 The new cabinet opened its activity by sending dispatches. The first such message was sent to Leonid Borkov in Berlin; Vershynin was to receive the second one, in Prague; the third was dispatched to the Mission diplomatique Blanrutheniene in Paris; the fourth, to the *Belaruskaya Khatka* in Grodno; the fifth, to Leon Dubiejkowski (member of Skirmuntt's Byelorussian National Committee in 1917; later on, associated with the Supreme Council).

168 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1663/7/II, c. 138.

(President of the Ministers), Evgeniy Ladnov (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Jafim Byalevich (Minister of the Treasury), Tamash Grib (Minister of Internal Affairs), Alyaksandr Tsvikyevich (Minister of Justice), Klaudiush Dushevskiy (Secretary), and Leonard Zayats/Zaytsev (Controller).¹⁶⁹

Several factors were conducive to the split within the Byelorussian movement. First of all, the agreement between the Byelorussian and Russian Socialist Revolutionaries (the so-called 'S-Rs'), and the fact that Ukraine sent the sum of 2,000,000 Karbovanets to support the S-Rs. The arrival of Anton Łuckiewicz¹⁷⁰ changed little, so he returned to Warsaw. Raczkiewicz, having been informed of the meeting of 13th December and of the censored dispatches by the new "superior authority in White Ruthenia", ordered arrests and a ban on publishing information on the Council in magazines. He notified Osmołowski of his provisions, asking for directives in the event of their termination. Before Raczkiewicz's report reached its addressee, it was delivered to an unidentified official (a Social Democrat) at the Commissariat-General.¹⁷¹

The latter added his handwritten opinion with a pencil in the margin, which reads as follows (in full): "The measure applied by Władysław shall prove fruitful. I am confident of it; they will soften and be obedient. The elements simulating Byelorussians will mainly become detached. Jerzy, do not release them, Sir, for some time, so that they depend a little in their self-reliance."¹⁷² Such an opinion must have been penned by an ardent opponent of the federation idea. Its author was apparently ranked high in the Commissariat-General hierarchy, based on the fact that he had read the report and, no doubt, had the right to do so.

The atmosphere in the ZCZW-subsidised Byelorussian territory was increasingly unfavourable to Poles. Polish public opinion was particularly stirred by

169 "S-Ds (Social Democrats), peasant and national activists, Christian *złuchmost'* [unity]; that is, a majority of the former Council, refused to take part in the assemblage and, having gathered separately, they resolved to dissolve the Council that had been formed a month earlier, electing instead a five-member Committee of Representatives – the Supreme Council, tasked with the role of the supreme national body. With Lyosik heading, Messrs Seredo, Rak-Mikhaylovsky, Vlosov, and Tereschenko were the members of the cast. Bemused, the moderate group took efforts to dissuade the S-Rs but failed to attain their objective. The split has become a fact." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1663/7/II, c. 138.

170 Łuckiewicz was a delegate of the Byelorussian Central Council of Vilnius and Grodno Lands.

171 I suppose it was Stanisław Downarowicz, head of Section I.

172 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1687/2, c. 80.

an article by Makar Kościarewicz (Makar Kraucau), entitled Discussions on the Plebiscite [*Plebiscytnoje rozmowy*]. The author did not consider himself a citizen of Poland, and his homeland, Byelorussia, had the right – he claimed – to govern herself and criticise the regulations of a foreign country's parliament regarding her.

An analysis of the texts published in *Byalorus'* shows that both Poles and Russians are consistently mentioned as 'strangers' or 'the unwelcome', imposing their 'yoke' on Byelorussia and stifling the national spirit. This is indirect proof of where the publishers did not get their funds from. Therefore, only the Germans could be their sponsors. Since 19th December 1919, the magazine's blade was redirected, essentially, against the Poles. From the German perspective, inciting the situation in Byelorussian lands was highly beneficial. In the light of international law, Byelorussian territory, similarly to Silesia, was a disputed areas with a mixed population. We should seriously consider whether the driving force behind German actions in Byelorussia was, perhaps, the strengthening of the positions in Silesia and in Gdansk. Did not German policy, painfully experienced by the success of the Greater Poland (*Wielkopolska*) Uprising, also aim at complicating as much as possible Poland's situation whilst Germany aspired not only to the 'Polish' lands in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but also to the 'German' lands within Poland?

Weakening the Poles as much as possible and, above all, preventing Byelorussians from relying on Poland, certainly did not interfere with Russian plans for the future of their 'western borderlands'. The end of 1919 marked the end of the era of German domination on the Byelorussian scene. Following successes on the front against the 'White' Russia, the game began to be played by Soviet Russia.

General assumptions behind Polish policy and its determinants in 1920

The Byelorussian trump card

The editorial of the New Year's issue of *Byalorus'* dealt with the 'thwarted hopes', brought about once by the memorable Proclamation of the Chief of the Polish State.¹⁷³

173 "Plebiscites, annexations to Poland [*sic*], polemicising [*sic*], etc., etc. have all set in – to the point that such a discontent has come among the Byelorussian people that it is hard to have an idea of it": *Byalorus'* No. 1, 1st January 1920.

Such a position of the editorial board could not have had a positive influence on the attitude of local Polish society, extremely averse as it was to the Byelorussians, towards the initiative of creating and supporting Byelorussian regiments. The Poles never doubted that every step in this matter, involving the expenses and efforts of the Polish treasury, would inevitably be exploited by forces hostile to Poland: Germans or Russians.

Goniec Miński published a polemic that raged between W. Wojewódzki and the poet J. Wierzbicki. The former argued that dismembering the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Byelorussia into separate countries, or 'state entities' was not feasible. He believed that the only way out of the stalemate was to pull the whole of Byelorussia and Transdnistria from under Russian influence. By providing Byelorussians with opportunities for cultural development, it was necessary to firmly put an end to all German and Russian machinations that perpetuated Russian influence in the area. The tiny group of Byelorussian intelligentsia should reach a decision, Wojewódzki argued, on behalf of their war-weary and politically immature community, and choose genuine cooperation with Poland.¹⁷⁴

In the article entitled Polish Statehood and the Eastern Lands [*Państwowość polska i ziemie wschodnie*], the Warsaw Word [*Varshavskoe Slovo*] summarised an interview with the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories. Osmołowski confirmed that the Polish policy defined in the speeches of the Chief of State remained in effect, invariably based on the slogan: "The free with the free, the equal with the equal." He explicitly pointed out that the Polish authorities treated both the economic and cultural development of Byelorussians with sympathy, and emphasised that Byelorussian education was treated with special care, as far as possible.¹⁷⁵

This was, coincidentally, in rebuttal to the unjustified resentment often voiced by Byelorussians towards Poles (this aspect is discussed in more detail in the chapter on education). The proper purpose of these accusations was to emphasise that the Byelorussians had been given too little and to divert attention from the basic ascertainment that they had not promised anything themselves while being given a great deal. The weaker the position of the Byelorussian partners, the greater were their demonstrated expectations concerning Poland's contribution.

174 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1773/3/II, c. 595, No. 114 of 30th December 1919.

175 After 'Press report No. 16, 16th January 1920' BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1773/15, c. 54 – 56.

A federation of equals would not consist in subordinating the interests of one party to the benefit of the other. In the Polish-Byelorussian negotiations, there was no question of equality of potential partners. It would seem that the Byelorussians conducted these negotiations not to achieve a certain objective, but rather to bargain as much as they could without considering any reciprocity. The most active Byelorussian in contacts with Poles, Paweł Aleksyuk, temporarily vanished from the political scene, without fully explaining the matters related to the funding received for Byelorussian education.¹⁷⁶

Maciej Glogier, President of the District Court of Radom, delegated to the election of representatives in the Eastern Borderlands, met in February 1920 with representatives of all the groups and orientations, including Byelorussians. Waclaw Iwanowski, Yazep Lyosik, Symon Rak-Mikhaylowski, and Kuzma Tsyarashchanka advocated the indivisibility and independence of Byelorussia. Contrary to the popular opinion among Poles, they considered their people to be politically aware, and the Polish Government to be an occupying power. In the report submitted to the representative of Poland, they emphasised the persecution of all symptoms of Byelorussianness in the districts incorporated into Poland (i.e. not subject to the ZCZW's jurisdiction). Accusations were made of the ZCZW supporting Russian, rather than Byelorussian, education.

In practice, the local people requested the Russian language in schools. As an example, information can be cited about the behaviour of one Byelorussian member of the Central Byelorussian Council in Grodno, who, in the opinion of Grodno's school inspector Rafał Woźniakowski, was absolutely unsuitable for

176 "The political activity of P. Aleksyuk arouses some concern. As Chairman of the Byelorussian Council in Grodno, between 3rd June and 7th August 1919 he spent less than a day in Grodno. In June 1919, he received from the Commissariat-General 30,000 Marks for Byelorussian schools. The school inspector for the District of Grodno, Rafał Woźniakowski, found that 14,500 Marks were provided by Aleksyuk to Fyodor Vernikovskiy, a member of the Central Byelorussian Council in Grodno, to be used for payments to Byelorussian teachers. But Woźniakowski continued to be visited by hosts of Byelorussian teachers claiming that they had not received the promised money from the Polish Government. The situation was made more difficult by the fact that Aleksyuk and Vernikovskiy failed to settle their accounts. Once finally forced to do so, they submitted incredible bills of using the funds for purposes incompliant with the subsidy's actual purpose (they showed, among other things, a 12,000 Mark bill for a trip from Grodno to Vilnius)." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/6/I, c. 18–18 (verso): Confidential report re. Byelorussian educational system in the County of Grodno, by School Inspector of the District of Grodno, to the Commissioner-General in Warsaw. No. 161, Grodno, 7th August 1919.

supervising Byelorussian education. "What he [= 'this Byelorussian'] demands for the Byelorussian schools", he wrote, "is the Russian language, and he was surprised before me that I have not introduced Russian as a subject in the Polish schools."¹⁷⁷

The Byelorussians were making accusations against the Poles, quoting German projects,¹⁷⁸ which were certainly planned out of proportion, in the conviction that they would not be implemented by the project providers. And even if the ZCZW had implemented them, which was doubtful given the total lack of Byelorussian teachers or students willing to undertake such education in this area, would not the Poles have received other complaints?¹⁷⁹

177 Ibid.

178 "In Grodno region, of the 150 initial [i.e. elementary] Byelorussian schools, three schools remain. The educational personnel is Russian only, whilst the district inspector has not been utilising the credit designated for the Byelorussian teacher seminary." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 18: Memorial by Maciej Glogier to Mr. Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, to be submitted to the Chief of State. It is out of the question that during the German occupation, the primary and secondary school network was extended and redeveloped, thus outlining a plan of systematic work for the 1918–19 school year. In the first place, training courses were organised for the teachers who were due to be employed in those schools. However, these plans were somewhat disproportionate and their implementation by the Germans was not foreseen. The Germans, for their part, were clearly aware of how difficult these plans were to implement. The Byelorussian schools in the German occupation area had to keep Russian as the language of instruction due to a total lack of human resources among teachers. The seminary that opened in Świsłocz/Svislach provided training to 144 Byelorussian teachers in two years. Naturally, they preferred to settle down in the western part of the territory, hence their large clusters in Grodno region. Following the literature, the entire Byelorussia housed some 300 schools. Assuming that all the graduates of the training courses were employed as teachers and were joined by all the graduates of the teacher training courses provided in Vilnius (organised by the Byelorussian Committee for the Aid to War Victims, 1915), these two facts, taken together, inevitably lead one to conclude that a number of the 'statistically Byelorussian' schools had Russian as the language of instruction – and this language was known to the students. In the places reached by course graduates, the Byelorussian language was taught at an elementary level. This would explain the rationale behind the argument of 150 'Byelorussian' schools in the County of Grodno immediately after the Bolsheviks receded.

179 The Byelorussians found it more comfortable not to bear this fact in mind. The argument of 300 Byelorussian schools under the German occupation was an lever in the bargaining with the Poles who by no means had '144 graduates' at their disposal – and who, like the Germans earlier on, needed time to at least reconstruct such a personnel.

Despite the sometimes contradictory attitudes of individual Polish policymakers in the ZCZW's Department of Education (see Chapter VII), Byelorussians' education as a whole was not being restricted, and even enjoyed explicit support, compared to other ethnic groups. However, in practice Polish politics was saturated with the excesses of irresponsible people, frequently holding official functions; with the 'politics' made by school inspectors independent from district heads; with the shameful behaviour of the army (the troops from Greater Poland were notorious for this), and with local animosities. As a consequence, this inevitably resulted in the Byelorussians – overwhelmed by the sense of 'harm' in the western part of the country and living at a low social and economic level – turning to Bolshevik Russia.¹⁸⁰

There is one more problem to this: the quality of the offer of the teachers so quickly educated allowed them to run classes at an elementary level, which was what the education probably started from, wherever possible, when still under German rule. Such quality was not satisfactory, however, to those students who had been through such an elementary level before the Byelorussian territory became partly controlled by the ZCZW. It is highly probable that their parents faced a choice: continue elementary-level courses in Byelorussian, or work at a more advanced level in a language that would pose no barrier to the listeners. The Jewish people's trend to set up schools with Russian as the teaching language came as a consequence of a similar two-option choice. That Byelorussians themselves opted for Polish or Russian schools, in lieu of Byelorussian ones, is testified by a number of reliable records. The fact that schools with Russian as the language of teaching were referred to as 'Byelorussian' was the case because funding was provided to schools described as Byelorussian, as opposed to Russian. A pragmatic attitude clearly prevailed in this respect. See BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1671, c. 93–95: Record of the conference held on 31st July 1919 between J. Osmołowski and Witold Węślowski, in the presence of Władysław Lichtarowicz.

- 180 "The attendees have determined, as the only certain forecast, that Poland opted for only by Vilnius and its closest vicinity; the voting in the Byelorussian-Orthodox areas, and even in the borderland – though Catholic – areas, they see as certainly lost. Enormous conservatism, suspiciousness and the self-interest of Byelorussian peasants has been pointed out, for whom the period of the Bolshevik rule, when everything could be broadly smuggled and much money earned, is in the reminiscence a paradise compared to the present-day situation when the Polish authorities and the army requisition [things], never allowing them to rob. The selfishness of Byelorussian peasants is typically reflected in the way the school is treated: they are more willing to have their children sent to a Polish school, like they once sent them to a Russian school, rather than a Byelorussian one. The Byelorussian peasants have never ceased to name the Polish Army 'the lordly army', hired and funded by the lords." BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 18 (as in fn. 178) – fragment

Maciej Glogier's Byelorussian respondents spoke straightforwardly about the possibility of people opting for Russia, "unless Poland contributes to furthering the Byelorussian national distinctiveness." The problem, however, was essentially that such a Polish gesture would have been appreciated by the scarce elite rather than masses of materially-oriented common people. The motto of the time and of the region was the adage: "If you are given, just take it; if you get beaten [meaning, if they want something from you], flee on the spot." There was seemingly no price at which gratitude could be won. "The folk is a dull mob, suspicious, but gullible: at times, they would be attracted by some fantastic promise, otherwise not even believing the facts [-]. The Byelorussian masses are average Joe-Blows, inert, presently under the influence of the clergy but prone to any whispers and impacts. The national Byelorussian movement is an entertainment of 40 zealous men who artificially blow up the national sense, which is essentially non-existent, to an unheard-of dimension."¹⁸¹

And this is how the Poles understood it, regardless of their option. Piłsudski alone still believed in Byelorussians, though. However, his ultimate goal was to consolidate the parties and factions of the state of which he was the Chief – and subsequently to make them opt for in his Eastern agenda. Not only the law but honesty also prevented him from acting against the voice of the public. Maciej Glogier's conference in Minsk with representatives of all Polish groups and directions¹⁸² brought a unanimous opinion on the Byelorussians and their political elite. Lt. Wojewódzki, widely recognised as an expert on the Byelorussian national movement, claimed that the statements made by representatives of the Byelorussian movement to Glogier were sincere. He also referred to

of the account featuring exponents of the conservative camp in Vilnius, including Count Marian Plater, Count Wincenty Łubieński, S. Kognowicki, Hipolit Giecewicz, S. Wańkowicz, Dr Dębowski, Mr Strumiłło, barrister, and St. Łunicki.

181 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1665/1, c. 20.

182 The meeting was attended by: Bishop Zygmunt Łoziński; Kazimierz Pietrusiewicz (Petrusiewicz), president of the local district court; Mr Badzian (PPS), city councilman; Mr Gnoiński (PPS), magistrate; the Rev. Edward Szejnec, chairman of Union of the Youth; Mr Świda (ND), 'landed citizen'; Mr Dworzaczek (ND), headmaster of a 'real' school; Mr Porębski, Vice Chairman of the Council of Minsk Land; Mr Rewiński, agronomist; Ernest Ambroszkiewicz, barrister, city councilman; Mr Pawluć (ND), lay judge; Mr Adamowicz ('democrat'), man-of-letters; Mr Jesman, physician, councilman; Mr Pietrzak, Chairman of the Polish Cooperative; Mr Ciechocki (ND), grammar school headmaster; Mr Offenber, physician; Count Czapski, landowner; Mr Zahorski ('progressive'); Mr Świętorzecki, Head of the Borderland Guard. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No.1665/1, c. 19–20.

the Byelorussian common people as an “inert mean mass” influenced by the clergy, while a “handful of pioneers of the Byelorussian movement should”, in his opinion, “be supported, in the interest of the Polish state, as they strive for de-Russification.”¹⁸³

Stefan Świȩtorzecki, Head of the Borderland Guard in the Minsk District, told Glogier that as an ethnic unity, Byelorussia is a fictitious entity with no real support in the popular masses, and that the elites with whom he was in contact published an eminently anti-Polish newspaper, subsidised “by no-one knows whom.”¹⁸⁴

Despite such an unfavourable climate for which the Byelorussians are to be blamed, in order to avoid frictions and misunderstandings between the so-called administration of the Eastern Borderlands and the Byelorussian people, the ZCZW prepared a 20-paragraph motion ‘On the establishment of the Commissariat-General for Byelorussian Affairs, affiliated to the Administration of the Eastern Borderlands’,¹⁸⁵ to be “presented in person in Warsaw”, undoubtedly to the Chief of State. The typescript of the draft is dated 3rd February 1920 and was crossed out personally by Osmałowski with the annotation ‘Archive’, to which it was ultimately transferred only in June 1920. The draft, highly beneficial to the Byelorussians, was apparently not approved by the Chief of State.¹⁸⁶ The mode of ‘approval’ of the Deputy Commissioner-General for Byelorussian Affairs was called into question; concerns were raised regarding the overgrowth and significance of the autonomous Byelorussian network within the ZCZW and the prerogative of “issuing administrative ordinances in respect of laws-in-force.”

This does not mean, however, that Piłsudski opposed the Byelorussian movement. As an active politician, he could not allow additional rights to be conferred

183 Ibid.

184 As opposed to the Poles, the Germans were interested in supporting the Byelorussian element in the country’s western area; they were negligent of the eastern territory. This fact provided an extensive opportunity for them to seek out manifestations of Polish ‘Byelorussianness’, of which they could eagerly inform the Byelorussians, remaining under their influence, clearly in view of stiffening their stance in respect of Poles. Thus, *Byalorus’* did not change its anti-Polish attitude: on the contrary, as it can be judged from the press reports, it aggravated the issue. Ibid.

185 The Byelorussian Commissariat sought to represent and defend the interests of Byelorussian ethnicity, “inhabiting the ‘Borderland’ territory in a dense mass as well as scattered across the country.”

186 The cross-out, marks-offs and question marks on the typescript page annotated by J[erzy] O[smałowski] ‘in person, at Warsaw’ do not give a conclusive clue as to who actually made them.

on a counterparty without obtaining binding commitments from them. There was no-one on the Byelorussian side who would be able to honestly undertake such commitments, as the hopes of the activists of this movement were torn between Moscow, Kaunas, Berlin, and Warsaw. Marian Kościalkowski, Head of the Political Section at the Command of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front, and Wojewódzki's superior, did claim in his report of 5 February 1920¹⁸⁷ that Waclaw Iwanowski had obtained the support of all the warring Byelorussian political parties, but such information also had to be confirmed by practice. The beginning of February saw Piłsudski meeting in Vilnius with this spokesman for Byelorussia.¹⁸⁸

“... amongst the other ethnic area of the State”, the Commissioner-General for Byelorussian Affairs was supposed to be placed, as appointed by the Chief of State. Vilnius, with its branch offices affiliated to the district boards, was to be the seat of the Byelorussian Commissariat.

The Commissioner-General for Byelorussian Affairs was to be approved by the Chief of State among the candidacies proposed by the Commissioner-General. His position was supposed to be very high-ranking: as to the rank and the rights, it corresponded with that of Deputy Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories. The Commissariat-General for Byelorussian Affairs was to be composed of the following offices or bodies: Commissioner; Deputy Commissioner; head of the Office; Internal Affairs Department, Enlightenment [*resp.* Education] Department, Economic Department and Military Department. These were to be bodies complementing the operations of the corresponding ZCZW authorities, whilst staying autonomous. The Internal Affairs Department was meant to pursue a particularly extensive agenda: it was responsible for local-government, police, justice, public care, labour protection, and Byelorussian national organisations' affairs. Public security was to be managed by the Enlightenment Department (essentially in charge of religious cults), as the educational/school system, publishing houses, the organisation of conventions and exhibitions, the activities of theatres, educational and art-popularising organisations as well as confessional matters were all included under this umbrella. At the same time, the said Department was to function as the school inspectorate. The Economic Department was to be in charge of finance, industry, agriculture, roads and transportation, and so on. The Military Department was to operate in association with the Byelorussian Military Commission, so the functioning of two parallel

187 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1686.

188 J. Turonek, *Waclaw Iwanowski i odrodzenie Białorusi*, Warsaw 1992, p. 83.

military structures was actually planned. The Committee for Byelorussian Affairs was to be funded from the Polish State Treasury.

Osmołowski happened to fall ill with typhoid, which excluded him for many weeks. Piłsudski entrusted the further preparation of the conference to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This circumstance boosted the impression of the meeting's importance in the eyes of the Byelorussian partners, and once again weakened the already weak position of the Commissioner-General. The unfavourable resonance for the ZCZW was not lessened by the fact that the Head of Minsk District was included in the Polish delegation. On 1st March 1920, Minister Plenipotentiary Leon Wasilewski was requested by Minister Stanisław Patek to chair the commission responsible for the formulation of guidelines for the settlement of Polish-Byelorussian relations. The body was composed of the aforementioned Władysław Raczkiewicz, Lieutenant S. Wojewódzki (political clerk with the Second Department of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front in Minsk), and Cavalry Captain Kazimierz Stamirowski (Head of the Second Division).

After preliminary negotiations in Warsaw on 16th March 1920, Waclaw Iwanowski presented the Polish party with his 'Memorial on the Byelorussian issue'.¹⁸⁹ His primary concern was to prevent the division of the country proposed by Vladimir Lenin. Iwanowski wanted Poland to conclude peace with Russia while inducing the handover of areas situated within the Polish pre-partition borders. Poland would then, pursuant to its commitment, settle the fate of Byelorussia according to the will of its people.

Leon Wasilewski's report on the negotiations with Byelorussian representatives in March 1920 was published 40 years ago.¹⁹⁰ The conference was held in Minsk on 23rd-24th March 1920. Fifteen Byelorussian demands were rejected, including the request for the defence of the entire White Ruthenia and assurance of the plebiscite. The plebiscite could not be guaranteed as at that point it was out of the question for the Poles and the Entente alike (see the note of 6th March quoted in Chapter II). The Polish partners could not undertake to introduce the Byelorussians into the peace conference, given the relations with the KNP. Neither was Byelorussian made an official language in communes and counties (the officials did not have a functional command of it), nor was the autonomy of Byelorussian schools granted. The Commissariat-General for Byelorussian Affairs was not established. The Lithuanian-Byelorussian government in Vilnius

189 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1553/2, c. 22-22 (verso).

190 DiM, Vol. II, p. 687.

was not formed (the Lithuanians did not show an interest in it). The excessive demands of Byelorussians regarding subsidies and scholarships, formulated in as many as ten points, were diminished threefold. It is true that ten of the Byelorussian demands were repealed. It should be noted, however, that instead of the rejected demand for the formation of the Commissariat-General for Byelorussian Affairs, the Polish party resolved to establish district, county clerks [*referents*] and a general clerk – ranked as head of the section for Byelorussian affairs, wherever possible – within the ZCZW's existing structure.

It is also true that the demand to grant the staggering sum of 2,035,000 Marks for the organisation of the Byelorussian congress was repealed, but in total 5,466,000 Marks were ultimately accorded in response to ten other demands. As the amounts were reduced, the Byelorussian, and subsequently Polish historians as well, apparently tend to consider these subsidies as 'repealed' demands. Although the request for a subsidy of 5,220,000 Marks for the Orthodox clergy was denied, the Polish party offered its support for the initiative to make the Byelorussian Orthodox Church independent of the Russian patriarchy in a manner consistent with the national and cultural interests of the Byelorussian people.

The Byelorussians agreed to the proposal. On its part, the Polish party approved two out of 25 Byelorussians demands. To this day, the meaning of these two demands has not been interpreted correctly.

The Polish commitments were as follows: the legalisation of statutes (and the like) submitted in Byelorussian only; the operation of offices of Byelorussian associations in the Byelorussian language in the District of Minsk and, if possible, in other parts of Byelorussia; a declaration on the introduction of the Byelorussian language in all of the country's schools with a language of instruction other than Byelorussian, starting at the beginning of the 1920–1921 school year, which was adopted "without a declaration for Minsk District, and as far as possible for other districts."¹⁹¹

These were not 'just' educational concessions; these were political concessions of great importance. The Poles were in fact deviating from the political line implemented in the previous period. Despite the lack of progress in the Lithuanian matter, the second stage of the federation building process was in

191 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1553/2, c. 46–47: Byelorussian demands – Polish commitments. Appendix to: Report on the negotiations with the representatives of White Ruthenia in March 1920, by Leon Wasilewski, Minister Plenipotentiary. Thoroughly confidential.

progress. The relocation of the Byelorussian centre to the territory of Mińsk District and the preparation of the possible incorporation of the District of Brześć Litewski (Western Byelorussia) were abandoned. The Polish Government expressly renounced the perspective of waiting for the Byelorussians to return the favour of supporting the creation of a sovereign Byelorussian state out of Eastern Byelorussia. The development of Byelorussian education to such a privileged degree in a district whose incorporation into Poland had been planned over the past year was clearly a departure from this idea, and an explicit transition to the path of establishing a Byelorussia consisting of the eastern as well as the western part, possibly federated with Poland. Given the existing conditions, Poland's political line could not be more explicitly or concretely formulated in Byelorussian-friendly terms.

All the arrangements were approved by the Byelorussian delegation, comprising the entire composition of the Supreme Council of White Ruthenia and extended to include representatives of Christian Democracy, Social Democracy, and the pro-Polish fraction of the Social Revolutionaries.¹⁹² But then there was the other side of the coin. The Byelorussians were not at all grateful for receiving what they thought they had long deserved and, regardless of their weakness resulting from the inconsistent standpoint of their own organisations towards Poland, they wanted more. They expected a normalisation of the temporary mutual relationship between Poland and White Ruthenia on the principles of privileging the Byelorussian national group.¹⁹³

192 The Byelorussian delegation present at the conference consisted of Waclaw Iwanowski, formally Rector of the Byelorussian Pedagogical Institute; Yazep Lyosik, member of the Supreme Council (Minister of Education), editor of *Biała Ruś* daily; I. Sereda, member of the Supreme Council; Symon Rak-Mikhałowski, member of the Supreme Council and the Military Commission; Kuzma Tsyareshchanka, member of the Supreme Council, Chairman of the Byelorussian National Committee in Minsk; the Rev. Fabian Abrantowicz, Rector of the Theological Seminary, leader of the Social Christian Party; Arkady Smolich (former Minister of Education), and A. Vlasov. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1553/2, c. 22–22 (verso).

193 “a) reorganise the Council of the Byelorussian Republic through the incorporation of all the Byelorussian lands and, moreover, a reliable Polish representative;
 b) Poles to participate in the Byelorussian Government, and to be included in the cast of the Council of People's Ministers;
 c) the reconstructed Government to cooperate with the Polish General-Commissioner;
 d) organisation of the provinces in the way so that county commissioners are appointed by the Byelorussian Government, with Polish Army commissioners existing along with them;

At the same time, other national groups (including Poles), which held more social power and economic potential in the area, felt disadvantaged. They were incapable of obtaining conditions for themselves that would be even comparable to those of the Byelorussians. This state of affairs must have envenomed the Poles living in Brześć Litewski District neighbouring on Poland, who were already quite sceptical of the idea of a Byelorussian state and of its possible federation with Poland. They soon realised that they would have to perish first and then pay for the cause which was to be resolved by the Byelorussians, undoubtedly strengthened by the inevitable weakening of the Poles, only once the costs were borne by the Poles. Aside from the mental condition of the Poles, in Grodno, for instance, economic calculation did not favour such a scenario, and neither did it seem to have generated enthusiasm at the Commissariat-General. The first memo of the Head of the District of Minsk, from March 1920, requesting additional personnel for the Department of Nationalities and Denominations headed by inspector J. Fostowicz-Zahorski, was not positively received by the person replacing Osmołowski during his sick leave, most probably E. Iwaszkiewicz. Władysław Raczekiewicz therefore submitted a new request for one more post on 18th May 1920, and it seems that the answer was positive this time, as the department consisted of 13 employees on its dissolution.¹⁹⁴

Despite providing conditions so favourable to the Byelorussians, the Byelorussian issue in the area under the ZCZW's jurisdiction came to a standstill. Rafał Woźniakowski, school inspector in Grodno, wrote in April 1920: "There are three Byelorussian schools [in Grodno] with 274 students, despite the freedom and even open support from the ZCZW."¹⁹⁵ The press announcement of the

e) convoke the Byelorussian Constituent Assembly in the areas cleared of the Bolsheviks, in the name of the Byelorussian Government. It is anticipated in advance that the Constituent Assembly shall advocate a closer liaison with the Republic of Poland;

f) organise, with help from Poland, a Byelorussian army which would continue to wage war against the Bolsheviks for liberation of the eastern Byelorussian borderland. As the liberation progresses, the new areas would have their deputies sent to the Constituent Assembly, but this after the crucial issue has been decided; namely, the legal-and-state association between White Ruthenia and Poland;

g) the Byelorussian army to be subordinated to the Polish Supreme Command."

BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1553, c. 43–44 (copy No. 2, c. 25–26): Annex No. 2 to L. Wasilewski's report.

194 See fn. 1.

195 In Grodno, there were "five large individual schools; moreover, nine private Polish schools, two Polish grammar schools [*gimnazjums*], one Polish teacher seminary, one Polish school of handicrafts." In total, there were 5,986 Polish students attending

Borderlands Office of mid-May 1920¹⁹⁶ brought news of resumed activities by the Byelorussian organisations in Grodno, whose representatives were not signatories to the arrangements of 24th March.¹⁹⁷ The Byelorussians began to operate under the name ‘Byelorussian National Committee’. Under the German occupation, this body was, along with the other Byelorussian organisations, part of the Central Byelorussian Council of Grodno Land, presided over by Paweł Aleksiuik, the noted Byelorussian activist widely regarded as a Polish sympathiser.

In spite of the unwillingness repeatedly displayed by the ZCZW, including by its officials, to excessively favour a particular national group, the ZCZW consistently fulfilled its obligations towards the Byelorussians. The largest Byelorussian organisation, that of the ‘Byelorussian scouts’, formed by the commander of these troops, Sec. Lt. Yanka Shurpa, was active in Grodno. In June 1920, he submitted a comprehensive report to the Byelorussian School Council on the activity of Byelorussian youth organisations operating under the ZCZW without any obstacles.¹⁹⁸

The Byelorussian people usually identified the ZCZW with the Polish society of the Eastern Territories. They did not differentiate between people’s private views and the practical politics. The policies pursued by the Central Welfare Council (RGO) or of the democratically elected municipal authorities, which stood in opposition to the ZCZW, were equated with those of the ZCZW. This is best exemplified by two particular accusations made by Waław Iwanowski in

these schools, which were run by 142 Polish teachers. The situation in the Jewish schools, which recognised the competence of the School Inspector, was much more beneficial. But this came as a consequence of the fact that these schools had been set up and supported during the German occupation by the Germans. In Grodno, 159 Jewish teachers taught at 15 schools attended by 3,333 pupils. “There are three Byelorussian schools with 274 students, despite the freedom and even open support from the ZCZW. There is, moreover, one private school for Evangelical students, a little orphan of the German occupation.” See LMAB, Fond 168–13, Lap. 92–95: Memorial of the School Inspector of the County of Grodno of 27th April 1920, sent to the Sejm of the Republic [of Poland], Mr Józef Piłsudski, the Chief of State and Commander-in-Chief; Mr Jerzy Osmałowski, Commissioner-General, via Jan Woźnicki, Deputy.

196 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/II, c. 72–74, PBK No. 177 of 18th May 1920.

197 The operations of the Council of Grodno faded for a longer time; *Belaruskaya Khatka* was dissolved.

198 Let us note that the School Council treated Shurpa very favourably as he was invited to organise a scout centre in Minsk as well. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/II, c. 14.

his 'Memorial on the Byelorussian issue', which have been wrongly addressed to the ZCZW.¹⁹⁹

The announcement of the resolution of the Byelorussian Republican Union, which occurred in the first days of June 1920, was unfortunately overdue. The ZCZW was no longer the same as before its subordination to the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Chamber of Control in Warsaw. There were no longer the conditions for the implementation of Józef Piłsudski's own Eastern policy.²⁰⁰

Piłsudski received the declaration that he expected from the Byelorussians too late. In anticipation of it, he had lost the internal Polish dispute over the shape of the Eastern policy of the state for which he was responsible. The achievement of the federationist agenda in the form intended by Piłsudski was no longer possible after the ZCZW structure was subordinated to the Council of Ministers, which was dominated by a different political orientation. The Byelorussian politicians seemed not to grasp this. Or, perhaps, they were waiting precisely for this to happen?

In June 1920, a convention of the clergy of the Diocese of Minsk was held in Lithuanian Minsk [so-called then by Poles, to differentiate it from a namesake

199 For a more extensive discussion, see J. Gierowska-Kałaaur, *Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich – kadra i procesy decyzyjne*, in K. Jasiewicz (ed.), *Europa nie prowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś, Litwa, Łotwa, Ukraina wschodnie pogranicze III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) w latach 1772–1999*, Warszawa–Londyn [Warsaw–London] 1999, pp. 53–54.

200 The text for which Piłsudski waited so long was quoted by *Goniec Miński*: "The attendees of the formation meeting of the political Club 'Byelorussian Republican Union' hereby unanimously express the idea that at the present historical and responsible moment, all the better forces of the Byelorussian society ought to unite under one banner of national revival of the state within the borders of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania-Byelorussia. They are summoning all the country's nationalities to work together on the construction of the state. Based upon the Proclamation of the Chief of the Polish State and the Superior Commander of the armed forces of Poland, J. Piłsudski, they strongly believe that the great leader of the Polish nation shall put into effect his own proclamation, appealing to the dwellers of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in view of common life of all the nations of Great Lithuania in freedom. Strive to solve the relations in the East [sic]. Stand unshakeably upon the ground of seeking support from their closest neighbour, the democratic Republic of Poland, they will be in capacity of defending their state against the Bolshevik possessiveness." *Goniec Miński*, No. 262, 10th June 1920. Quoted after the Borderland Guard's Press Report, No. 244, 14th June 1920. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/II, c. 51. The text was also published by the Borderland Press Office, Report No. 191, 11th June 1920; *ibid.*, c. 27.

locality in Masovia], with the consent of the ZCZW. The matter of the attitude towards the Byelorussian national movement caused a split among the attendees into two opposite camps. The rural priests, who had more direct relations with the common people, opted for participation in the Byelorussian national movement. The second group, openly a Russifying one, blocked the effort.²⁰¹

During that time, despite the unfavourable trend in domestic Polish rivalries between the Warsaw and Vilnius circles, the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, continuing the enforcement of directives previously obtained from the Chief of State, did not alter the pro-Byelorussian course of the ZCZW: on the contrary, he approved the statute of the Byelorussian School Council. As a result, all Byelorussian academic establishments were granted the right to autonomous management (or administration),²⁰² which meant that one of the demands rejected in March 1920 was eventually fulfilled. This measure was introduced without any effort by the Byelorussians, merely as yet another act of goodwill by the Poles with the aim of protecting Byelorussians – in view of the adoption by the Polish Sejm, dominated by the national camp, of the amendment proposed by Rev. Kazimierz Lutosławski, the camp's exponent, which imposed temporary regulations on elementary schools in the Kingdom of Poland not only in the former Austrian and Prussian provinces, but also in the Eastern Borderlands.²⁰³ The enforcement of this amendment in the Eastern Borderlands threatened the Byelorussian education system with the loss of all sovereignty and distinctiveness.

In July 1920, the Byelorussian territories were recaptured by the Red Army. On 31st July 1920, the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Lithuania and Byelorussia proclaimed once again the establishment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. The newly-formed Military and Revolutionary Committee²⁰⁴ served as the Byelorussian Soviet government.

201 “Owing to the endeavours and machinations of two anti-Byelorussian dissentients, who had managed to incite a certain part of the clergy against the Byelorussians, the disputes regarding the Byelorussian issue have become so chaotic that no resolution could effectively be adopted in this matter.” BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/11, c. 16, 22; PBK Report No. 195 of 17th June 1920; *ibid.*, c. 14; PBK Report No. 201 of 23rd June 1920.

202 *Minskoie Utro Bealrusii*, No. 13, 18th June 1920; quoted after: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/II, c. 14 (as in fn. 201).

203 *Dziennik Wileński*, No. 96, 5th June 1920; quoted after BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/SK2, c. 202; Press extract No. 209/20.

204 The members included Aleksandr Chervyakov, Wilhelm Knorin[sz]/Vilhelms Knoriņš, and Józef Adamowicz.

The declaration on the establishment of the 'independent Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic' brought about a rump state composed of 18 counties, deprived of the Vilnius and Grodno regions, transferred by the Bolsheviks to Lithuania.²⁰⁵

The Lithuanian trump card

Despite the passage of time and the evolving context, the authorities in Kaunas were invariably blocking the implementation of Piłsudski's Eastern concept. At the end of 1919, the economic activity of the Lithuanians intensified, as they consistently pursued a policy of ignoring the Poles (including the 'Polish' ZCZW) while accumulating financial resources with great diligence, in order to become independent from German loans.²⁰⁶ January 1920 saw radical personnel changes in the Lithuanian missions in France, England, Switzerland, and Latvia.²⁰⁷

The press reported extensively on the de-facto recognition of Lithuania by these countries, thus condemning Poland – which, despite recognising the independence of Latvia and Estonia, was reluctant to acknowledge Lithuania. The idea of Lithuania cutting itself off from Byelorussia was promoted in Kaunas, as the country's "lower economic and social culture" would burden Lithuania with the struggle against Byelorussian *pomeshchiks* (landowners) and obstruct the development of Lithuanian national life.²⁰⁸

The Lithuanians sabotaged the plan of the Helsingfors Conference regarding the establishment of a polling conciliatory committee for Polish-Lithuanian affairs. As it transpired, the Lithuanian delegation arrived "without powers of attorney." At the same time, the Supreme Council was presented with Lithuanian demands. They included the return of Klaipėda/Memel and Vilnius and "all the

205 Giving Grodno Land away to Lithuania came as a consequence of not only Lithuanian appetites but also of a high evaluation of the degree to which Polish political postulates had been implemented in Western Byelorussia.

206 The activity of Fr. Zylius, who organised the sale of a Lithuanian state loan, intensified. The venture was joined by the following: the National Fund, the Independence Fund, the Lithuanian Catholic Association, the Lithuanian Union, the Commercial and Industrial Company, the Partnership for the Reconstruction of Lithuania, the Mechanics' Association Fund, and the National Council's Executive Committee.

207 Dismissed: Dr Jan Szaulis (Switzerland), J. Czepiński (London), and Jonas Szliupas (Riga). Appointed: Oskaras Milašius [Oskar Miłosz] (Lithuania's chargé d'affaires in France), the Rev. J. Dobieżys (Secretary at the legation in France), Count Alfred Tyszkiewicz (Lithuanian envoy to England), Mr Szablowski, a barrister (Lithuanian envoy to Riga). *Echo Litwy*, No. 20, 25th January 1920.

208 *Echo Litwy*, No. 30, 7th February 1920.

Lithuanian areas”, the withdrawal of Poles beyond the former demarcation line, and a guarantee from the League of Nations for the independence of Lithuania.²⁰⁹

Lithuanian propaganda did not let up. News of Polish disloyalty was an excellent excuse to ordain special requisitions in Polish manors and remote estates.²¹⁰ The consequences of these intensified measures affected the poor Polish local population. Five Poles from beyond the demarcation line, inhabitants of the Kozakiszkis [Kazokiškės] parish in the Commune of Jewje/Jewie [Vievis],²¹¹ submitted on 10th January 1920 the ‘Memorandum to the Polish Government and the Coalition Mission.’²¹² They begged the Coalition’s governments not to prevent Poland from providing assistance, or that the Coalition itself take the Polish population in these lands under its custody. These representatives made it very clear once again that the Polish people lived in peace and harmony, without issues, with the local Lithuanians. “Only the Lithuanian Government, installed by the Germans, is seeking to exterminate the Polish population and inciting the peaceful Lithuanian population against the Poles.”²¹³

However, the Lithuanian neighbours began to enjoy the fact that the authorities conducted requisitions only among Poles. The Polish language was being ousted, young girls were arrested and raped, and the men were beaten. The Lithuanian clergy played an invaluable role as they enforced the use of the Lithuanian language during confessions or weddings. The Polish people, however, had no knowledge of this language, and never returned to the church after being thrown out for singing in Polish. The deceased were buried without the presence of a priest and the children were brought up without baptism, for the Poles avoided the Church as an institution hostile to them. Good neighbourly relations with the Lithuanians were becoming a thing of the past.

A different approach was employed with respect to Polish ‘landed citizens’ in the Kaunas region. The citizens who had returned, and had no position nor salary, were immediately charged by Lithuanian officials with the payment of all outstanding debts plus interest, which was tantamount to depriving them of

209 *Nasz Kraj*, No. 30, 6th February 1920.

210 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3/II, c. 508: Communiqué of the Defence of the Poles of Kowno [KOPK].

211 Stefan Gumbis, Józef Amul, Franciszek Rynkiewicz, Jan Czupajło, and Wincenty Żyliński (illiterate).

212 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/3, c. 490.

213 *Ibid.*

their property rights, since they were insolvent and their assets were immediately seized.²¹⁴

It was difficult for both sides to maintain objectivity and reserve in the evaluation of the festering Polish-Lithuanian relations at that time. After the collapse of Leon Wasilewski's mission in Kaunas, Poland had two possibilities: it could either intervene militarily so as to "remove the artificially implanted Germanophile element, with its entire plethora of German government agents", or recognise the independence of ethnographic Lithuania in exchange for its political guarantees for Poland.

Piśsudski did not opt for the first variant, and this decision is symptomatic. The second option was thwarted by the policies of the Command of the Polish Army's Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front, attempting to confront the Commander-in-Chief with a *fait accompli*. This was justified by strategic necessity. There were numerous cases of planned withdrawals of Polish troops, not only without pressure from Lithuanian posts, but most of all without forewarning the ZCZW authorities or the local population. The latter were thus forced to abandon all their belongings in the course of a hasty and chaotic flight from persecution and revenge from the instantly intervening Lithuanian troops. Regular employees of the ZCZW and its volunteering collaborators were particularly vulnerable.²¹⁵

These condemnable decisions of the military were not just incidents. The Second Department of the Supreme Command informed Czesław Krupski of the new policy of the Command of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Front, which sought to provoke the Lithuanians into attacking Vilnius, which would give the Poles an excuse to launch a counter-attack and proceed further into Lithuanian territory beyond the demarcation line.²¹⁶

214 *Kurier Poranny*, issue of 22nd January 1920.

215 This was so in several border communes of Vilnius County, including those of Szyrwinty/Širvintos and Mušniki/Musinkai. LMAB, Fond 168–19, lap. 20–21: From Mr Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, from Czesław Krupski, Head of the Department of Nationalities and the Press; Strictly confidential; to the Addressee personally. No. W.W 72/20, Vilnius, 13th January 1919 [erroneous; correct: 1920].

216 "The Command of the Front, in consultation with the Second Department, has come to the conclusion that the matter of our accord with the Lithuanians in an amicable or diplomatic fashion will not come to fruition. The thing is that, allegedly upon the coming to the said conclusion, it was decided that our troops and posts be drawn towards Vilnius to the point that the Lithuanians, who are following us, ... having spotted the turrets of the Vilnius churches, launch an attack in the hope that they might take Vilnius back from us." Ibid.

The course of events was supposed to force the Commander-in-Chief to make the decision expected by the Supreme Command. The Lithuanians did not fall for the provocation, and the military manoeuvres along the demarcation line left the worst impression possible on the people in the border zone, who could not understand why, instead of strengthening their positions and moving towards where the calls for Polish relief were coming from, Poland was giving up.

On the other hand, concern for one's own safety prompted people, even those who were sympathetic towards Poland, to hide their sympathies so that they would not fall victim to Lithuanian revenge if the situation reversed. This atmosphere discouraged the local people from any cooperation with the Civil Administration and thus undermined any ZCZW measures aimed at bringing normality to the area under its control.

The execution of the political design of the military command in the ZCZW-ruled area with no consultation with the Civil Administration – whereas in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania territory the preparatory work for a plebiscite, formally announced nine months before, was nearing its end – propagated chaos whilst undermining the position and role of the ZCZW, let alone the belief in good intentions of Poland towards the inhabitants of these lands. All the more so that Polish owners of the local fertile lands, rather than being involved in farm work, endeavoured to exchange everything they possessed for cash, as cash could be taken away in the event of flight.²¹⁷

Such conduct did not contribute to the stabilisation of the region's economic life while boosting the business of tradesmen, most of whom were Jewish; in search of beneficial transactions, the latter supplied the Bolsheviks, in turn. Without going into depth into the intentions of the Supreme Command, who initiated this action – in compliance with the ZCZW's policy – it has to be stated that it did not lead to the expected effect and simply proved to be an act of sabotage against the Commander-in-Chief's policy, which had been supposed to be put into effect by the Civil Administration. At the same time, in Kovnian Lithuania, in the ZCZW-managed area, debates went on among the Poles residing there. The postponement of the decision regarding Poland's intervention in Kaunas region caused enormous depression among them; moreover, it frustrated the hopes of some of the Byelorussians.

217 LMAB, Fond 168–19, lap. 18–18 (verso): 'To the Head of the District of Vilnius', Confidential report No. 14, 21st January 1920, by J. Borowski, Starost of the County of Vilnius.

The attendance of a group of Polish landowners in the agricultural convention in Panevėžys/Poniewież might be treated as an attempt to recognise, in practice, Lithuania's independence. Such a step, requiring considerable personal courage, was interpreted in early 1920 by the adherents of incorporation of possibly large areas into Poland as an act of national treason in the name of one's own particular interest and protection of one's property, and a sign of a weakened morale among the Poles in Kaunas region. As a matter of fact, the initiative came much too late. It can be regretted that these landowners had not frustrated, in December 1918, the adoption of the resolution to boycott any and all Lithuanian gatherings and assemblies. Such a move, if it had been made before the August incidents in Kaunas, would definitely have had positive consequences in Polish-Lithuanian relations. After the uprising, however, it was apparently too late, and – apart from the national infamy, which affected the Polish attendees of the aforesaid convention – the move did not contribute at all to Polish-Lithuanian reconciliation.

Public opinion responded in a similar way a month later as well. Early in February 1920, a meeting of the agricultural syndicate and the Society for Mutual Credit was held in Kaunas. Twenty-three Poles from Kaunas region,²¹⁸ the area that had experienced anti-Polish excesses, expressed their positive attitude towards Lithuania's aspirations of independence; thus, they supported the Vilnius Proclamation's policy. However, this initiative came ten months too late and their attitude was thoroughly negatively evaluated by public opinion in Vilnius. Demonstrating their solidarity with the Poles of Kaunas region, oppressed by the Lithuanian authorities, the local men of authority unanimously condemned all joint Polish-Kaunas initiatives aimed at normalising the relations in any of the relevant aspects.

A late-January 1920 issue of *Echo Litwy*²¹⁹ published a riveting piece of news stating that POW would continue to work in Kaunas. It was probably this particular press advertisement that provoked a declaration from General Bronisław Babiański, on behalf of the Polish Government, that POW did not exist anymore in Kaunas. As it seems, this declaration was not a tactical move aimed

218 K. Kudrewicz, K. Łukomski, Róża Komarowa, Zofia Jagminowa, Wł. Komar, Karol Zabiello, Dominik Dowgiałło, Jerzy Grużewski, Konstanty Plater-Zyberk, Stefan Plater-Zyberk, 'Ben. Karp. Jun.', H. Szuksza, M. Janowicz, P. Narkiewicz, K. Janczewski, Henryk Przewysz, H. Kwinta, Oskar Rutkowski, Piotr Wereszczyński, K. Chrapowicki, Bolesław Lutyk, Zygmunt Butkowski, E. Lutkiewicz. After *Echo Litwy*, No. 34, 12th February 1920. The affair is discussed in Krzysztof Buchowski, *Polacy w niepodległym państwie litewskim 1918–1940*, Białystok 1999, pp. 81–82.

219 *Echo Litwy*, No. 19 (33), 24th January 1920.

at ensuring security for possible emissaries, since it was Babiański who submitted it. As Lithuania was not officially recognised by Poland at the time, the Polish Government found it difficult to submit a declaration of intent targeted at Lithuania in a different form. The action in Kaunas region was probably suspended; the idea was to provoke Lithuanians to react in a more Poland-friendly manner – to no avail, however. An Estonian columnist and poet (not a Pole or Lithuanian, then) who had resided in Vilnius since July 1915, so commented later upon these developments: “The fact needs to be emphasised that the misunderstanding with regards to the frontier mostly falls upon Lithuania, which in support for its chauvinistic demands cannot quote any fact-based arguments, save for the ‘historical rights.’”²²⁰

The turning point in Polish-Lithuanian relations was the Lithuanians signing an alliance with Russia, Poland’s foremost enemy, and the breaking of neutrality. This led to the Lithuanians taking part in Bolshevik hostilities against Poland.

Now, let us attempt a brief summary. Whereas the Entente’s moves were made outside the manoeuvring space of Polish politicians, the social sentiments among Poles were undoubtedly informed by the very fact that there functioned a political centre alternative to the Belweder-based one in Paris. It has to be appreciated, moreover, that in the aftermath of the Partition period, sympathy for oppositional centres of power remained long-rooted in the Polish mentality; in 1919, it was additionally strengthened by the concern about the development of the social situation in Poland.

A realistic evaluation of the political situation that prevailed among the Poles in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the dominant ethnic group in this territory) was accompanied by the development of the social situation in the region, which appeared to be extremely beneficial for the national camp’s political line.

Those who considerably contributed to the blocking of Józef Piłsudski’s Eastern concept were the Lithuanian politicians who showed anti-Polish attitudes. Byelorussians posed a great problem. One has to consider whether the break-up of Byelorussian political concepts came as a consequence of a lack or, conversely, of a surplus of political realism on the Byelorussian side. Were the Byelorussian elites not conducting a game, making their weakness an asset? Unconsolidated, they could not promise anything to anybody, and their obligations could always be disavowed: an ideal situation where as much as possible is being taken from everyone while offering no obligations from one’s own side. Most regrettably for

220 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/15/II, c. 20: Report of the Borderland Press Office No. 196, 18th June 1920.

Byelorussia, they overrated their artifice and underrated Russia, which stood at the eastern gate.

However, some of the Lithuanians displayed anti-German attitudes and sought agreement with the Poles. The potential to consistently implement the agenda announced in the April Proclamation on April 22, 1919 the lands of the former Grand Duchy was probably thwarted by the Polish counteraction targeted at Juzoas Gabrys's proposals. Apparently, Gabrys was treated very seriously in Polish national political circles, and the Polish partners would not doubt in his sincere interest in the idea to federalise with Poland – the agenda Józef Piłsudski intended to implement.

It remains a research query whether, as a matter of fact, the early outbreak of the Kaunas uprising was Piłsudski's deliberate decision. At the moment he finally accepted the idea, he apparently did not have complete information, which would have been provided not only to Władysław Skrzyński and Ignacy Paderewski, but also to him. The developments that unfolded might indicate that Piłsudski was aware at least of the contents of the late-arriving letters, whereas Foreign Ministry officials made use of them, 'winking' to the Poles in Kaunas.

Finding who endeavoured to renounce the accelerated outbreak of the uprising, and why, would explain a great deal, since the hitherto disseminated version of 'bad currency' brought by Stanisław Radziwiłł from Warsaw to Kaunas as the reason for 'postponing' the date might have been meant to hide the actual reason for the withholding of an early outbreak. The unclear circumstances around the uprising's commencement might have additionally been obscured by the attempt to neutralise its effects, if not at Piłsudski taking advantage of the prematurely incited burst. At the same time, the KNP-associated politicians held talks with Vasily Maklakov, member of the Russian Political Council in Paris. It is probable that the Chief of State did not want international public opinion to learn that something was happening behind his, the Chief of the State of Poland's, back – just two months after the Entente powers recognised Admiral Alexander Kolchak as a representative of the interests of pre-revolutionary Russia. Piłsudski might have possibly decided that he ought to take responsibility for an initiative he had eventually approved. The *raison d'état* of the state he headed prevented him from revealing to the world how imminent the Polish opposition against his programme was.

Given the hitherto-established facts, as a strategist what incriminates the Chief of State is the abandonment of Polish intervention in Kaunas after August 1919 (cf. Marian Świechowski's addresses). Is it possible, then, that – to the detriment of efficiency – he resumed the tactics suggested in May 1919 by Constantin Reboul at the strategically least favourable moment, having crossed the Rubicon?

No-one has yet charged Józef Piłsudski with incompetence as a military-man, but something such as this would have been a fatal tactical mistake. If it was Piłsudski indeed who initiated an early outbreak of the Polish uprising in Kaunas, as it is unanimously accepted in the existing literature, he should not have hesitated in September and, ignoring the Entente, seized Kaunas by means of military action. The abandonment of such line of conduct is legitimate if we assume, in line with the above-specified findings, that the outbreak of the “Kaunas uprising” (although finally accepted by him) was not completely his decision, given the above-discussed circumstances. We are not able today to determine the actual decision-making process in this respect. However, the very fact that Leon Wasilewski operated in Vilnius and Kaunas until November would suggest that the scenario of extinction in August – at Polish, National Democratic, hands – of the Polish-Lithuanian uprising planned for September is quite plausible.

CHAPTER IX: THE VOLHYNIAN DISTRICT

The Volhynian District: its emergence and activities

In spite of Volhynia's singular social and geographical situation, the mechanism of Polish society's attitude towards the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories locally took a course similar to that observed in the other regions.

The leading ideas behind the the ZCZW had a chance to be understood in the District among the fairly modern circles of peasants leasing the land and serving no *corvée* duty (*czynszowniks*), landholders, and more-or-less socially sophisticated manorial-farm servants. This situation translated into an exacerbation and intensification of the processes that were occurring elsewhere as well, although in slow (and less graspable) motion. In Volhynia, which was part of the complex of areas subordinate to the Administration until January 1920, concessions made at the expense of landowners could really contribute to win over, in a quite simple way, the votes of the voteless strata in favour of relying upon Poland. That a merger with Poland would be opted for by the proprietors of the Polish nation was so obvious that nobody saw the need to do any canvassing among them.

In Volhynia in the preceding years, this particular group had not been subjected to the influence of Russo-German manipulation to an extent comparable to that experienced by the Poles in Lithuania or Byelorussia. Poles, including those from the Eastern Territories, had been accustomed to sacrificing their lives – but never the land they owned – for their homeland. For those from the Eastern Territories, acceptance of the new formula of patriotism was becoming a condition of survival not only of themselves but also of Polish influence in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania's territory. There was a considerable chance that landowners from Volhynia would be the first to become aware of the historical necessity of a new way of testifying to their patriotism. This, however, would have come true by way of a process rather than an individual step. Attempts at rendering the Insurgents' sons and grandsons aware of a new reality were to be made, based on their personal example, by ZCZW officials. However, as everyday practice demonstrated, they first had, in the vast majority of cases, to understand it for themselves.

Due to their qualifications and involvement, 'landed citizens', i.e. squires, took most of the ZCZW offices, including almost all of the vacancies available in Volhynia. They tended to interpret the Commissioner-General's ordinances – which attempted, at times incoherently, to reconcile contradicting interests – to possibly minimise their own encumbrances and losses. Unfortunately, in almost

all of the counties they would not confine themselves to interpreting the degrees they received. Between June and October 1919, they were much too preoccupied with destroying and outright sabotaging the instructions of the Commissioner, their actual superior. A number of Polish Army troops allied with them to this end.

Włodzimierz County was the only county where authority was wielded in loyalty to the General Commissariat's orders and instructions. Through good fortune, reports from the county's governor (starosta), Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, a 'landed citizen', and those of the Borderland Guard, Stefan Kapuściński, have survived. These reports, along with the notices and the official journal published in the county (*Dziennik Urzędowy Komisariatu Włodzimierskiego*), allow us to trace, in an almost clinical manner, how the situation might have evolved in 1919 had the administrative apparatus been performing its imposed tasks loyally – regardless of one's own oppositional views – if not all over Volhynia, certainly in the adjacent Counties of Łuck and Kowel, which were occupied by the Polish Army almost in parallel with the County of Włodzimierz.

The administration for the Volhynian counties was established in an order of 7th June 1919,¹ whose Article 4 stated that: "The Administration of the Volhynian Counties shall temporarily extend to the territories of the Counties of Włodzimierz, Kowel, and Łuck. In keeping with eastward expansion, the further parts of the Governorate of Volhynia shall become integrated into the Administration of the Volhynian Counties without separate ordinances. The Volhynian Counties shall retain their 1st August 1914 frontiers."

The organisation of the Volhynian Counties was dealt with by three ordinances published in the official journal on 25th July 1919.² The first took care of leaseholders, banning the displacement of those who held land under a lease before 1st January 1900 and instructing that the expired contracts with those

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- 1 *Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich–Naczelne Dowództwo Wojsk Polskich* [Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories–the High Command of the Polish Armed Forces] (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW ND WP'), No. 5, 28th June 1919, Dz. III, [No.] 41: Order of the Commissioner-General of the Civil Administration of E.T. of 7th June 1919 concerning the formation of the Districts of Vilnius and Brześć and the Administration of the Volhynian Counties.
 - 2 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, No. 8, 25th July 1919, Dz. II, [No.] 49: Ordinance Commissioner-General of the C.A., 17th July 1919, in the matter of regulation of the relations between the owners of lands in the Volhynian Counties and leaseholders (colonists) of the same; [nr] 57–land value tax in the Volhynian Counties; [No.] 59–tax on the rental value of real property in the Volhynian Counties.

returning from the coerced evacuation be renewed, provided that they appeared at the expired lease site prior to 1st August 1919. In parallel, the Commissioner-General suspended the execution of all related verdicts or decisions passed by the courts, which implied ban on eviction as well.

For the leaseholders who took up land after 1st January 1900, a way out was found based on the 'goodwill' of county commissioners. A special mediatory commission, to be set up 'if need be', was to opine whether a given leaseholder was to remain on the given land, otherwise it would propose that he take up other land of equal value and size within the same estate. The body was to be composed of the county scribe, a justice of the peace (magistrate), and a minor property representative delegated by the head of the commune (*wójt*). To satisfy those proprietors who might be dissatisfied by such a turn of events, it was decided that the limitation period of cases be suspended, in parallel with the suspension of eviction. This, however, would not be a convincing argument for the party for whose benefit the case had been resolved during Russian rule. In order to gain favour with the owners, the legislator proposed a tie-in agreement in the form of an ordinance which, ignoring the abnormality of the economic realities in post-war Volhynia, provided (in Article 5) that if the parties did not reach an agreement voluntarily, the lease fee would be determined at the amount stated in the preceding leasehold contract.

The land value tax ordinance increased the estimated value of land by 500 % and imposed a tax equal to its former Russian counterpart. For private, municipal and Church-owned land, the tax was determined on an individual basis; for bestowed land, it was the aggregate amount for individual villages and communes, whereas the burden was to be distributed by communal offices. Dedicated estimation committees were to be formed for the purpose of classifying parcels of land.

The rental tax ordinance for the Counties of Volhynia increased the estimated value of the given real property by 300 % and imposed upon it a tax according to the Russian model. Exempted from taxation were temples of all denominations, state-owned and communal realties and those belonging to institutions or associations pursuing charity, scientific and educational, cultural, or religious activities only, rather than making material or financial profit. For the year 1919, rental residential houses and those real properties which were designed for profit-making purposes were additionally exempt from tax. The latter move was a thought-over step to encourage economic activity by individuals.

In order to settle currency relations in the Counties of Kowel, Łuck, and Włodzimierz-Wołyński, all administered by the ZCZW,³ an ordinance on

3 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, Yr. I, No. 16, 9th September 1920, Dz. II.

receiving and making payments in tsarist Roubles and Crowns (100 Roubles equalled 200 Crowns) was adopted on 31st July 1919.

At last, the District of Volhynia was set up on 9th (15th) September. With its registered office in Kowel, it encompassed the Counties of Włodzimierz, Kowel, Łuck, Dubno, Równe, Krzemieniec, Ostróg, Zasław, and Zwiahel [Nowogród Wołyński].⁴ Maciej Jamontt was appointed the district head (announced on 8th November, two months after the unit was established).⁵ On 29th November, the appointment of his deputy, Stefan Smólski, was officially announced.⁶ The seat of the District Office of Volhynia was moved from Kowel to Łuck on 20th November 1919.⁷

In November and December 1919, a total of 29 cases were pending against ZCZW officers in the District of Volhynia alone. Particularly outrageous was the case of Stanisław Łada-Łobarzewski, Governor of the County of Równe, and Kamil Pourbaix, Deputy Commissioner in Łuck, who became famous for their passing in silence over the ordinance of the Commissioner-General of 25th July regarding the leaseholder colonists and, moreover, barring a member of the delegation to the Łuck Convention (11th July–11th September 1919) from reading out this ‘awkward’ document in public. They went as far as calling the ordinance, in public, a piece of Bolshevik propaganda.⁸

The district head of the County of Ostróg, who formerly acted as a granger and administrator in Count Tyszkiewicz’s demesne, earned notoriety when he took advantage of his job position to enforce dues for his long-standing employers.⁹ In

4 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 17, 12th September 1919, Dz. III, 153.

5 *Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich* [Official Journal of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories] (hereinafter, ‘D.U. ZCZW’), Yr. I, No. 27, 8th November 1919, [column:] ‘Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements’.

6 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 36, 29th November 1919, [column:] ‘Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements’.

7 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 35, 27th November 1919, Dz. VI, 407.

8 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1681, c. 140–6: ‘Memorial re. the situation in Volhynia, the tasks of the administration and the Borderland Guard’, Kowel, 18th October 1919, [signed by] Antoni Zalewski, Instructor with the Borderland Guard for the County of Łuck; submitted to Mr Jamontt. Published in J. Gierowska-Kałaur, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999, pp. 103–108 (Annex 13).

9 Ibid., No. 1691, c. 47–56: ‘Report on abuses of the Administration, the security situation and its indispositions, the Army’s attitude towards the people, the peasant rebellions underway and the peasants’ actions in the District of Volhynia’, Łuck, 2nd January 1920; Stefan Kirtiklis, Sub-Lieutenant of the Investigation Sec. of the HQ. of Z.P.O.E. Vilnius, to Mister Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories.

addition, it is possible that the suspension of Edmund Martynowicz, Lord Mayor of the City of Łuck, for not complying with an order of the county's governor, was a form of account-settling between certain circles in the Commissariat and the man who stayed loyal to the Commissioner-General. However, the suspension of the mayor of Kowel for salt-related scandals seems to have been driven by purely economic and supply-related motivations.¹⁰

Antoni Zalewski points to a "strange blindness of the landed class" which was not diminished by a favourable turn of economic conditions: "on the contrary, it turned into a state of wrong-headedness." Accusations of 'Thuguttism' were cast against the Borderland Guard. Edward Strauch mentions Commissioner Dworakowski's confidential circular memo from September 1919, which dealt with the ZCZW's attitude towards the Borderland Guard. A. Zalewski described the situation in his 'Memorial regarding the situation in Volhynia, the tasks of the administration and the Borderland Guard', compiled on 18th October 1919 in Kowel and submitted to Maciej Jamontt.¹¹

The author argued (on seven pages) that if the work of the administration and the Borderland Guard was to maximise the result whilst minimising the effort involved, it had to be coordinated and harmonised, since any friction caused a vain expenditure of energy and gave a result opposite of what was expected. Polishness is identified in Volhynia, Zalewski remarked, with 'lordly rule', which stands for *corvée* duty, bondage, 'hetmanism', and lawlessness. Therefore, to his mind, to make the support for the authorities real, the landowning class alone would not suffice. From the standpoint of the Borderland Guard, such support could only be given by broad masses of Polish people, the leaseholder colonists among them. Rather than partnering in one's arbitrariness, Polish gendarmes as well as clerks and officials should be the executors of the law.¹²

The threads touched upon in Zalewski's memorial were taken up by Tadeusz Jankowski in his six-page 'Memorial regarding the administration in Volhynia', compiled in December 1919.¹³ According to this document, the primary task of the Borderland Guard would be to counteract the local people's distrust and

10 Ibid.

11 As in fn. 8.

12 Ibid.

13 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1681, c. 134–9: 'Memorial re. administration in Volhynia of December 1919'; Borderland Guard, Organisational Department, signed by Tadeusz Jankowski. Published in Gierowska-Kałużur, *Straż Kresowa*, pp. 109–114 (Annex 14).

enhance the supremacy of the local authorities. This would seem compliant with the slogans advocated by the federationists, were it not for the fact that Jankowski added, in the next breath, that the option of any action in which the people could express their opinion should be precluded in Volhynia, the reason being that the local Poles were a minority. He considered the existing state-of-affairs unacceptable and pointed out the necessity to meet the promises made by the Warsaw-based Department for the Eastern Territories to the delegates from Volhynia, especially regarding the formation of Agricultural Committees and passing protective laws related to manorial servants and setting up mediatory commissions.

In his indicative report written in Kowel on 15th September 1919, the Delegate of the Commissioner-General for the District of Volhynia added one more element of importance to the emerging comprehensive image of the situation: "Each of these military commanders gives, on his own, orders that are outright contrary to those of the Government in the affairs of a purely civil-administrative nature. For instance, one such is the order of the commander of the 8th Regiment of Riflemen (General Józef Haller's Division) issued, in the Russian language, at Lachowice on 27th August [1919], to the head of the Commune [*wójt*] of Uniewież, whereby the entire crop from a field is only due to the one who has worked and sown it, regardless of who owns the land, and in any similar case one has only to be driven by this particular order." It was moreover found that General Haller's men were talking the peasants into not obeying the administrative ordinances, and even holding peasant rallies with a clearly Bolshevik agenda.¹⁴

A different situation prevailed in the 'frontline' District of Minsk. As Jan Suszyński's report on the County of Słuck for February 1920 informs us, "Słuck, the '*nepokalabimy*' ['imperishable'] and '*nepobiezhdonny*' ['invincible']: these are the sobriquets with which the Russian-Orthodox society christened their Słuck. And there is some truth in it."¹⁵ "All those Orthodox and Jewish who are alive", the report went on, "are breathing with the will to humiliate, take revenge, and destroy all things Polish. The labour conditions are, consequently, tough, all the more so that our landed class have done nothing by far ... In Poland's backwaters", the Borderland Guard instructor for the County of Bobrujsk

14 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1691, c. 99–103: Indicative report of W. Bo[niecki], Delegate of the Commissioner-General for the District of Volhynia in Kowel, to the Commissioner for the Eastern Territories in Warsaw, Kowel, 15th September 1919.

15 Ibid., No. 1732, c. 6–13: Report of the Borderland Guard from the County of Słuck, January 1920.

notices, “the people are so dull-witted that embarking on some organisation is unconceivable since you first have to teach them how to read and write.” The activity of Rev. Wincenty Godlewski, Prefect of the Polish *gimnazjum* (grammar school) in Nieśwież, who in his address to General Adam Mokrzecki, heading the Polish troops marching into the town, “dared to disclose the agenda of the Byelorussians”, was briefly summarised in the report thus: “[Godlewski] is a pledged enemy of Polishness.” General Mokrzecki seems to have shared this opinion, as he said to his soldiers after Godlewski’s expose, “Did you hear it?” According to Suszyński, in spite of the common indignation, “a gentleman like Mr Godlewski is tolerated, and indeed continually holds a responsible post of educator of the youth.”¹⁶

The same report tells us of “cold banditry performed by the officials of the Poznań army commissariat, who under the custody of Mr Wagnerowski, a Colonel with the Poznań army, did horrible things along with the cattle requisitioning action carried out in Słuck.”¹⁷

Although the manors did not carry encumbrances comparable to those imposed on the villages (sentinels), the landowners were selling out their lands with a telling haste. Jews were the main purchasers. The picture was complemented by a mass forest felling (in the demesnes of Radziwiłł, Zaleski, and others), which, awkwardly enough, was accompanied by resistance against the selling price of firewood. Prince Radziwiłł’s foresters cancelled the custom of out-of-cart selling, replacing it by ‘*sążeń* (or fathom) sales’ [so-named after the old length measurement, 1 *sążeń* equalling approx. 190 cm], which proved too expensive for the peasants. It was February and furnace fuel was indispensable for survival, so telegraph posts and birches, the land’s adornment, went under the axe.¹⁸ As a result, the posts of starost (county governor) experienced break-neck job rotation – which was not at all surprising.¹⁹

Given Volhynia’s administrative and economic peculiarities compared to the entire Eastern Territories, a Section [*Referat*] for the District of Volhynia was established within the Commissariat-General of the ZCZW, reporting directly to Commissioner-General, in parallel with the district which was set up in the middle of September.²⁰

16 Ibid., c. 1–5: Report of the Borderland Guard from the County of Słuck, February 1920.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Before 12th March 1920, the County of Borysów had five consecutive *starostas*.

20 D.U. ND WP, Yr. I, No. 17, 12th September 1919, Dz. III. 154.

The *Referat's* head held the post of head of the section, and had a deputy and a staff reporting to him. The office's task was to monitor the needs of the District of Volhynia, pronounce opinions on Volhynia's affairs dealt with at the Commissariat-General, submit motions and requests, give opinions on staffing/personnel-related matters, and prepare legislative motions regarding Volhynia and the entire area governed by the ZCZW, seen in Volhynia's view. I have found no trace of the Section's activity in the files I have searched. Perhaps it may be that the activities of this particular office implied that the decision to appoint Jamontt Head of the District was a backward step. It is astonishing that the first instruction that concerned Volhynia only, which was published in the *Official Journal* after the Section was established, was the Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, of 17th January 1920, regarding the setting up of the Commissariat for the Lands of Volhynia and the Front of Podolia,²¹ which meant that the ZCZW was to be split, in spite of the formal authority resting with the Commissioner-General.

Until 14th August 1919, Zdzisław Rodzynkiewicz was the Delegate of the Commissioner-General for the Volhynian districts.²² After his appointment with the Commissariat-General, he was replaced by Edward Boniecki.²³

Based on the *Official Journal*, we find that in August 1919, Tadeusz Dworakowski took the office of County Commissioner in Kowel.²⁴ In September, the counterpart office in Łuck was taken by Bolesław Grabowski.²⁵ Józef Kraszewski was made County Commissioner for Ostróg from 1st October;²⁶ soon after, Kazimierz Kleczyński became his deputy.²⁷ From 14th August, Stanisław Łada-Łobarzewski was Commissioner of the County of Równe.²⁸ The surviving reports say that Tadeusz Krzyżanowski was in office as Commissioner with the County of Włodzimierz.²⁹

21 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 6 (50) z 24th January 1920, Dz. I. 79.

22 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, Yr. I, No. 9, 31st July 1919.

23 Ibid.

24 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, Yr. I, No. 11, 14th August 1919.

25 Ibid., No. 15, 4th Sept. 1919.

26 Ibid., No. 20, 1st October 1919.

27 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 25, 31st October 1919.

28 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1691, c. 105: Memo by Stanisław Łada-Łobarzewski to General A. Listowski, Commander of the Volhynian Front, No. 67/8. [SGK]

29 Ibid., No. 1691, c. 74-78: A brief report on the operations of the *Starosty* of Włodzimierz for December 1918 to February 1919, signed by Tadeusz Krzyżanowski on 24th February 1919 in Warsaw.

No record regarding the appointment for the Counties of Dubno, Krzemieniec, Zaslav, and Zwiahel make one suppose that commissioners representing the local landowning class had already functioned in all those areas, analogously to the County of Włodzimierz.

Daily practices and routines under the ZCZW

The political reports by the Borderland Guard instructor for the Counties of Równe and Dubno describe the situation that prevailed in these areas.³⁰

The County of Równe was prevalently inhabited by Catholics who were Russified Poles that spoke Russian at home. The colonists – Polish, Czech, and German alike – felt endangered by the Ukrainian (referred to as ‘Ruthenian’) peasants’ growing efforts to expropriate them. The lack of actual authority in the county implied disorder and uncertainty for tomorrow. In the Dubno County area, Sich-men operated who exhorted the locals to struggle against the Bolsheviks and the Poles. According to a period account, the Ukrainian army, commanded by Russian Army officers, deserted after a couple of shots fired, and so created no sense of threat. News about pogroms of Jews going on across Petliurian Ukraine spread widely.³¹

A number of villages in the area between Beresteczko and Dubno formed an anti-Sich organisation, led by the ‘war-and-revolutionary committee in the village of Bereza’. A peasant and former sailor with Bolshevik beliefs called Riekuń became the body’s chairman (*Predsedatiel’ Komiteta*) and the organisation’s leader. The organisation considered itself to consist of ‘national Bolsheviks’ (*narodnye bolsheviki*) and, to an extent, allies of the Poles as well as the Jews. The superior instance was the ‘Communal Reunion’ (*Schód Gminny*) or the ‘Rural Committee’. All the governmental ordinances were received with disdain, taxes were refused, and no consent was given for requisition or collection. In mid-March 1919, the village’s residents, armed, marched out to liberate Dubno, which had been preceded by ensuring help from the Dubno Jews. The action ended in failure; as a side effect, it provoked a pogrom of the Jews. As the

30 Ibid., No. 1690, c. 188: Political report. County of Równe, for 12th March to 13th April 1919; *ibid.*, No. 1690, c. 186, Political report. County of Dubno, for 26th March to 13th April 1919; *ibid.*, No. 1681, c. 60–69: Political report. County of Dubno, after August 1919.

31 Two pogroms took place in Żytomierz (100 and 1,500 killed, respectively), and one in each of Płoskirów (5,000 killed), Miropol, Dubne, and Berdyczów [Report for 12th March to 13th April 1919 – see fn. 30].

Borderland Guard instructor for the County of Dubno put it in an opinion dated 13th April 1919, “if the Polish Army had behaved tactfully”, the affairs between the Polish authority and the local people would have had a chance to turn out for the better. This scenario could have been prevented by the collection of compensation for the ‘lords’, and the withdrawal of the troops after a short stay, or, indeed, ‘untactful conduct’.³²

June 1919 saw occurrences which suggested Volhynia’s military authorities neglected the fact that the Civil Administration had been set up. All the orders and instructions of the civil authority were ignored – from the organisation of hay inning, the subordination of the municipal militia, to requisition, custody and disposition of trophy property, despite the decrees of the War Spoils Commission. The height of this outlawry was marked by the initiative of Generals Bronisław Babiański and Bernard in Kowel, consisting in putting into practice Colonel Jahoda’s untoward idea to completely suspend the civil authorities and courts-of-law by means of the martial-law regulations of 9th June 1919.

Very significant of the sentiments prevailing in July 1919 was the first report by Jerzy Osmołowski to the Commander-in-Chief, regarding on-site inspections of the Counties of Kowel, Łuck, and Włodzimierz (dated 2nd July),³³ which admitted that the civil authorities operated inefficiently and were, apparently, overly yielding to the Jews. They were burdened with the charge of supporting large property. However, in the opinion of Commissioner-General, the shortcomings of the Polish administration in Volhynia were not really based on the offices being manned with ill-willing people, but on the unprofessional quality of the officials. This clearly inaccurate evaluation of the situation by the Commissioner-General had a severe bearing on the occurrences in Volhynia in later years. One’s ‘goodwill’ appeared, in most of the cases, unsatisfactory when it came to sorting out public security affairs, embroiled due to the lack of delimitation of competences between the civil and the military authorities. (However, in the County of Włodzimierz the outcome was successful.) For the same reasons, the issue of securing war prey left much to be desired.

The importance of Volhynia for getting affairs in order in the East was appreciated by members of the Legislative Sejm. On 23rd and 24th August 1919, Kowel and Łuck were visited by a team of delegates, including Witold Kamieniecki

32 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1690, c. 186: Report of the Borderland Guard for the County of Lubień, for 26th March to 13th April 1919.

33 *Ibid.*, No. 1669, c. 52–54: Report by Jerzy Osmołowski to the Commander-in-Chief, 2nd June 1919.

(chairman and member of Polish Peasant Union), Mieczysław Niedziałkowski (PPS), Alfons Erdman (PSL), the Rev. Stanisław Maciejewicz (ZLN), Józef Zagórski (NZR), Aleksander Purta (PSL-‘Piast’) and Antoni [*resp.* Józef] Piotrowski (NZL). The Sejm delegation concluded that the character of Volhynia called for special treatment whereas the plebiscite carried out in this region was poorly promising and had a misbegotten purpose.³⁴

This opinion must have contributed to the establishment, a month later, of the independent Section for the District of Volhynia in the ZCZW’s Commissariat-General. Dr Henryk Orliński, the District’s head of the Borderland Guard, who was familiar with the local conditions, realised the importance of the Polish authority’s position in respect of agricultural reform for the reinforcement of its power in Volhynia. This automatically made him an opponent of the local landed gentry. He suggested to the Commissariat-General that it publish “some quietening proclamation” that would not infringe the interests of the owners of fields sown by peasants. The proprietors frenetically looked for methods to protect their interests. Among the several options, the ‘landed citizen’ circles considered the fighting of Ukrainism and Bolshevism with the help of ‘Russianism’. In addition, the municipalities and communes feverishly looked for possibilities to secure their interests: they had been burdened with regular encumbrances, in ignorance of the fact that they could not meet the expenditure obligations due to the scarcity of income. The mayor-designate for Równe, Dr Baliński, refused to accept the office without income to ensure the coverage of expenses being provided. Ascertaining that the Polish element was weak in Volhynia, Orliński postulated that ultraquist schools be created to enable the control of the non-Polish population. He rightly expected that having Russians as members of the railway staff, owing to their unique qualifications for the Eastern Borderland area, could lead to unpredictable consequences if the warfront situation changed. The fact that the Polish authorities communicated with railway staff in Russian reassured the locals that Poland fought against the Bolsheviks to give the liberated lands to the Russian state.

Dr Orliński’s paper contained a significant statement: “I can understand that any foreigner who made a journey by our railway across the eastern lands would allocate this land to Russia.” He postulated that railway personnel be replaced completely by removing the indigenous Russians deeper inside the country, which for many of them would mean a promotion, whilst importing Polish

34 Ibid., No. 1691, c. 79–85: The situation in Volhynia nowadays, by Dr Henryk Orliński, August 1919.

railwaymen into the Eastern Borderland, with the use financial incentives. The postulate was never put into practice. The Volhynian District's civil authorities soon notified their superiors of discontent among former Russian clerks and officials, as they were being evicted from cushy positions.

Polish society froze with expectation, taking up no administrative duties, since working for the ZCZW was not perceived as a route towards the Polonisation of Volhynia – for those people were only interested in a 'Polish Volhynia'. The uncertainty of the Polish authorities, whose action was cut short by overzealous Polish troops, directly infected the concerned ones; that is, the local Poles. This positioned the administration in a very inconvenient position: they could not, by any means, rule against their own society.

To implement their selected objectives of the ZCZW agenda, the Polish administration in Volhynia searched for a compromise with their own society – at any expense, often paying too high a price to win allies in the implementation of its entrusted tasks. The support was acquired at the expense of quitting the superior targets upon which the ZCZW was founded. No propaganda actions were taken, as with so sensitive a matter at stake, any propaganda campaign would have aroused a response in Polish society completely opposite to what was expected. Polish society did not live in a vacuum, however: it was exposed to the propaganda of the national (i.e. nationalist) camp, which opposed Piłsudski and whose political and social agenda was adapted to the needs and expectations of Polish social opinion. The ZCZW's mission could not be put into practice without the support of the local society. The administration of the Volhynian District cooperated with Polish society at the expense of role reversal: it was the society that managed the administration.

Volhynia's Poles realised the need for subsidised civic institutions to strictly cooperate with the Government.³⁵ The contacts, be they half-official and meant to reduce the information circulation time and to act as the regulator of social relations, were initiated by the Convention of Volhynia's Peasants held in Kowel

35 One example of this attitude is the Declaration of the Association of the Land of Volhynia of 18th August 1919, regarding a new rule for county delegates of rural self-governments joining municipal councils, submitted as a motion to the ZCZW's Law and Administration Section. This would have been a cultured and argumentative means to deprive the Jews of their prevalence in the towns and, in parallel, alleviate the antinomies in the interests of rural and urban areas. The rule was postulated not only for Lithuania but also in 'Poland proper'. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 6–7; *ibid.*, No. 1691, c. 6–7: Motion made by the reason of the Delegation of the Association of the Land of Volhynia, 18th August 1919.

on 1st September 1919, and a convention of 18th August 1919 in Pińsk. The Volhynian Association strongly insisted that joint consultations with ZCZW representatives be held on a monthly basis, as a means of avoiding animosities and resentments, the reasons for which were identified as lack of contacts and communication. A reply from Jerzy Osmołowski, Commissioner-General, was almost instantaneous. On 22nd August in Warsaw, he signed the Statute of the Committee for the Reconstruction of Volhynia, with its temporary office in Warsaw and a target one in Łuck. A third of Committee members were to be appointed by the Commissioner-General, to whose delegate the body was to account for the amounts of money allotted by the Government.³⁶ The Board was composed of three directors in charge of departments and units set up in line with the directives of the Committee's General Assembly.

Like all the other commissariats in the area ruled by the ZCZW, the *Starosty* of Włodzimierz was set up based on a decree of the military authorities in the last days of November 1918, three weeks after the Austrians left the area. Not waiting for the Polish army to enter, the Civic Committee organised the executive power in the form of a militia consisting of 226 barracked men formed into troops at district posts and subordinated to the command units in Włodzimierz. The militiamen were local Poles and privates from the Society [*sic*] of the Borderland Guard from Lublin. The formation was commanded and organised by Marcei Gużkowski.³⁷

Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, a 'landed citizen', was appointed starost (commissioner), and Ludwik Mościcki his deputy. In contrast to the lands in the north, the newly-organised *Starosty* in Volhynia instantly assumed the principle of establishing an administration staffed only by Poles and striving for unification with Poland. Toleration was applied to the extent allowed by military as well as national considerations and requirements. Daily practice demonstrated that, in spite of accepting the principle – not-quite-compliant as it was with the declared political line of the ZCZW – Commissioner Krzyżanowski was simply a good administrator and manager of his entrusted land, much to the benefit of all the dwellers (not only the Poles). His efforts were aided by the fact that the area had suffered minimal damage. The tasks of the Polish administration in Włodzimierz County were performed by 300 people, 18 of whom did the clerical jobs. The

36 Ibid., No. 1691, c. 91–92: The Statute of the Committee for Reconstruction of Volhynia, 22nd August 1919.

37 Ibid., No. 1691, c. 74–78: A brief report ... [cf. fn. 29].

governing authority counted on collaboration from local 'landed citizens' – in the fields of economy, education, as well as charity.

The Włodzimierz commissariat probably retrieved 300,000 Crowns, previously expended on the military, from the Ministry of Military Affairs.³⁸ A municipal and county telephone network was organised soon (consisting of 26 telephone sets), along with a post-office and a hospital. The full-time post of county physician was manned and a forest guard set up (formed of six forest districts). For reconstruction purposes, each applicant was afforded 12 pines and two oaks free-of-charge; charges imposed on account of robbed and stolen trees thus certainly contributed to the county coffers. As many as 40,000 refugees passed through the county. Raising the funds for the inevitable handling of this particular group was possible thanks to an instant assumption of Russian taxation rules, in line with the Commissioner-General's ordinance passed in July 1919. Income was also gained from 10 % exportation tax, income tax, and forest tax, as well as kerosene and salt monopolies. The *Starosty's* oversight was extended over a total of 19 Polish schools run by the Educational Society (Macierz Szkolna), along with two Russian ones, one Ukrainian, and three Jewish. The activities of the Christian Orthodox believers and the 'Israelites' were monitored. Moreover, the *Starosty* administered several deserted estates, and the relevant formalities were soon sorted out in legal terms.³⁹

The Commissariat's administration was exercised via the five District Economic Boards,⁴⁰ authorised to determine the amounts of rental payments for the deserted estates and collect them in advance, on a one-off basis. Sowing on land that belonged to others was banned, unless with the consent or agreement of the owner. An excellent move by the Commissioner was a plan to publish, from 27th June 1919, the Commissariat's official journal (*Dziennik Urzędowy Komisarjatu Włodzimierskiego*).⁴¹

38 This would explain the otherwise thought-provoking expenditures on the ZCZW, recorded from 18th November 1918 onwards [*sic*].

39 By Order of the Commissioner of the County of Włodzimierz of 30th May 1919 – Notice No. 3898/33, signed by Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, Commissioner of the County of Włodzimierz: BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1773/5/VII, c. 45.

40 In Włodzimierz (Mr Kościak), Ozdzytycz (Maryan Koczkowski), Łokacze (Mr Ołędzki), Horochów (Mr Koczkowski), and Grzybowica (Mr Tribenbach).

41 The *Official Journal of the County of Włodzimierz* [inscription also in Russian, printed bilingually in two columns], No. 1, Włodzimierz, 27th June 1919; the Waser Printery at Włodzimierz-Wołyński, p. 6; No. 2, 21st July 1919; No. 4, 12th September 1919; No. 6, 9th October 1919.

Its first issue described the organisation of the county's communes,⁴² the locations of supply depots,⁴³ teacher training sessions with Polish as the language of instruction, auctions, and the obligations to provide horse-and-cart and timber to repair roads and bridges situated on private land. Issue No. 2 contained, among other things, an excerpt from the regulations in force regarding passenger and commodity traffic in Volhynian District, as published in the ZCZW's official journal.⁴⁴

The Provisions Department of the Włodzimierz County *Starosty* was run by Zdzisław Stecki. The quality of the department's work proved poorer compared to the efficiency of the county's peer units, owing to the method of distributing donations via the Welfare Council. The system did not operate accurately, which disturbed the peasants who had counted on free distribution. In addition, the ethnic/national and religious splits were deepening.

In the County of Łuck, the situation was similar. As it appeared, the human resources employed with the Provisions Department were also 'defective': according to the Borderland Guard's opinion, the officials neglected the local people, forcing them to wait all day to be served at the depots. Commissioner T. Krzyżanowski punished two functionaries for abuse by dismissing Messrs Lipiński and Krzemiński, commonly notorious as 'bribers'. Unfortunately, with the intervention of a Commissioner-General delegate called Boniecki, both were almost immediately re-employed as civil servants: Lipiński became a member of the war-prey managing staff; Krzemiński a sub-commissioner in Ostróg. We can try and understand the impression made by these developments in the commissariat reporting to Krzyżanowski.

Ferment was also incited because of lawless appointments and dismissals of teachers by Fr. Ginoff of the Educational Society, who neglected the School Committee which, in theory, oversaw the school and education system. These facts are indicative that the unethical conduct of Lipiński and Krzemiński was not a unique occurrence, but rather a daily practice which accurately reflected

42 The county, within its former borders, was split into 22 communes, consisting of Skobelka, Podberzie, Brany, Świniuchy, Poryck, Chorów, Mikulcze, Werba, Kisielin, Nowy Dwór, Grzybowica, Chotiaczów, Korytnica, Bereźce, Łuboml, Olesk, Szack, Zagorawy, Pulmo, Krymno, Gołowno, and Guszczka [Huszczka].

43 The headquarters were located in Uścilug with branch offices in Włodzimierz, Łuboml, and Piszcz. A movable depot travelled between the stations of Wojnica, Iwańcze, Krymno, and Włodawa.

44 As in fn. 41.

the sentiments that prevailed not only in the administration, but across Polish society in the County of Włodzimierz.⁴⁵

Clearly, such an atmosphere had no positive effect on the witnesses to developments in the county. The mood of the local peasants also darkened because no decisions were being made with regards to farming/agricultural matters. The colonist peasants' strivings to own at least a small piece of land intensified: they were ready to purchase land at not-too-prohibitive a price. Despite conditions that would favour a parcelling-out and allotment of land, no such transactions were done. Perhaps, if we follow the Borderland Guard's opinion, a buyout was impossible due to the extortionate financial expectations of Volhynia's landowners, who were no doubt dejected by the poor harvest in 1919. However, the crop failure did not affect only them. The solution might have consisted in the landed gentry lowering their financial expectations, or in providing easy credit options to the peasants. Finding a reliable loan provider would not have happened overnight and was not a matter of one decision, which caused delays. It is possible that the climate that prevailed after the invalidation by the Commissioner-General of all the transactions entered into under the Bolshevik and Ukrainian rule did not benefit mass-scale acquisitions of land.⁴⁶

The peasants were reluctant to financially enter into a transaction which could be made null-and-void by the subsequent authority. After all, Volhynia's adherence to one of the two parties still at war remained unresolved, and anything could still happen, seen from the perspective of the farm-pen. It was logical on the part of the Włodzimierz County Commissioner that, given the situation, he supported the activity of the Borderland Guard, a formation that enjoyed support among the local peasants. As a result, Krzyżanowski earned the reputation of a radical. His defence of the peasantry's interests (which, in this case, stood for seducing the Ruthenian peasants to Poland) intensified the landlords' distrust towards the Guard, apparently "detrimental and spreading class dissension."⁴⁷

45 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 106–112: Report by Stefan Kapuściński, Instructor with the Borderland Guard for the County of Włodzimierz, for 11th August to 11th September 1919.

46 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, Yr. I, 1919, No. 17, Dz. 149: Ordinance of 5th September 1919, No. (10706/165), of the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories regarding the invalidation of the agreements and contracts entered into and concluded as well as acquired rights based upon the decrees and ordinances of the former Soviet (Bolshevik) and Ukrainian authorities.

47 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 113–117: Report ... (as in fn. 45).

Grasping the chronology of the political *faits accomplis* taking place in Volhynian District, and effectively bringing about the result intended by the opponents of the Chief of State's Eastern policy, is fundamental to understanding the processes that occurred then and there. At a landowners' convention in Kowel on 1st September 1919, the delegates adopted a resolution to join the Borderland Guard, thereby gaining control over the organisation. It has to be presumed that a considerable number of landlords also penetrated the People's Councils and endeavoured to control their operations. Late in September, a convention of county commissioners, also held in Kowel, resolved that communal council elections be carried out in all the counties at the same time. As it seems, the commissioners saw such 'elections' as an ersatz of the plebiscite that was announced upon establishment of the ZCZW. In Stefan Kapuściński's opinion, the resolution was tantamount to foregoing the idea of having 'any election in general' and called into question the rationale behind the Borderland Guard's political action.⁴⁸

In parallel, the Borderland Guard instructor noted that the Polish Educational Society had suspended its operations (it was September, and the school year had just began). At the same time, he mentioned intensified activities by the County Welfare Council [abbr. ROP], which was commonly memorised as an unfair and unreliable distributor of goods imported by the Provisions Department. The Council, with Czesław Cyngott as Chairman, continued its collaboration with the Commissariat. To render its social action even more efficient, the Council had the county divided into districts. As opposed to the County of Włodzimierz, which was properly administered most of the time, the County of Dubno was a dangerous territory in the autumn of 1919. The 'National Bolsheviks', led by Rekun and Shelestyuk and residing in Sady, were a military organisation whose members were given five Roubles of soldier's pay each, 'from an unknown pay-desk'. The organisation waged a regular war against Symon Petliura and the Sichmen, and was the main segment of the Bolshevik forces. Anton Denikin's agents, holding passports issued by the Provisions Department in Łuck, intensified their activity. Jews prevailed in trade and commerce, earning fabulous profits on goods brought by the Russians employed with Dubno's Provisions Department. The Jews' forethought and thrift was taken advantage of by Polish landlords, who sold to them almost the whole stock of cereals. Uncertainty about tomorrow incited the landowners to get rid of any goods whose evacuation was impossible (if need be). The annulment of the grain monopoly and introduction of

48 Ibid.

free trade in cereals released them from any responsibility and let them and line up to wait for grain transports from deeper inside the country. The cereals from Volhynia fed the lands under Bolshevik rule, for a change. They hid behind the 'Government's' decrees (that is, in fact, those of the Commissariat-General), and refused not only free distribution but also the sale of wood. The Commissioner of the County of Włodzimierz, who was fairly commended by all the political groups for his exemplary style of handling administrative affairs, complained to Marian Świechowski that he could not drag out the wood for the fire, afforded to him for the sole reason of office-related work, from the forest district (which employed Russian workers). Acquiring timber for reconstruction purposes was no less difficult. The attitude of the Russians towards the Poles in Dubno County was reluctant; hence, it is plausible that quite a number of them were employed with the local commissariat only because of the directives received from Vilnius, which proved incomprehensible to the Poles in Volhynia. Understanding the Proclamation was additionally made difficult by the conduct of the foresters, among whom Russians also prevailed.

Such a policy of the Administration of the State Possessions paralysed the entire reconstruction process in the areas devastated by hostilities. As a result, only those who had stolen some wood in Petliura's time could now have their properties reconstructed. Not only did such a state-of-affairs incite Polish-Russian antagonism, along with those between Volhynia (District) and Vilnius (Commissariat-General), but it fuelled bitterness and demoralisation among those respecting the right of others' property. The people subjected to Krzyżanowski were overwhelmed by the justified will to rebel, which in turn led to 'Bolshevism'. The administrative authorities of Dubno County were overly reluctant towards the Borderline Guard, which in the area concerned was resolutely supported by the Czechs and Germans. These tendencies intensified after a visit to Łuck by Maciej Jamontt, the district's delegate. The commissioner made promises to "get a strong grip of everything and put an end to the practice of forming a 'government' within the Government."⁴⁹

The County Commissariat was seconded by the Educational Society of the County of Dubno, which quickly removed the Guard from doing educational tasks. To this end, the Society was backed by certain military circles connected with the landed gentry. The military itself treated the local people improperly, although General Haller's men commanded by Colonel Jung were recalled to

49 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 60–69: Report by the Borderland Guard Straży Kresowej from the County of Dubno.

have behaved much better than the domestic troops (those of Greater Poland [Wielkopolska]).

As the county commissariats collected tributes for the absent proprietors, which was against the letter of the Commissioner-General's decisions, conflicts between large and small property owners were exacerbated. The trouble spot was an affair involving the *czynszownik* peasants leasing land and doing no *corvée* for a lord. The landowners leased out, for a second time, the land on which, under the Commissioner-General's law,⁵⁰ the *czynszowniki* were to continually stay. This move led to the exacerbation of the conflict between the *czynszowniki* and the local peasants, as is clearly put in the above-quoted report of Dubno's Borderline Guard.⁵¹

As there was no act or law on *czynszownik* peasants, these settlers were exposed to bearing excessive obligations.⁵² The county authorities interfered with such affairs, tendentiously guarding the interests of one class only. The Borderline Guard could not help much as it was bitterly opposed by the Educational Society, which in turn was supported by military circles associated with the landowning class and by the Gendarmerie, which also had relationships with the landowners.⁵³ The overall confusion and antipathy towards the Commissariat-General in Vilnius were aggravated by the Commissioner-General's currency decrees, the intent behind which was, apparently, to shift the currency transition expenditure to the economically most affluent district of those under his rule. This must have aroused decentralist tendencies in the District of Volhynia. At that particular stage, in contrast with Lithuania and Byelorussia, any form of plebiscite carried out in Volhynia would have most probably ended in defeat for the pro-Polish faction. The Volhynian Association did not consent to have an election carried out of parliamentary members equipped with the right to decide the country's future. The election of delegates of local people to the Warsaw-based Sejm, who

50 Ordinance No. 49 (see fn. 2).

51 This is what Mr Bielajew, proprietor of Mychlin, did. A 'landed citizen' (whose name is not mentioned), the owner of the villages of Hawczyce, Rafałówka, and Aleksandrówka in the Commune of Trościanka, completely ignored the Commissioner-General's instructions and revealed a Denikinian bias, thus winning support from the authorities which repeatedly put gendarmes at his disposal.

52 As he wanted to put things straight about his estate, Mr Rakowski, owner of Boratyń, Commune of Szczurzyn, demanded that his *czynszowniki* provide two days of labour per week per morgue.

53 As in fn. 49.

would hold no powers typical of MPs, was regarded a legitimate option, for a change – for the sake of defending the economic interests.⁵⁴

Relations between the Commissariat-General and the Volhynian districts were not severed. On 5th September 1919, Jerzy Osmołowski received their delegation in Warsaw; the audience was attended by Stanisław Downarowicz, Head of the Administrative Section.⁵⁵ The delegates declared their willingness to see the counties they represented – Łuck, Kowel, and Włodzimierz – integrated into the Kingdom of Poland based on the Kingdom's laws. According to the minutes of the meeting, Osmołowski said, "Everything is being done to bring about the annexation as soon as practicable. This is not only dependent upon Poland: it is necessary that the alien nations confirm it as well. There is a hope that a part of Volhynia will belong to Poland – at least the three counties which had previously been included."⁵⁶

Such a position taken by the Commissioner-General early in September 1919 makes one ask, whose political agenda did he actually implement – the one of the Chief of State or of Roman Dmowski? I suppose that the aforesaid declaration must have provided food for thought to Mr Downarowicz, who assisted with the talks. He was not positive about the idea of a plebiscite in the Eastern Territories. Osmołowski complained about the fact that there was a shortage of appropriate administration staff candidates, and the consequent need to employ 'inappropriate' ones: "Everybody I have talked to has told me that he would rule in the way I demand it, and will never forget he is a landed citizen; and all the same, they all do the opposite of what I expect, and contrary to what the laws allow."⁵⁷ The delegates from Volhynia spoke up for manorial servants to whom their lords showed no gratitude for protecting their estates while away, and instead enforced 'every third sheaf'⁵⁸ and, moreover, charged inflated fees for

54 As in fn. 34.

55 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 1–2: Delegation of the Volhynian Counties received by Jerzy Osmołowski, Commissioner-General, Warsaw, 5th September 1919.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 The controversial 'Third Sheaf Law' was not published in the Official Journal. Article 5 of Ordinance No. 49 of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories merely set down, in terms of the settlement of the relations between owners of land in the Volhynian districts and the leaseholders of these parcels of land (colonists), that if no agreement was entered into, the financial conditions of the most recent contract were to be automatically extended.

the lands whilst at the same time ignoring the orders published in the *Official Journal*.⁵⁹

Nobody volunteered to replace those ZCZW officials and clerks in Volhynia who performed their duties improperly.⁶⁰ The accounts on the free distribution of clothes, a commodity of high value at the time which in this county was carried out in a non-Christian manner, proved to be the last straw: “The clothes were given to those who stood closest to the Commissioner and the priest ... those who [had already] had them, were given [even more], and those who had nothing were given nothing.”⁶¹ The Commissioner-General, having no executive at his disposal, could regretfully only respond with words rather than take any counteraction.

As reported by the delegates, the ‘landed citizens’ ignored the law on *czynszownik* peasants. Worse even, these regulations were ignored by the Commissioners of the Counties of Dubno and Równe, giving the landlords a free hand. The delegates quoted the statements made by Volhynia’s ‘landed citizens’ who “openly said, ‘May the land remain set-aside for 50 years, and we shall not back down: things should be as we want them to be.’” In the opinion of the delegates from the Volhynian counties, ideal order prevailed only in the County of Włodzimierz, which was headed by Tadeusz Krzyżanowski; all the other counties abounded in abuses and irregularities.

On 1st September 1919, an Association of Landowners was set up at the Convention of Volhynian Farmers in Kowel. The Convention resolved that a parcelling-out project be developed, and initiated the relevant action not only locally but also in the territory of the Congress Kingdom. The research question arises: was Volhynia not a cradle of a landlords’ irredentism aimed at preventing the agricultural reform adopted by the Sejm? The issue of Józef Piłsudski’s Eastern policy might have been a ‘secondary’ victim of the battle that was eventually lost by the squirearchy.

59 According to a credible account, one of the ‘landed citizens’ told a delegate that “this article is not for me.” In the aftermath of this exchange of opinions, the delegate (probably Mr Wardak from Łuck County) was called to appear at the county authority, where the Deputy Commissioner of the County of Łuck told him that he had no right to read such articles. Such instructions were particularly painful for someone who was aware of Łuck Commissariat’s underhand economic deals with the Jewish smugglers.

60 The appropriate candidates were busy with their duties in Warsaw or were not willing to move to the Eastern Borderlands.

61 As in fn. 55.

Unfortunately, when anti-Polish sentiments grew in the District of Volhynia, the Commissioner-General's Delegate would not associate them with the failure of the Volhynian District's 'federative' activity but rather with Anton Denikin's actions in the East. The action was certainly an extremely important element, but apart from the military reasons, the response from Polish society mattered even more. According to an account by Bishop Dubowski, who arrived from Żytomierz on 14th September 1919, Denikin's army was welcomed with enormous joy in the areas previously occupied by the Bolsheviks, with an active contribution from Polish owners of demesnes and estates. "The reason behind this fact is Denikin's decrees with economic content, with a strong political emphasis. Respecting the right of private ownership, the decrees determine the land-owning maximum for large proprietors at 1,000 dessiatins, whereas those of the area owners who have industrial establishments on their land may correspondingly increase their possessions by way of acquisition. The proprietorship unit for small owners of land equalled 15 dessiatins. In order for land to be acquired, dedicated estimation commissions have been established, which deal with appraising the value of land earmarked for sale, for all the proprietors, to the basic standard of 1,000 dessiatins ... forests remained private property, without their owned quantity being restricted whatsoever."⁶²

These orders implied an enormous anti-Polish canvassing action among those aspiring to own 15 dessiatins; they perceived Denikin as at least a progressive man, if not a revolutionary. The situation of the Polish administration, which was incapable of submitting a competitive offer, was hampered by 'excesses' of General Haller's army members – mainly in the County of Ostróg, where soldiers of the 1st Riflemen's Division "not only did not withhold or suppress the Bolshevik canvassing, but went as far as propagating it." The commanders exhorted to ignore administrative ordinances, and themselves passed orders regarding administrative matters.⁶³

62 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 99–103: Indicative report for the period from 8th to 14th September 1919, by a Delegate of the Commissioner-General for the District in Kowel, to the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories; Kowel, 15th September 1919.

63 The Commissioner's Delegate for the District of Volhynia was particularly outraged by the order of the Commander of 8th Regiment of Riflemen (Gen. Haller's Division) issued in Russian at Lachowice on 27th August 1919, to the mayor of the Commune of Uniewo, stating that the harvest of a field belongs, in its entirety, to the one who has treated and sown it, regardless of who the land's proprietor is. Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 100: Indicative report ... (as in fn. 62).

The Delegate showed high self-reliance and initiative as he requested the Presidium of the Postal and Telegraphic Management Office in Lublin to open post-and-telegraph offices in Równe, Dubno, Ostróg, and Krzemieniec, and to enlarge the already-functioning offices in Łuck, Kowel, and Włodzimierz Wołyński by providing them with telegraphic stations, of which the Delegate notified the Commissioner-General on a post-factum basis. Nevertheless, the restriction by the Delegate of the communal assembly and council elections, as ordained by the Commissioner-General's rescript of 16th August 1919 – so that they were only carried out in the Counties of Kowel, Łuck, and Włodzimierz, whilst being withheld in the newly-included Równe, Dubno, Ostróg, and Krzemieniec, owing to the uncertainty of the outcome – came out as a de facto act of sabotaging the edicts of the Commissariat-General, which implemented the Chief of State's policies.

On 14th September 1919, a Convention of the Delegates of the Polish Population of the County of Kowel took place, held at the Express theatre auditorium in Kowel, with a total of 334 delegates attending, representing 6,000 inhabitants of the area. The attendees included 200 Poles, 120 Ruthenians, two Czechs, nine Germans, and three Jews. Sitting on the Presidium were the noted citizens of Volhynia: Henryk Orliński, Head of the Borderland Guard for the District of Volhynia, and Jan Dębski, Sejm deputy from Chełm.⁶⁴ The record was drawn up by Edward Strauch, a Borderland Guard instructor.⁶⁵ Twenty-one members were elected to the People's Council of the Council of Kowel.⁶⁶ The incentive behind these steps was the good of Poland, comprehended in this particular way by the incorporationists.

64 Teofil Postkowski from Zielona; Stanisław Malicki, Stara Dąbrowa; Stanisław Śladowski, Zasmyk; Jan Wójcicki, Groszówka; Antoni Burek from Wólka Szczytyńska, Władysław Leszczyński from Osiecznik, and Michał Czwałiński from Zahlusze. Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 147–165: Record of the Convention of the Delegates of the Polish Population of the County of Kowel, 14th September [1919].

65 Ibid.

66 The members included Stanisław Malicki, Piotr Ostaszewski, Jan Szyber, Michał Czwałiński, Daniel Domański, Stanisław Błocki, Stanisław Śladowski, Teofil Pestkowski, Jan Wójcik, Władysław Leszczyński, Marcelli Leśniewski, Ryszard Wesła, Nikodem Terpiłowski, Bolesław Rubinowski, Piotr Jurgielewicz, Antoni Burczak, Jan Koszykowski, Antoni Kuncewicz, Kazimierz Żebrowski, Jakub Daszkiewicz, and Franciszek Kowalewski. (Record entry reference: as in fn. 64.)

The situation in the territory on which Denikin's army operated was not alien to Jan Dębski, MP. The wishes were pronounced at a Sejm assembly "that the rights and freedoms enjoyed by the Polish people behind the Bug [River] be extended to you as soon as possible; that the benefactions of land reform may flow down to the earth: the care about workers and the elderly, and that these rights and freedoms may extend to the Ruthenian people who shall be living with us, as free people among free people, equal among the equal." Interest of the attendees, among whom there were 240 peasants, was aroused also by Dębski's subsequent words, agitating for agrarian reform to be executed through the annexation of Volhynia to Poland. In the optics of Volhynia's individual interests, such an argument was absolutely convincing to non-moneyed classes, as reflected in the resolutions adopted at the Convention. It was resolved to renew the political connections with the Republic of Poland and tighten cultural and economic bonds: the 'magnet' was the freedom-oriented system founded upon the Borderland Guard's governing principle: "The free with the free, the equal with the equal."

Mr Dębski managed to convince the hesitant voters about the benefits yielded by the annexation of Volhynian Land to Poland and, consequently, aligning the administrative authorities' system, arrangements and laws with those officially binding in Poland. It was resolved that agrarian affairs be settled under the principles in force in Poland, by setting up Landed Committees and, for the manorial servants, Mediatory Commissions. Luckily, yet another account on the Convention has survived, which deviates from the Borderland Guard's report. On the following day, 15th September 1919, Kowel County's justice-of-the-peace (probably F. Siewierski) sent a confidential letter to Edmund Iwaszkiewicz, Deputy of the Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories, expressing his private afterthought on the Convention he had attended.⁶⁷

The author considered the Convention to have been premature. He accused the Borderland Guard, "impersonated by young people", that they cherished the illusion of the Ruthenians, and were certain that after the speech [delivered by Dębski] they shall speak in favour of joining Poland. It did not happen so, for "the Ruthenian speakers said, in their regular fashion, that ... as to Poland, they will think the thing over, consult one another, and then present their stance." As per this account, "having realised that it ended in failure, the Guard announced

67 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 117–118 (verso): Confidential letter of [F. Siewierski/Siewierek[?]], Justice-of-the-Peace of the County of Kowel.

to the attendees that this was a Polish meeting with regards to the decisions [on] the matters concerning the Poles, whereas the Ruthenians have been invited in the capacity of guests.”⁶⁸

This altered the key idea behind the Convention, but indeed provided a way out of a tricky situation. Polish peasants came to the Guard’s aid: they managed to persuade the Ukrainians (‘Ruthenians’) that if they postponed the decision, the supply of grains for sowing would be delayed. The Ukrainian (‘Rus’sian’) peasants picked out six men of their team, whose presence was meant to testify the group’s support for the Convention’s resolutions. This fact did not convince the letter’s author that the Ruthenians’ intentions were genuine. He interpreted it as a temporary tactical move and expressed his conviction that while Ukrainian (‘Ruthenian’) peasants were longing for the tsar, intellectuals were missing Ukraine, whereas Poland was merely treated instrumentally – likely in retaliation for the seized *tserkovs*, as the news spread across villages by Orthodox popes had it.⁶⁹ This analysis of the situation seems quite authoritative in recognising the Polish evaluation of the period’s situation in Volhynia.

On 26th September 1919, the Commissioner-General was visited in Warsaw by a delegation of three Volhynian counties: Łuck, Kowel (delegates of the People’s Council), and Włodzimierz, who requested that these areas be annexed to Poland along with all the democratic laws and systemic arrangements established in them.⁷⁰ The delegates touched upon four matters, all of great importance to Volhynia as an agriculture-dominated region. Along with manorial

68 Ibid.

69 “The large landed proprietorships will never achieve a productivity equal to that achieved by the smaller proprietorships and cultivated by peasants ... the war has demonstrated that it is the peasants that are attached to the land the most – the land-owners and the fabricants had fled ... The Sejm has opened the Land Subdivision Bank, Landed Offices are being formed ... peasants are joining the landed Committees ... in Volhynia, the lot of the *czynszowniks* resembles the villeinage era. Should Volhynia conjoin its fortunes with Poland, then all of the Sejm deputies shall support the Volhynian deputies with regards to the *czynszowniks*, [thus ensuring] the Government’s control and custody in the form of Adjudicative Committees, over the labour and living conditions of the manorial servants ... Custody of the jobless has established the Health Funds, accident insurances ... in the Sejm, only a small handful of land-owners [is represented], and it is not down to them to resolve in respect of these important matters, but the peasants and the workers instead.” Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 117–118 (verte).

70 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 110–116: To Mr. Jerzy Osmołowski, Commissioner-General of the Eastern Territories.

servants, leaseholder colonists formed a prevalent part of the conscious Polish element in Volhynia, themselves possessing no land. Their leasehold contracts had expired long before then. The resolution of the Commissariat-General of the Eastern Territories concerning this particular occupational group was only announced in the County of Włodzimierz, the exemplarily managed area. No other county published the resolution as the *Starosts* believed it was potentially too controversial. The situation was growing even more complex owing to the disputes between the leaseholders returning to their residences from before the wartime evacuation and the proprietors of estates who had rented out the concerned lands for the second time. On top of that, conflicts arose between the forcibly evacuated renters, who had settled (against their will) on desolate land, and the owners of land who, once returned, voiced their excessive financial claims against those people, who lived in very challenging conditions. In the Counties of Łuck and Włodzimierz, these disagreements tended to turn into class and ethnical riots. The situation of farm servants was disastrous. With no help from the proprietors, they managed to survive the Petliura-men and Bolsheviks, protecting the property and belongings of their landlords-and-landladies. To survive, they sowed but minimal scraps of land. Once back in their residences, the owners of estates and demesnes decided to win back their losses mostly at the expense of those whom they owed custody, at least, if not gratitude. They demanded that their former servants pay them rent for the accommodation, which soon brought them to ruin.⁷¹

Yet another source of conflict was the brutal enforcement by the Gendarmerie of the Third Sheaf Law, which ruined farm servants and leaseholder colonists; Ordinance No. 49, published in the *Official Journal*, could not protect them as the county commissariats kept it hidden.⁷²

Commissioners instructed the Gendarmerie to extort the 'dues' by force, on behalf of the absent owners, although no right to a 'third sheaf' was vested in them. This complicated manipulation immensely exacerbated the relations

71 Princess Maria Lubomirska from Ławrów, Commune of Czarnków, County of Łuck, had 20 families thrown out onto the street, with all formalities observed. She was actively supported in this by the Commissariat of Łuck. According to A. Zalewski, BG instructor, it was her and Waclaw Popiel (the Popiel & Count von Meck company) who in July 1919 travelled to Warsaw to demand, on behalf of local landlords, that the Guard's actions in Volhynia be instantly discontinued. Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 43–55: Report of the Borderland Guard from the County of Łuck for 11th July to 11th September 1919.

72 See fn. 2.

between the manor and the village, which in turn had an adverse bearing on ethnic/national relations. A delegation from the Counties of Włodzimierz, Kowel, and Łuck quoted once again the instances of abuse in the last of the mentioned Counties, which was administered by 'landed citizens' only. According to a report signed in hand by 17 Volhynian delegates, the county's managerial team scandalously sabotaged the ZCZW's policies.⁷³

Commissioner Stanisław Łada-Łobarzewski of Równe, which they mentioned as an exemplary case, who fairly deserved criticism for failing to supervise his subordinates⁷⁴ and making sure that the Third Sheaf Law was published together with the law on leaseholder colonists,⁷⁵ was criticised by the 17 delegates for a step that in fact marked his loyalty to the federalist policy; namely, his refusal to support the 13th June celebration, which was the 350th anniversary of Volhynia's annexation to Poland. The delegation were legitimately outraged, for a change, by the conduct of the Deputy Commissioner of the County of Łuck, Mr Galik, who barred Eugeniusz Strobel from Skurcz, a member of the county's delegation, from reading out to the people the law on leaseholder colonists, published in the *Journal of Ordinances*. Galik reportedly told Adam Wachowski of Dąbrowa, another petition signatory from the Łuck County delegation, that the law on leaseholder colonists was invalid. It was matter-of-factly an outrageous undermining of the Commissioner-General's authority.

In his secret memo of 20th October 1919, Captain Kwaśniewski of the General Staff notified the ZCZW that the administration of the Counties of Równe, Dubno, and Krzemieniec was almost exclusively composed of locals who used

73 On behalf of the People's Council of the County of Kowel: Edward Strauch, Marcei Leśniewski, 'Riszard Wrla' [Ryszard Wesła], Władysław Leszczyński, Stanisław Śladowski, Stanisław Malicki, Bolesław Rubinowski; for the County of Łuck: Feliks Baranowski, T. Wardach, Adam Baxobskij [Wachowski], [XXX – name unknown], Eugeniusz Strobel, Antoni Szelągowski; for the County of powiatu Włodzimierz: Franciszek Kogucik, Jan Twardowski. Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 110–116.

74 Stanisław Łada-Łobarzewski, the county's commissioner, was a 'landed citizen' in the County of Kowel; his deputy Kamil Pourbaix, Łuck County's 'landed citizen', caused serious agrarian problems in his estates in Horod[zi]ec. Galik, the other deputy of the Łuck County Commissioner, was a 'landed citizen' in the County of Dubno, involved in an agrarian problem in his Chałupy estate. The office's head was also a 'landed citizen', as well all the section clerks. The heads of three circuits were steward of landowners' demesnes situated in the circuits where they did their service.

75 The initiative to have a celebration was proposed by General Bernard, Commander of 1st Division of General Haller's army.

their positions to settle personal scores; therefore, anti-Polish canvassing proved repeatedly successful. "The local people would be glad to see the Polish administration as representatives of order, but, seeing their shortcomings, they show apparent sympathy for the alien elements, so the numerous Russian or Bolshevik canvassers bustling about the place can find fertile ground for their activity."⁷⁶ Day by day, the prevalence of this diminished the possibility to meet the target set upon the establishment of the ZCZW.

In October, news reached the Commissariat-General in Vilnius about Jan Dębski's address delivered at the convention in Kowel. A conference was held on 5th October, attended by Jan Dębski (MP), Commissioner Osmołowski, Major Krzaczyński, as well as Mieczysław Niedziałkowski, Witold Kamieniecki, Dr Hipolit Harniewicz, Leopold Skulski (MP), the Rev. Stanisław Maciejewicz, Fr. Turnau, Prince Czetwertyński, Adam Cieśla (MP), and Messrs Zagórski, Pułaski, and Porębski. The slips of paper on which Osmołowski took down his notes on the session are now extant.⁷⁷

Mr Niedziałkowski stated that, to his mind, the Commissioner-General's legal-and-political situation was unstable and undetermined. But he was not right: in that respect, the Commissioner's position was quite clear (although not the most beneficial possible) as of 5th October 1919, and it was only a week before he left the High Command of the Polish Army. Niedziałkowski postulated that a ministry be set up in charge of the Eastern Territories, which would be responsible to the Sejm, by renaming the Commissariat-General's ministry. He thus showed his complete lack of understanding for the ZCZW's objectives; otherwise, he might have opposed Piłsudski's Eastern policies despite being a member of PPS – the party that formally supported Piłsudski. The suggestion put forth by Leopold Skulski (who, as mentioned, headed the new Cabinet from 14th December 1919) to have the ZCZW-ruled area divided into larger administrative units,⁷⁸ in view of the expected lot of the Eastern Territories, offers some

76 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 104: Political relations in Volhynia. ND WR General Staff, No. 50 795/ IV, Warsaw, 20th October 1919. Secret. Submitted at the High Command's branch office in Warsaw on 27th October, the memo was received in Kowel on 4th November 1919.

77 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 169–178.

78 As of 5th October 1919, the District of Vilnius encompassed 51,340 sq. km, with a population of 2,518,000; the Brest District equalled 53,000 sq. km; the Minsk District, 45,000 sq. km, both having a population of 1,600,000. The District of Volhynia had 40,000 sq. km, population 2,300,000. Given the economic and transportation/traffic situation, creating even larger units would have been unworkable.

space for far-reaching considerations. Let us note that, in line with this advice, Osmołowski endeavoured to split his subordinate territory in January 1920 into two districts, along with the German-Russian trench borderline. Fr. Maciejewicz identified the following adverse phenomena: the Commander-in-Chief's proclamation, the activity of the *Nasz Kraj* periodical, the formation of a Byelorussian army, and relations with the Lithuanian Government. In parallel, he considered incorporation an optimum option for Poland. Fr. Turnau supported him and additionally proposed that Byelorussian and Lithuanian activists be displaced as far westwards as possible. Jan Dębski considered the *czynszownik* peasants' issue a priority. He ascertained that Volhynia's Commissariat had not supported the Russian educational system, which he did not reprove. Dębski suggested that a pay increase be offered to those Polish teachers who contributed to reinforcing the Polish element in the lands concerned, and suggested that the school and education system be subordinated to the Ministry of Education, which was clearly tantamount to opting for incorporating these lands into Poland. He pointed out that the landlords who took offices in Volhynia in collaboration with the Gendarmerie had prevented the establishment of adjudicative or agreement committees, although the local people had demanded their formation. Additionally, he was right in considering that entrusting the fulfilment of such postulates to the involved administration, rather than a professional one, was a severe error. The administration of Volhynia took advantage of the right granted to it to set up agrarian committees, but did not make use of it on a programme-related basis. It was a mistake by Osmołowski that he did not enjoin that such committees be set up obligatorily; such was the consequence of negligence or premeditation of the Commissariat's Legislative Department and the policy of the Section of Volhynia reporting, as part of the Commissariat-General of the Eastern Territories, to the Commissioner-General in respect of the affairs of the land concerned. "I order that the officials Lasota, Galik, Pourbaix, and Łobarzewski be suspended in their duties, with their salaries put on hold, effective 1st November – J.O." Osmołowski wrote in a side note to Maciej Jamontt.⁷⁹

79 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 169–178. The latter name was crossed out in the list of the dismissed. Excerpt from an undated and unsigned handwritten letter written by (as I suppose) Marian Świechowski to Czesław [Krupski]: "[The land-owners of Volhynia] have grown outraged at the expulsion of Galik and Pourbaix without them having been consulted, and they ascertain that it is their interest that Mr Łobarzewski retain his office, as he has firmly stood on guard of, primarily, the land-owners' interests, and now, for the very sake of it, he is supposed to be removed"; [incipit:] "Dear Czesław (*Panie Czesławie...*)"

Soon afterwards, the Commissioner-General, heads of the Sections, the Branch Office in Warsaw, and the Deputy Commissioner-General with the active army, along with the Headquarters of the Volhynian and Galician Fronts, received an order signed by Maciej Jamontt, formerly Head of the Brest District, who – now as a newly-appointed Head of the District of Volhynia – had a new team of officials and clerks hired for District Commissariat purposes.⁸⁰

Jamontt charged his staff with personal accountability for the summary preparation of the layout of the District Office's organisational chart; apparently, no such layout had been in place before then. The county commissioners, the Revenue Office, and the Board of State Properties and Forests were bound to submit weekly reports by telephone or telegraph. A convention of all the county commissioners⁸¹ was ordained to be held on 19th October

Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 153–155. In his 24th October 1919 letter to J. Osmołowski, the same author, Świechowski, described the activities of Stanisława Łada-Łobarzewski as 'criminal', and postulated – “for the sake of keeping-up the prestige of the Polish authorities, and overall, the Polish cause in Volhynia” – that “all the team members (Pourbaix, Galik, and Łobarzewski) be forthwith suspended, and an investigative commission established.” Pourbaix had organised punitive expeditions and torment sessions, collected contributions for timber and wood that had once been dispensed, and sold the peasants' cows at less than their full value to Jews. He threatened the others with incineration and deliberately inflated the authority of the supreme authorities by withholding the performance of Commissioner-General's ordinances. Moreover, he represented in public that the Commissioner-Generals could be taken to court on account of his decrees. Galik forbade the reading out of the Commissioner-General's ordinances received by telegraph to the county office on 10th October. Łada-Łobarzewski not only tolerated the situation but also himself hid the Commissioner-General's decrees he found displeasing, and stayed in office despite having been suspended in his duties. Cf. M. Świechowski, “To Mr. Commissioner-General ...” (*Do Pana Komisarza Generalnego...*), *ibid.*, c. 163–164.

- 80 Mr Boniecki was appointed Maciej Jamontt's deputy; Stanisław Rzewuski as temporary inspector for administration; Waclaw Iszora as Senior Officer [*starszy referent*] with the Inspectorate of Administration; Bronisław Jamontt as Registrar with the District Archive; Witold Świackiewicz as clerk in charge of orders/commissions; Jan Łunkiewicz as clerk for economic affairs; Konstanty Olesza as Office Secretary at the District Office; and Ms Józefa Dubiecka was made Senior Office Clerk [*starsza kancelistka*]. Local forces were used as far as possible. Kazimierz Kleczyński, Deputy Commissioner for the County of Ostróg, was temporarily seconded as a District Controller; Józef Kmita was employed with the Inspectorate of Administration.
- 81 The Commissioners were in charge of the Counties of Kowel, Łuck, Ostróg, Dubno, Włodzimierz, Zwiahel, Krzemieniec, Równe, and Zasław.

1919;⁸² it was moreover resolved that courier messengers would be dispatched to Vilnius on a weekly basis.

A total of eight inspectorates were active in the District of Volhynia, including those in charge of Administration, Police, Sanitary matters, Technical matters, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, and Education. Apart from the district office in Kowel, there functioned the Staging-Area District Headquarters, Staging-Area District Gendarmerie, Fiscal Chamber, local inspectorates of the War Spoils Commission and of the War Loss Records.⁸³ Daily Order No. 2, dated 21st October 1919 and signed by the Head of the District of Volhynia, expressly testifies to how resilient the Jamontt administration was.⁸⁴

A promising perspective emerged of getting the ZCZW Volhynia's business in order, all the more that the attitude of non-landowning people to the Commissioner-General was still very sympathetic, as is attested to by the beginning of a letter written on 10th October 1919, in Równe, to "Mr Commissioner, respected by the people."⁸⁵ The authors expressed their understanding for Osmołowski's efforts: "Since you are not a God, you have no ability to know

82 On this day, the inspector for administration was to hand to the Commissioners the county administration charts as well as the rules-and-regulations for the County Office, the Regional Office, and the Communal Office.

83 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1773/5/VII, c. 2: [seal:] 'the High Command of the Polish Army [-] the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories [-] the Head of the District of Volhynia' [the crowned Eagle {national emblem of the Republic of Poland}] [-] Order. Table of contents: Business trips of the District Head; Distribution of tasks between the District Head and his Deputies' [Boniecki was responsible for the Departments of Administration, Self-Government, Veterinary Medicine, Technical matters, Agriculture, Schools, and Finance; Smólski was in charge of the office, the Department of Nationalities, and the Inspectorates of Sanitary matters, Industry and Commerce, and War Losses.] Office hours of the Head Office hours in the District, etc., etc. Among the appointments, Jan Berezowski is mentioned as *Starost* of the County of Równe from 1st October 1919. Cf. *ibid.*, ZCZW, No. 1773/16/7, c. 1-2.

84 "[The land-owners of Volhynia] are, in turn, delighted with Jamont[t]. In their opinion, he is a strong-handed man – so much did he appeal to them; he is entirely just one of them, a local." Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 153-155; based on a handwritten, unsigned letter from, I suppose, Marian Świechowski to Czesław [Krupski]; [incipit:] 'Dear Czesław ... (*Panie Czesławie...*)'.

85 *Ibid.*, c. 148-148 (verso), [incipit:] 'Mr. Commissioner, respected by the people' (*Szanowany przez lud Panie Komisarzu ...*), 10th October 1919, Równe; signed by: /-/ Zawrocki, /-/ J. Mroczkowski, /-/ Kazimirski /-/ W. Wonsowski I-I Maciej Jankowski I-I Krot.

each one of your functionaries; you have entrusted the administration to Mr Boniecki, with a disappointing outcome.” Expecting new appointments to come, they decided to warn Osmołowski against hiring the men who proved to be inappropriate, in their common opinion.⁸⁶

Therefore, the ‘Memorial regarding the situation in Volhynia, the tasks of the administration and the Borderland Guard’,⁸⁷ compiled in Kowel on 18th October 1919 by Antoni Zalewski, Borderland Guard Instructor for the County of Łuck, and submitted to Maciej Jamontt, the new Head of the District of Volhynia, simply confirmed the facts of which the Commissariat-General had already been aware. This was to no detriment of its value to a research historian. It seems that both the memorial in question and its counterpart compiled on its basis by Tadeusz Jankowski at the Warsaw-based Borderland Guard’s Organisational Department⁸⁸ were meant not quite to inform the ZCZW of the situation in Volhynia, but rather to help determine common grounds for communication between the Borderland Guard and the new head of the district, who was reluctant towards the Guard. This hypothesis is confirmed based on the passages in the memorial that clearly refer to the necessity to settle the border with Russia and to the preclusion of any potential action enabling the people to speak for their

86 As per the source in question, Jan Berezowski, Commissioner of Równe, dealt in Kowel with tobacco profiteering from when the Polish Army entered the town. He was commonly regarded as a reveller, card-sharp, a “man who was ready to walk down the dirtiest path of life in exchange for a Rouble.” In Równe he made a fortune trading ‘through merchants’, and owed his job backed by Fr. Sznarbachowski, who became friends with Mr Boniecki at the balls given by local landlords. Jan’s brother, an investigating magistrate in Kowel, was a very influential person, “for he has turned his office into a hostelry and a place of carousals for the citizens, whereas the culprits would wait long weeks and months till they could be heard. Now, he has hired a Russian named Bernasovsky to be his associate – a man without a determined face: as a Russian, an enemy of Polishness; he, quite naturally, a Russophile.” Yet another inappropriate candidate was a senior militiaman from Żytomierz, “a former fiacre and commonly ill-famed as a ruffian. The Dubno Commissioner, Iwaniecki, became rich, in turn, by residing at the cattle-drive point in Słobodyszcze, and made a name for himself in the society as a dangerous racketeer.” Based on the same record, Mr Boniecki’s clearance clerk, a wholly ill-mannered man, would be very suitable for a caretaker or a doorkeeper, as he could neither read nor write. The officials Lasota, Jaworski, etc., were as well considered inappropriate with the replaced staff.

87 The Zalewski *Memorial* is published as Annex No. 13 in Gierowska-Kałaŭ, *Straż Kresowa*, pp. 103–106.

88 The memorial by T. Jankowskiego is published as Annex No. 14 in Gierowska-Kałaŭ, *Straż Kresowa*, pp. 109–114.

cause, as it would inevitably make even the Russified Poles opt against Poland. An analysis of the situation in Volhynia incited Zalewski to ascertain that the Russian rule in Volhynia had attained its goals, whereas the landed gentry, caring about their estates, had caused that the masses perceived Polishness as synonymous to a 'lordly' rule, which, in effect, indisposed them towards Poland. Thus, Zalewski suggested that – given the impossibility of holding an election for the communal and rural self-government bodies – the People's Councils, organised by the Borderland Guard, be turned into a surrogate of self-government, or local government, and that advantage be taken of participation in these Councils by delegates from the other nations. One of the ZCZW's primary tasks was to persuade the masses that Poland would keep the promises of forming agrarian committees and issuing protective laws on manorial servants, where adjudicative or conciliation commissions would be set up. For the sake of Poland's *raison d'état*, changes in staffing were absolutely indispensable, and specified individuals ought to be formally blamed for all the previously-unfulfilled promises. To Zalewski's mind, the administrative authority should have been based on the most nationally cognisant colonists, leaseholders, and petty nobles.

The tactics proposed by the Borderland Guard had so far stood in glaring contradiction to the interests of the property-holding and moneyed 'citizens'. The phrases of the memorial by Jankowski must have given this particular group food for thought, though. A change in social relations was the Borderland Guard's leading idea. The Guard made use of the Vilnius Proclamation's arguments and support from Piłsudski in order to gain funding and reinforce its own authority. No thought was given to the question of whether agrarian or social reform would be carried out in the federated or incorporated lands. And yet, the Guard received its permanent subsidies and loans owing to this declaration clearly worded by Teofil Szopa and Zdzisław Lechicki: "The Guard is becoming an organisation of the Eastern-Borderland society, one in which the Polish Republic's Eastern policy, commenced by the Chief-of-State's Proclamation of Vilnius, will gain a stable footing."⁸⁹

In the County of Włodzimierz, even the clergy came round to cooperating with the Borderland Guard. Such a thing, incidentally, would have been inconceivable in the County of Kowel, where the clergy, resolutely hostile towards the Guard, mostly supported the Executive Committee in Ruthenia.⁹⁰

89 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1592, c. 27–35.

90 *Ibid.*, No. 1681, c. 34–37: Report of the County of Kowel for 5th December 1919 to 15th January 1920.

As I suppose, the ‘citizens’ attitudes towards the Guard must have been repeatedly informed by political and social aspects or opinions that were represented by the actual emissary in the actual county. After the reshuffle in the District of Volhynia on 5th October and before the launch of the press campaign on 3rd November, a meeting of the Volhynian Association was held – probably in the third week of October⁹¹ – in Czapski’s apartment. From an unsigned handwritten letter written by (as can be guessed from the handwriting) Marian Świechowski to, logically enough, Czesław Krupski, Head of the Commissariat-General’s Department of the Nationalities and the Press, an extremely sophisticated scheme looms.⁹² “The thing is, they are seeking to excrete the affairs of Volhynia into a separate whole, and therefore propose to create a separate and independent Ministry for the Eastern Borderland ([which is] tantamount to incorporation), with two Undersecretaries of State affiliated to it: one for Lithuania and White Russia [i.e. Byelorussia] and the other for Volhynia. ... They have nothing against Osmołowski himself: what they say is, he is good-willed and best-willed a man – but there [in Vilnius], he is entangled by those surrounding him, who have made him their slave and rendered him dependent upon various shady scandals that those around him are dealing in. So, for instance, Mr Osmołowski would let Volhynia’s affairs be singled out – [pointing to] Dębski having implicated him into the forest fuss he is running there, and this is why Osmołowski cannot accede to their stance, as all this would come out.”⁹³

The attendees finally resolved to commence a strong press campaign against Dębski and his ‘scandals’, accentuating in parallel the inefficiency of Osmołowski’s administration. Świechowski noted down the outstanding activity of Princess Lubomirska and Count Potocki in this respect.⁹⁴

91 To be more specific, after Dębski’s speech at the convention in Kowel, and prior to the expiry of Paderewski’s term-of-office on 27th November. Count Józef Potocki sought in vain, for more than a week, to be received by Paderewski; then, the audience was being ‘worked out’ via the beautiful Helena [Paderewski’s spouse], as initiated by Ms Lubomirska. I suppose that it was the third week of October on a Friday, for certain. Cf. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 68–73: On the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. Association of Poles of the Volhynian Land, No. 55508/IV.

92 Ibid., c. 153–155: Excerpt from an undated, unsigned handwritten letter by (I suppose) Marian Świechowski to Czesław [Krupski]; [incipit] ‘Dear Czesław (*Panie Czesławie...*)’.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

The action was launched according to the adopted plan and systematically. *Gazeta Poranna* of 3rd November 1919 announced that a “Delegation of the Volhynian Association of Landowners’ had requested the Chief-of-State to free Volhynia from interventions by Commissioner-General Osmołowski. The Chief-of-State impledged to reconsider the request.” *Przegląd Wieczorny* of 4th November 1919 announced that the Presidium of the Association of the Volhynian People, impersonated by Czacki and Starczewski, took a position with respect to the state borders, thus addressing a fundamental issue. However, if the federative concept was to gain the upper hand, it was not a primary question; with the incorporation idea, it was a burning one. Such was the assumption made by Roman Dmowski in February/March 1919. The same is true for the Vilnius Committee, which feverishly sought support from everybody – except the Chief of the State of Poland. In the opinion of the Association of Poles of the Volhynian Land,⁹⁵ the activity of the commissioners in Volhynia had been paralysed by the ‘Central Board’ (Commissariat-General), which was sending hindering or defective decrees. (The ‘defective’ ones certainly concerned the settling of agrarian issues, and these particular edicts were hidden from the peasants.). According to the Volhynian Association, these decrees negatively affected local relations. The ‘Central Board’ in Vilnius was moreover accused of selecting inappropriate persons to run for the official county posts. While this charge was certainly apt, the Association would have surely regarded Tadeusz Krzyżanowski, Commissioner of Włodzimierz County and a man of ‘radical’ bias as an inappropriate candidacy. I would personally highlight Messrs Pourbaix, Galik, Łada-Łobarzewski, and some other men who enjoyed the Association’s support.

One cannot disagree with the charges put forth against the Volhynian district administration. However, it was not the ‘Board in Vilnius’ but rather the local district management that should be blamed. Either the Commissioner-General had selected a wrong head of the district, or he had been deceived. Each of the counties dealt with a different situation: somewhere, the commissioner published proclamations to the people in Polish and Ukrainian; elsewhere, the local commissioner would announce a completely different thing – in Polish and Russian, for a change; somewhere else, no proclamation was issued; somewhere else still, an official sent over in lieu of the commissioner would advertise that the laws binding in the Congress Kingdom were to remain in force, and all the landowners might resume their possessions pared down. Once Osmołowski found

95 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 68–73 (as in fn. 91) [a duplicate].

out what was actually happening, he did some reshuffling in the staff, which took time to complete. In the Districts of Vilnius, Brześć Litewski, and Minsk, the Commissioner-General had become aware of what was on more precisely and, above all, sooner. He could confront the reports received from his county commissioners against those produced in two mutually independent sources: the ZCZW recruitment agents and the Borderland Guard emissaries (the latter reports were sent to his attention by the ZCZW's Organisational Department). In the area of Volhynia, the Conscription-and-Enlistment Inspectorate was practically not in operation and it took some time before the Guard's reports were received. The people in Volhynia openly stated that they found Warsaw much closer to them than Vilnius, and so they would send letters to the Commissioner-General via the Branch Office. Once the information was received, Osmołowski did intervene – either in person or by establishing his personal delegate (not all of them were loyal to him, though), or dismissing the disloyal county officials, which was preceded by disciplinary proceedings. The reasons behind the deficient functioning of Polish political life across the Eastern Borderland territory were identified by the landowners in the fact that Osmołowski refused to approve projects or drafts prompted to him by the 'citizens'. He was incriminated for preparing land-and-mortgage regulations in as late as the autumn. Given this context, the argument written down much earlier by Stanisław Łada-Łobarzewski, the Równe Commissioner, appears incomprehensible: "The *Starosty* of Równe contains the offices of its 12 Departments of labour of the Civil Authority, along with the laboratories, farming depots, post-offices and stables in the building being mortgaged property of the Civil Administration of the County of Równe, whilst it works in its own building."⁹⁶

The accusation targeted at Jerzy Osmołowski of "failing to live to see the agrarian committees or land-subdivision regulations" sounded unjust. The initiative in this respect was on the part of county commissioners. Why did the Volhynian Association members not simply gain employment with the Agricultural Departments once they had joined the People's Councils on a voluntary basis, and present their own projects/drafts? Or, perhaps, such projects had been developed but by no means did they fit the "The free with the free, the equal with the equal" policy – and this is why the 'Civil Administration in Vilnius' endeavoured to withhold the Volhynian District operations under the pretext of delays ensuing from what reportedly was a 'mess'? One argument behind such a scenario might be the emotional excerpt from a memorial: "And this is how

96 Ibid., c. 105: Memo to General Listowski, Esquire [undated; a duplicate].

the Polish cause is perishing in Volhynia, resulting from the disorder prevailing in the Central Administration of the Eastern Territories. This is the last moment to sound the alarm and separate the administration of Volhynia from the Administration for the Lands of the former G.[rand] D.[uchy of] Lithuania.”

The Commissariat-General was an arena of behind-the-scenes games between the followers of the opposing concepts of how to resolve the problem of the Eastern Territories. Education and the school system was an example of the conflicts occurring across the area subject to the ZCZW's management; the problem is dealt with in Chapter VII. Volhynia could also see the consequences of these conflicts. One of the first appointments in the Volhynian counties' administration went in July 1919 to Bolesław Zajączkowski, school inspector and a follower of the National Democracy camp (an *'endek'*, in colloquial Polish). August 1919 saw appointments of school inspectors for the County of Łuck (Witold Wadowski)⁹⁷ and Włodzimierz (Zygmunt Herman).⁹⁸ Zajączkowski⁹⁹ was relocated to Vilnius (possibly to join the Section for the District of Volhynia) within the Commissariat-General. Later, after a period of stagnation during which one teacher-instructor was appointed in Kowel (Ludwik Semkowicz),¹⁰⁰ Zajączkowski was reinstated, at the end of November, as School Inspector for the County of Volhynia. Almost at the same time, a school inspector was appointed for the Counties of Dubno (Jan Siciński)¹⁰¹ and Krzemieniec (Dr Zygmunt Kostkiewicz).¹⁰²

The County of Łuck received its school inspector, Tadeusz Toczyski, as late as 10th January 1920.¹⁰³ He instantly began to fill the posts with teachers from Galicia (mostly of a National Democratic orientation) and threatened that the local element would be removed. His behaviour towards the teachers cooperating with

97 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, Yr. I, No. 13, 25th August 1919, I, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

98 Ibid.

99 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 36, 29th November 1919, II, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

100 D.U. ZCZW ND WP, Yr. I, No. 20, 1st October 1919, I, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

101 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. I, No. 35, 27th November 1919, I, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

102 Ibid., Yr. I, No. 42, 12th December 1919, I, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

103 Ibid., Yr. II, No. 2, 10th January 1920, II, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

the Borderland Guard was very upsetting; the Guard was commonly regarded as the body implementing the policy heralded by the Vilnius Proclamation.¹⁰⁴ Once Volhynia was detached, the structure of Kowel's District School Inspectorate started expanding to the extent that an office manager had to be hired (Stanisław Gindrych).¹⁰⁵

The human resource policy of the mass replacement of teachers during the school year, conducted by the School Inspectorate, might have resulted from a substantive incompetence – which is unlikely, taking into account the teaching experience in this particular part of what had been Poland-Lithuania – or from the people employed there having been focused on non-statutory objectives. As a result, those teachers who supported the Chief of State's policy quit their engagements as one body. It is also possible that at the beginning of the school year, a fierce battle occurred in the Commissariat-General over the form of the school and educational system in all of the ZCZW-ruled lands. Were the schools supposed to draw from the linguistic and, consequently, cultural diversity of the societies they served, or instead to Polish the pupils and students? In a nutshell: a federation or incorporation?

The inefficiency of the School Department was blatant: by January 1920, halfway through the school year, no school programme had been prepared. The phenomenon was accompanied by a decline in the activity of the Polish Educational Society (which in the County of Włodzimierz was chaired, surprisingly enough, by the Commissioner himself, Tadeusz Krzyżanowski), with its professional pedagogical forces. However, community service on a voluntary basis is something one cannot be forced to do. Discouraged by the games going on among top-level politicians, teachers looked for (unless dismissed) better-paid posts that would give them a better living and fulfilment of their vocational potential. Nevertheless, the number of schools reached 97, made up of 63 Polish, 31 Ukrainian, two Jewish, and one German, with only two Russian schools having been closed down. The teaching personnel included 89 Poles, 36 Ukrainians, four Jews, and one German.¹⁰⁶

104 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 82–83: Report of the County of Łuck for 11th February to 11th March 1920.

105 D.U. ZCZW, Yr. II, No. 10 (54), 12th February 1920, II, [column:] 'Officials: appointments, vacancies, replacements'.

106 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 118–125: Report of the County of Włodzimierz for 7th December 1919 to 12th January 1920; *ibid.*, c. 123–125 (addendum to the report).

The development of the entire school system in the District of Volhynia – despite the adverse conditions – attests to the fact that education was a particular focus of the local authorities. The political views of both the inspectors and representatives of social organisations that had earlier organised educational institutions spontaneously, seemed to have an influence on the situation of the schools and the way they were organised. The reappointment of Bolesław Zajączkowski indicates that the national camp triumphed in this foray (which no doubt took place).

After Zajączkowski's return to Volhynia, from 9th December 1919 onwards, a People's University functioned in Włodzimierz Wołyński at 9 Katedralna Street, established by the Borderland Guard, so hated by the district school inspector. However, the school developed poorly as the students were only soldiers as well as Jews and Ukrainians ('Ruthenians'). In the County of Włodzimierz, the Guard developed an educational activity alternative to that organised by the Administration. The setting up of six Youth Clubs in January 1920 involving a total of 118 members also goes to its credit.¹⁰⁷

The teachers' deplorable financial condition led them to establishing a Teachers' Trade Union, run by Messrs Piecuch and Behm. The commissioner and a representative of the Borderland Guard showed their understanding of this group's needs, subsidising those who functioned under such tough material conditions with 50 Marks each. This very thoughtful gesture did not conciliate Mr Herman, the school inspector who overtly protested to the Guard and continued his slander and insinuation policy against this Polish organisation and Commissioner Krzyżanowski personally.¹⁰⁸ The County of Łuck witnessed similar developments.

I identify the reasons behind this state-of-affairs in terms of the fight between the different conceptions of the Eastern Territories' lot among the Commissariat-General's workers. After all, the changes in the district entailed no reshuffling in the counties' staff. Instead, they had a notable bearing on the intensifying sense of confusion among all those to whom it fell the lot to function there and then, among the contradictory signals from those in power.

107 The chairmen and membership: Włodzimierz (30 members) – Ignacy Sadowski; Uściług (25) – Ignacy Rozmysłowicz, Rudnia, Commune of Werba (13) – Adam Jończyk; Marjanówka, Commune of Werba (17) – Kozłowski, Hohoryn (8) – Mr Łuszkiewicz, Radowicze, Commune of Werba (25) – Mr Dańczuk.

108 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 126–129: Report of the County of Włodzimierz for 11th January to 11th February 1920; Report of the County of Włodzimierz for 2nd February to 9th March 1920; *ibid.*, c. 130–132.

The Łuck County Inspector continued to fill the posts with Galician teachers, most of whom were backers of National Democracy and threatened that he would remove the local element – those who favoured the Borderland Guard and Ukrainians ('Ruthenians'). He also started organising a teachers' association separate from the one functioning in Włodzimierz County. Such a move, contrary to the real interests of this professional group, can be explained in terms of his will to weaken the 'competitors' associated with the Borderland Guard.¹⁰⁹

Toczyski's next step was to dismiss Zajączkowski in March 1920 and replace him with Rytller, a PPS member – a change that did not affect the work in the counties. Education matters were still decided by the same county inspectors who used to this end the (aforementioned) teachers reporting to them. The Borderland Guard dealt with other areas apart from education. The Machinery Rings' Association, chaired by Wojciech Skaczkowski, was joined by some 350 people belonging to a total of 21 such rings, organised by Mr Gulbin, an instructor with the Borderland Guard.¹¹⁰

There were some 20 cooperatives active in the county, organised into the County Association of Consumers, presided over by Mr Spicera. Ludwik Mościcki, Krzyżanowski's deputy, headed the Agricultural Merchant Syndicate. Economic activity, well organised by the Borderland Guard, and the efficient administration meant that groups of Ukrainians ('Ruthenians'), even if 'programmatically' ill-disposed towards Poland, actively took part in the work: they would select individuals ready to compromise so that collaboration with the Poles could go on. As commune heads (*wójt*s) were subject to appointment, there was a need to build at least a surrogate of self-government. The initiative was put forth by Mr Zagórski, manager of the Self-Government Department affiliated

109 Ibid., c. 82–83: Report of the County of Łuck for 11th February–11th March 1920.

110 The circles and their chairmen included: Podberezie, Commune of Podberezie – Mr Sząceki; Korytnica, Commune of Poryck – Stanisław Markowski; Mikulicze, Commune of Chotiaczów – Michał Flisak; Sielec, Commune of Mikulicze – the Rev. Ludwik Syrowicz; Chotiaczów, Commune of Chotiaczów – Wasyl Mech; Czerników [name unknown]; Mokrzec, Commune of Werba – Mitrofan Małaszczuk; Rusów, Commune of Poryck – Aleksiej Matyjasz; Iwonicze, Commune of Poryck – Karol Szymonek; Antonówka, Commune of Werba – Gustaw Wolter; Kupiczew – Paweł Hołub; Stare Werby, Commune of Werba – Mr Brzeźniakiewicz; Białozowczyzna, Commune of Werba – Marcin Puzio; Włodzimierz – Wacław Zbarawski; Bielin, Commune of Werba – Wojciech Skaczkowski; Wodzinów, Commune of Werba – Władysław Matuszyński; Parcelówka, Commune of Werba – Karol Zarembiński; Oktawin, Commune of Mikulicze – Józef Kosnowicz; Załuże, Commune of Włodzimierz – Józef Oberda; Turopin, Commune of Werba – [name unknown].

to the Supreme Commissioner of Volhynia. He suggested that the former communal self-governments (*ziemstvos*) be reinstated, with a broad scope of competencies. As to the County Self-Governmental Council, 50 % of its members were to be elected and the other half appointed, based on the criterion of at least a two-grade education, which in practice would have eliminated non-Poles. The initiative failed, however.

The Memorial of the Association of Poles of the Volhynian Land 'On the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories' charged Osmołowski with insufficient skill to efficiently deal with the basic challenges of administration, helplessness in face of lawlessness and abuse, and, above all, bringing about destabilisation and disorder to the detriment of literally every strata of the country's population.¹¹¹

In turn, the Memorial regarding the Civil Administration in Volhynia, dated 22nd October 1919, signed by the Association of Polish Democracy in Ruthenia, lamented the consequences of Volhynia's annexation to the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, sad as they were from the standpoint of a prospective incorporation.¹¹²

The copy I have found in the ZCZW collection at the Capital-City-of-Warsaw Public Library is annotated in hand on the margins. Given the handwriting, I suppose that it was Osmołowski who added these comments. I would not argue whether the notes were made in 1919 or at the moment they were handed over to the Library before the Second World War. In any case, these notes confirm that my doubts concerning the competencies of the leadership team and personnel of the District of Volhynia have been legitimate. As it appears, the people of Volhynia were by no means kept away from any influence on ruling, as is confirmed by the above-discussed documents, for the entire administration was performed by Volhynian people. The accusation, formulated on 22nd October 1919, that "the Civil Administration has no political concept and no agenda regarding Volhynia" is complemented with a remark made by hand, which I attribute to Osmołowski, stating: "Neither does the Polish Government." The Association of Polish Democracy in Ruthenia resolved to have its exponent seconded to the Association of Poles of the Volhynian Land, so that the Chief of State and the Council of Ministers could jointly be requested by them to 'remedy' the situation. The people's convention held in Łuck on 17th-18th December 1919 went on as planned by the Supreme People's Council [NRL] representatives. In

111 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 68-73 (as in fn. 91) [a duplicate].

112 Ibid., c. 63-67.

this latter body, National Democrats ('*endeks*'), with their 51 representatives, including 25 clergymen, had slightly above a third of the attendees (135 vs. 51). The plan to appoint a special minister for Volhynian affairs was rejected by an overwhelming majority of votes. The idea, pushed by the priests Baranowski and Szuman, to form a National Councils' Organisation, for it to take over the role previously fulfilled by the NRL, was turned down.¹¹³

The landowners were confronted the basic problem of Volhynia's lands, with no support from the Councils. A considerable part of manorial servants made efforts to get a horse and farming implements during the war; those who did so by way of purchase, rather than by pillaging the property left behind by their landlords, were now embittered by the abuses of these lords (the 'third sheaf' issue), whose property they left untouched despite the potentially beneficial circumstances not long before then. Consequently, they forced their way to possessing property of their own, caring now for their own sake only. Among the landowning gentry whose estates were partly the direct source of the 'supply' of the resourceful leaseholders, a schism took place because Count Zygmunt Krasicki and Stanisław Lipiński opted to radically resolve agrarian matters.¹¹⁴

At an audience with the Chief of State, the younger members of the landowning class undertook to carry through a resolution to enfranchise the colonists. Based on this, Józef Piłsudski gave his word of honour to the Łuck County delegates whereby the issue in question should be resolved 'in this very way' (i.e., by way of enfranchisement). Such a clear standpoint aroused great expectations in Volhynia – whilst, in parallel, jeopardising the confidence bestowed upon the Chief of State in respect of the irreparable losses, should the promise not be kept.

On 22nd December 1919, a meeting of section and department heads was held in Vilnius – attended, and presided in person, by Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmołowski and his deputy Edmund Iwaszkiewicz.¹¹⁵ Given the resignations submitted by Maciej Jamontt, W. Boniecki, and Stefan Smólski, it was resolved that a commission be formed, composed of Jan Klott, Tomasz Kujawski, and Czesław Chorzelski, to be tasked with preparing a legislative draft concerning

113 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No.1681, c. 70–75: Report of the Borderland Guard from the County of Łuck for 11th December 1919–11th January 1920.

114 *Ibid.*, c. 76–81: Report of the Borderland Guard of the County of Łuck, 11th January to 11th February 1920.

115 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1691, c. 107–107 (verte), 108–109: Minutes of the meeting of Heads of Sections, held on 22nd December 1919 in Vilnius.

the autonomy of Volhynia. Upon the request of the Commissioner-General, the Commander-in-Chief gave an order, dated 17th January, establishing the Commissariat for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front. Osmołowski had the burden of responsibility for the situation over which he had no real control (given the distance) ‘taken off his shoulders’

On 5th January 1920, Piłsudski set off for a couple-of-days’ tour of the Volhynian front. When in Równe on 9th January, he proposed that the notion of ‘Eastern Borderland’ (*Kresy*) be seen as an area of contact between two nations, cultures, and breeding and educational models. In Łuck, he advised the locals to get rid of mutual distrust and work together. He delivered similar speeches in Kowel and Chełm.¹¹⁶

In spite of the not-completely-commendable power wielding practice in the District of Volhynia, Piłsudski’s visit to Kowel turned into a great manifestation of concord between the nations, religions, and social strata inhabiting Volhynia. It is difficult to know whether the change in the stance was owed to a political and social maturity attained by the locals, or perhaps to the promise of a strict junction with the Republic of Poland. The description of the sentiments prevailing among those attending the party held to celebrate the Chief of State’s stay in Kowel offers a foretaste of what Piłsudski was striving for across the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. An anonymous note prepared for the press gives an excellent idea of the rhythm of that day:

Among the whole crowd of the delegations introducing themselves to the Chief of State in Kowel, particular attention was given to the national deputations from the Ruthenians, Russians, Germans, and Czechs, all bidding welcome to the Chief of State no less enthusiastically than the Polish delegations did. The representative of the Ukrainians expressed in his address the ardent will of the Ukrainian nation that the Polish state put it under its guard and protect against Russification by the schools and the Orthodox clergy. The representative of the Germans thanked them for having been dragged out of the Bolshevik abyss, and stressed the Volhynian Germans’ loyalty and faithfulness toward the State of Poland.

Cheering the Republic of Poland, the representative of the Czechs remarked that the Czechs fervently believe that Poland is the only country where they can live as the free with the free, the equal with the equal. In Łuck, the local rabbi, Mr Glücklich, greeted the Chief of State at the synagogue by recalling King Sigismund III, who had once presented the local Jews with this Łuck temple paying homage to Jehovah, who shared a part of his grandeur to the most dignified knight – the hero who is today heading Poland, the mother-and-motherland of all the peoples within its frontiers.

116 W. Jędrzejewicz, *Józef Piłsudski 1867–1935. Życiorys*, Londyn [London] 1996, p. 79.

Receiving the delegation of landlords at a separate audience, the Chief of State said that of all the matters touched upon by the delegates, he considers the enfranchisement of colonists to be the most important issue. "The foundation", the Commandant argued, "upon which the Polish statehood could be based, must of necessity be expanded. I consider the enfranchisement of colonists, and thereby their becoming bound with the Republic in the possibly strictest fashion, to be the first step that ought to be made in this direction. The number of those who should care about maintaining Polish rule must be enlarged. One has to bear in mind that the moment Denikin is smashed, the Bolshevik danger become serious." Then, the Chief of State supported the opinion, expressed by the Commissioner-General for the Eastern Territories, that the landlords' convention ought absolutely to take place earlier.

At the banquet given in honour of the Chief of State by Mr Osmołowski, the Commissioner-General, Achimandrite Gromadsky delivered quite a long speech, raising the cup for "the representative", as he concluded, in Polish, "of a broad Polish toleration, the Chief of the Polish State, who is attending this ceremony." At this banquet honoured by the presence of the Chief of State, Mr Suszyński, the Deputy Lord Mayor, expressed the common feelings and aspirations in the words addressed to the distinguished visitor: "We believe that we will never suffer under any yoke again, and that these Volhynian lands shall henceforth be forever more protected by the wing of the White Eagle."¹¹⁷

On 10th January 1920, the delegation of the County of Włodzimierz unexpectedly submitted a memorial to the Chief of State during his visit to Volhynia, requesting that the Volhynian Land forthwith be annexed to Poland. This would be tantamount to the abolishment of the border along the Bug River, which severely affected economic relations.¹¹⁸

The supplied aid proved insufficient (whether for objective or subjective reasons, as mentioned above), and consequently help was summoned for a total of 100,733 hungry people. Scarcity of horses and seeds for sowing meant a marginal quantity (9.5 %) of plough-land under cultivation. Most of the arable lands were left untilled, as the owners were reluctant to lease them: by refraining from

117 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1773/3/II, c. 484–484 (verso): On the Chief of State's sojourn in Volhynia. Anonymous note, compiled for use by the press.

118 The edicts often proved misguided indeed. When an order was issued to carry the entire stock of oats in Volhynia away to Brześć, the *starosts* (mainly Krzyżanowski) opposed and therefore a part of the stock could be kept for local use. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 118–125: Copy of the memorial submitted to the Chief of State by the delegation of the County of Włodzimierz, Łuck, 10th January 1920; in Report of the County of Włodzimierz for 7th December 1919 to 12th January 1920.

cultivating their own land (personally or via leaseholders), they protested against buying and disposing of horses. They stood in defence of their interests – a right that can hardly be denied to anybody.

Members of the delegation grumbled about the relaunch of the salt monopoly. The solution that might have remedied the situation in Lithuania or Byelorussia foreshadowed considerable problems in Volhynia, where salt, previously available in completely satisfactory quantities thanks to the efforts of the County Union of Consumer Associations, was expected to disappear quickly. Intensified help was (rightly) demanded in the reconstruction of lands in the area along the Stochód River, and protests were made against local estate owners filling the posts.¹¹⁹

The latter postulate also caused suffering to those who dutifully met their assumed obligations (individuals of the mould of Tadeusz Krzyżanowski). The Commander-in-Chief's Order of 17th January 1920 on the establishment of the Commissariat for the Lands of the Volhynia and Podolian Front put an end to the functioning of the Volhynian District by the ZCZW.¹²⁰

Volhynia became self-empowered. The Commander-in-Chief appointed Antoni Minkiewicz Head Commissioner for the Lands of Volhynia and Podolian Front [ZWiFP]; Stefan Rawicz-Smólski¹²¹ and Bolesław Kraczkiewicz were made Heads of the ZWiFP's Volhynian¹²² and Podolian Districts, respectively.

It has to be admitted that the non-Poles living in Volhynia made use of the opportunities offered by the federation programme with a significant outcome indeed; thus, they became rivals to the Volhynian Poles who had been accustomed to their own dominance in the area. The landowners limited themselves to offering passive resistance, rather than making attempts to change the surrounding reality.

Now is the time for an ahistorical question: how would the occurrences have unfolded if the Poles had also taken advantage of the opportunities on offer, in line with the spirit of the Vilnius Proclamation? Given the local Polish society's stance of permanent opposition, the chance for even the partial success of the 'Polish cause' grew with the endorsement of the incorporation policy.

119 Ibid., Report of the Borderland Guard from the County of Włodzimierz for 7th December 1919 to 12th January 1920.

120 *Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wołyńia i Frontu Podolskiego* [Official Journal of the Civil Administration for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front] (hereinafter, 'D.U. ZCZW i FP'), No. 1, 17th February 1920, I. 1.

121 Ibid., V.

122 Ibid., V.

Significantly enough, Marian Świechowski shared the following reflection with Czesław Krupski:

The thing is, Czesław, that I have not grown completely aware yet whether maintaining Volhynia's administrative union with Lithuania and Byelorussia is a good thing; or perhaps, it would be better to be separated, receiving a certain economic compensation from the Volhynians, which they have proposed ... but it is with regret that I have to ascertain – after all, you do know it yourself, Sir – that these ‘Wisents’ are right in a number of questions. And I do get it into my head that, for a good cause, keeping Mr Osmołowski in office is necessary to maintain the political line, and support in this respect is an absolute must. Still, it often comes to my mind whether, given the existing state-of-affairs, this will help attain the goal; that is, achieving the political results we are after. Are we not without political facility, contributing to the inhumation of the cause we otherwise seek to rescue – with our rather passive behaviour in respect of the things that are now going on, in our administration and general ruling methods, in the political respect?; and, do we have the right to do so?¹²³

As Stanisław Tazbir, Borderland Guard instructor with the County of Włodawa, adjacent to the County of Włodzimierz (and outside the ZCZW's jurisdiction), remarked in January 1920: “the Government was mistaken in that it sold the former-German sowed land at 175 mk [Marks] each in a blink, for those have sold the grain harvest, thereby gaining very serious profits and never caring about any new plantations.”¹²⁴ In a majority, and as holders of large landed property, the Poles strove to make use of a ‘partial opportunity.’ They valued their own interest higher than the interest of the state whilst considering themselves its citizens. It is extremely upsetting that at the expense of the Polish *raison d'état*, they were pushing forward the retrieval of their property – not in order to persist with it and propagate Polishness through economy and education, but instead for the sake of their gain and profit.

Resulting from the attitude summarised as “It's pointless to sow for the peasants' *ordynaria* [in-kind income], or for the Government”, the manorial areas were sown to a lesser degree than during the previous occupation. This strife for the rapid recovery of losses, along with the (admittedly) politically legitimate procrastination, led to an exacerbation of the social situation. The year of 1919 was wet in Podlachia, and this made it apparent, when the former German grain was being sold, that the subsequent year would see a deteriorated harvest. Given the region's population having increased by 30,000, the result came quickly: as

123 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 153–155.

124 *Ibid.*, No. 1681, c. 94–99: Report by the Borderland Guard from the County of Włodawa for January 1920.

many as 242 deaths from hunger were recorded in November 1919, against a smaller density.

S. Tazbir noted an apparently very small fact which, corresponding with the careers of Lipiński and Krzeмиński of Włodzimirz County, makes legitimate the presumption that some unofficial 'self-help mechanism' functioned in the region, mostly based on mutual support between former officials expelled from their posts for abuses. The corrupt and corruptible police made the Włodawa *starost*, Hrehorowicz, angry to the extent that this very ambitious and able Galician, a man of considerable organisational sense and ardent worker, that he had his assistant Królikowski sacked. Królikowski was at once employed with the ZCZW in the County of Słonim. All of this probably resulted from Hrehorowicz's personal conflicts with the heads of the agrarian supplies and medical sections who reported to him and treated enforcement of superiority as an attack on their independence. Królikowski's appointment meant a mismatch with the Słonim County administration and, in one go, a depreciation of Hrehorowicz's authority, who was a loyal and involved civil servant.¹²⁵

This was one of the many small facts which were certainly commented on in the counties and backwaters. Neither of these aspects could strengthen Poland's position in the East. The question remains: in whose interest was the sabotaging of Polish policies initiated by the ZCZW in Volhynia – at that very moment, on an interim basis? And how about the historical perspective? The local landowners could only appreciate the short-sighted interest of their own social group, and identified it with the good of the state. In the situation prevalent in the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, their benefits collided with the policy pursued by the Chief of State. Consequently, those people became voters for Józef Piłsudski's political opponents.

The landed class found themselves, essentially, in a very complicated situation. Negating the authority of the Chief of State in the political and social aspects was for them the only warranty that they would avoid being regarded as traitors of the national cause. Thus, a different authority had to be recognised – and one such, competitive as it was, was active in Paris.

Viewed in procedural terms, the position of the national camp activists was a secondary thing. They were surrounded by the fame of their sustained heroic struggles in the diplomatic arena for the revival of the Homeland. The political line proposed by the national camp called for no compromise with the landowners'

125 Ibid., c. 100–103: Report of the County of Włodawa for September to November 1919, by Stanisław Tazbir, Borderland Guard instructor.

interests. By the very fact of its existence, the Polish National Committee offered to make a choice. After August 1919, this role was taken over by the Legislative Sejm – possibly resulting from long-term solicitations, as is attested by the monitoring of the reshuffles and alterations in the power structures in the parliamentary (lower-house) clubs by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹²⁶

The landowners of Volhynia took on the challenge of a very complicated game. What they were after was incorporation – just like the *czynszownik* peasants, leaseholders, the Poles and the Ruthenians; yet, they sought to prevent the delivery of the postulates phrased by Jan Dębski in Kowel and Vilnius (on 14th September and 5th October 1919, respectively). Unwilling to understand the social change brought about by the new times, they perceived Dębski's postulates merely as promises posing a threat to the foundations of the old ways. They unfortunately saw Russia not as a source of danger: they believed Russia would ensure the reinstatement of the old order of things after the inevitable (as they believed) defeat of the Bolsheviks. In contrast to this, they perceived the policy of the Chief of State and his subordinate, 'Bolshevik-oriented' ZCZW, to be a threat. In the name of patriotic duty – as they comprehended it – they embarked on a heroic struggle against 'bolshevism.' The particular interest of the landowning stratum was not in conflict with the Legislative Sejm's position (altered after 25th November 1919) in respect of the Eastern Territories' issue. This change, and the subsequent detachment of Volhynia from the ZCZW Commissariat, offered these people a way out of the dramatic situation that rendered it impossible to combine their views with the interests of the state whose citizens they desired to become again.

Daily practices and routines after the establishment of the Commissariat for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front

The period after the separation of the affairs of Volhynia from the ZCZW is beyond the scope of this study, but it came as a logical consequence of the actions from the period of the administration functioning in the ZCZW, and hence it deserves a brief discussion. On the initiative of Mr Rupniewski, who chaired the Association in Defence of the Property of the Poles, February 1920 saw the formation of the Eastern-Borderland Land Subdivision Office, affiliated to the Association of Landowners in Kowel. As per the account of the Borderland

126 See Chapter V.

Guard instructor for the County of Kowel from the same month, the land allotment was commenced with the exclusion of the Association of Volhynian Farmers' Land Subdivision Office. Mr Abramowicz, Mr Skorupski, a notary, and Rupniewski himself gravitated to the Borderland Guard while the rest preserved a conservative standpoint.¹²⁷ Some of the Polish landlords sought to regain their capital by disposing of their lands. The Ruthenians also started to get rid of lands in order to win their livelihood.¹²⁸

The Convention of Volhynian Landowners deliberating on 5th and 6th February 1920 in Łuck was mostly dominated by the elderly, who on the whole were reluctant to make any radical moves. Their position was that they had never made any promises to the Chief of State; disparaging his position might only benefit the moneyed classes. These February deliberations in Łuck were mostly confidential, which must have made the worst impression on society.¹²⁹

According to the Borderland Guard, the financial stalemate could have been overcome by the state or private banks from outside Volhynia funding the enfranchisement action. When the agrarian committees commenced their activities,¹³⁰ the Borderland Guard urged that the enfranchisement scheme be put into practice as soon as practicable.¹³¹ The Guard presented a peculiar reform programme as it postulated that the colonists be enfranchised regardless of their religious denomination, ethnicity/nationality, or amount of land owned. The Guard considered it necessary to strictly determine the price of land based on the first contract date, with the right preserved to assign the contracts (*pereustupok*).

Both resolutions on the enfranchisement of leaseholder colonists were qualified as exclusions beyond their scopes did not extend to the disturbed Germans and Czechs loyal to Poland born outside Volhynia, or to the colonists settling down after 1900. A third of those concerned were thereby eliminated; as a result, two ethnicities otherwise loyal to Polish statehood were discouraged. The maximum enfranchisement area was determined at 15 dessiatins, which de

127 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 38–40: Report by the Borderland Guard from the County of Kowel for 15th January to 11th February 1920.

128 Ibid., c. 34–37: Report by the Borderland Guard from the County of Kowel for 5th December 1919 to 15th January 1920.

129 Ibid., c. 76–81: Report by the Borderland Guard from the County of Łuck for 11th January to 11th February 1920.

130 According to the report for January to February 1920, i.e. prior to Minkiewicz's decree on formation of the Committee for Agrarian Arrangements (D.U. ZCZW i FP, No. 2, 15th March 1920, Dz. II.12).

131 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 80 (as in fn. 129).

facto led to the building of an agrarian proletariat. The sizes of the allotments corresponded with the decisions the agrarian matters as proposed six months earlier by Denikin – in the counties not yet under the ZCZW's control, which apparently was not coincidental. At the same time, the landowners protected their own properties smaller than 500 dessiatins: their existence was regarded as pointless if burdened with disposal of 3 % to 5 % of the land which was to be given free-of-charge to settler soldiers.¹³²

Count Zygmunt Krasicki's motion proposing a land tribute for soldiers at 5 %, 10 %, or 15 % of the estate's area (i.e., the demesnes or estates of 50 to 500, 500 to 1,000, and above 1,000 dessiatins, respectively), was rejected.¹³³ The imposition of coerced labour in alien fields for yoke owners was adopted. Forced labour was something that evoked terribly bad associations in the East. It was resolved that all the *czynszownicy* be enfranchised – in return “for equitable remuneration”; but the implementation of even such an abridged resolution was delayed, without even fixing the price. These resolutions irrefutably demonstrate that the landlords assessed the situation unrealistically, showing no understanding for the Polish Army soldiers who had previously heard a multitude of cordial declarations.

The motion to request the ‘Government’ to sanction the resolutions in question was ostentatiously rejected. The district's activity was continuously restricted to rejecting applications, such as the legalisation of cooperatives and others, and to the repeated demand that the district be requested to legalise People's Councils, which would probably soon have led to their official de-legalisation.¹³⁴

All these facts make one put forth the following research question: what were the actual reasons behind pursuing a policy of this particular kind in the District of Volhynia? Was the style of the operations implied by incompetence and lack of qualifications, or by the dissenting political views? Among the Volhynian District inspectors, there were some who, at times, attempted to put the Chief of State's policies into practice, even after Volhynia was detached from the Commissariat-General. As the Borderland Guard instructor for the County of Łuck put it, “Mr Zagórski, the clueless self-governmental inspector, wanted to appoint [!] Russians to work with the self-governments and, to this end, requested the reactionaries and *black-hundredists* pursuing an anti-Polish policy in their estates (Belaev amongst them).”¹³⁵

132 Ibid., c. 76–81 (as in fn. 129 and 131).

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

The reorganisation of the ZCZW, which meant that Volhynia was detached from the lands of Lithiania and Byelorussia, also entailed a considerable change in the County of Włodzimierz. Starost Tadeusz Krzyżanowski left, to be replaced by Huck, a barrister from Kiev, who had been serving with the Commissariat for a number of months. The customs introduced by Krzyżanowski disappeared: “At present, the officials appear in the office at nine, to sit around as required. One has the impression that the *Starosty* [is] an institution created for clerks and officials only ... the people are gradually getting out of the habit of approaching the administrative authorities about anything.”¹³⁶

Resulting from the severance of cooperation with the other ethnicities/nationalities inhabiting these lands, hostile attitudes appeared in the northern and southern part of the County of Włodzimierz towards the administrative authorities and to Poland. ‘Brigand villages’ started functioning in the awareness of the Poles (one of such localities being Czarnoplesy, north of the Chełm-Kowel railway line).¹³⁷

The Supreme People’s Council submitted a memorial to Antoni Minkiewicz regarding the enfranchisement of leaseholder colonists, a draft law on compulsory leaseholds, and a motion to introduce a protective law for leaseholders.¹³⁸ The landowners had the Branch of the Association of Farmers moved to Łuck and began efforts to have the Board of the Club of Poles of Ruthenian Lands located there as well.¹³⁹

On 10th March 1920, Head Commissioner Minkiewicz ordained to form a Committee for Agrarian Arrangements;¹⁴⁰ on 27th March, he extended the final date for evicting the grange scribes and workers.¹⁴¹ On 30th March, he determined the rules for long-standing petty leaseholders and former *czynszownicy* acquiring the land they used,¹⁴² ordained the procedure for dispensing loans

136 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 130–132: Report by the Borderland Guard from the County of Włodzimierz for 2nd February to 9th March 1920.

137 Ibid.

138 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW No. 1681, c. 82–83: Report by the Borderland Guard from the County of Łuck for 11th February 1920 to 11th March 1920.

139 Ibid.

140 D.U. ZCZW i FP, No. 2, 15th March 1920, II. 12.

141 Ibid., No. 3, 31st March 1920, II. 25.

142 Ibid., 1920, No. 4, I. 63: Ordinance of the Head Commissioner for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front in the matter of long-standing petty leaseholders and former *czynszownik* peasants acquiring the land they used.

for agrarian aid,¹⁴³ and approved of the Bye-Laws of the Polish Society for the Economic Reconstruction of Volhynia, a joint-stock company [*Polskie Towarzystwo Gospodarczej Odbudowy Wołynia, Spółka Akcyjna*],¹⁴⁴ whose scope of operations was extended in June to the Podolian lands.¹⁴⁵

The *Official Journal* of 28th May published the Ordinance of the Head Commissioner of the Civil Administration for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front, signed on 25th May, concerning the subdivision of private landed property.¹⁴⁶ The subdivision could be carried out by the proprietors themselves or by partnerships licensed (and controlled) by the Civil Administration for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Front. The allotment was to be carried out to the benefit of smallholder and landless people, to whom reliefs were guaranteed. Specifically, the sale deeds were exempt from stamp duty, the acquired parcels were exempt from land taxes for three years, the purchasers were sold construction timber at concessionary prices, allowed to do the logging in order to expand their farmland areas, and granted haulage reliefs and lending aid.

By means of the Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces of 29th May 1920, the administration of the Volhynian counties – those of Włodzimierz, Kowel, Łuck, Dubno, Równe (within its former borders) and, partly, Ostróg and Krzemieniec – was handed over to the Government of the Republic of Poland.¹⁴⁷

The political and territorial postulate of the national camp was thereby fulfilled.

143 Ibid., No. 6, 24th April 1920, II. 96: Ordinance of the Head Commissioner for the Lands of Volhynia and the Podolian Fr.[ont] in the matter of the procedure of lending.

144 Ibid., 1920, No. 9, I. 126: Decision of the Head Commissioner in the matter of approving the Joint-Stock Company under the business name of: 'Polskie Towarzystwo Gospodarczej Odbudowy Wołynia, Spółka Akcyjna'.

145 Ibid., No. 15, 30th June 1920 III. 201.

146 Ibid., No. 10, 28th May 1920, II. 135.

147 Ibid., No. 13, 8th June 1920, I. 167: Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army in the matter of handing over the administration of the Volhynian Counties to the Government of the Republic of Poland.

CONCLUSION

This study, entitled *The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories*, is in fact an attempt to look at the Eastern Policy pursued various decision-making links in the independent Poland, with a particular focus on the Chief of State and his most important adversaries. It transpires that the ZCZW was in the middle of affairs and events that deeply defined what was happening in the vast territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in Warsaw, as well as in external centres wishing to exert a significant influence on the shape and place of Poland in post-war Europe and on its relations with its neighbours. Hence, there is the need (as already remarked in the Introduction) for a broad, panoramic approach to the problem. Coordinating numerous findings required, in most cases, arduous archival research and creating an almost mosaic-like image of the years and events under discussion.

It is needless to remind ourselves that the year 1918 marked the beginning of a new era; it was a breakthrough moment that brought new possibilities and perspectives. Considering that the year 1864 was still alive in Lithuania's memory, from the viewpoint of the Germans and Russians, both countries feared that, circumstances permitting, Poland and Lithuania would restore the former Commonwealth in a new form, thus consequently blocking the German *Drang nach Osten* and the Soviet *Drang nach Westen* alike.

From the perspective of Polish history and tradition, the reconstruction of Poland in the form of a nation-state, rather than a federation (as a natural continuation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), appeared absurd to Piłsudski and Paderewski, given the historical and tradition-related premises. They saw it as incomprehensible self-restraint in an international situation that had at last become so favourable for the first time in many years. This process did not take place in a historical void.

As is known, the first stage of German policy in 1917–1918 was to stimulate the national aspirations of Lithuanians, who, from the Vatican's point of view, strengthened Catholicism in this part of Europe. This fact must have boosted their position in the international scene. The Byelorussians were devoid of this advantage. The two-denominational Byelorussia – Orthodox in the larger part – was easier prey for Russia and Germany, willing to gain control over its territory. It inevitably faced dismantlement.

A reinstated Commonwealth would become the third factor in this game, owing to the past of both nations concerned. This endeavour could have been

hampered by the creation of nation-states in its former territory. The conflict between Józef Piłsudski, the Chief of State, still linked by international public opinion in 1919 with the Central States' camp, and Roman Dmowski, who was implementing the national vision of a Catholic Poland, could have been, and certainly was, not only a beneficial development for both German and Russian politicians, but also a very desirable one.

Before 1918, the Polish elite were characterised by a trifold division of political preferences, which was understandable in the conditions prevalent at the time. In some cases – not as rare as it might have seemed, based on my findings – these opinions were accompanied by a hope of retaining one's current professional and social position or attaining a better one. Understandably, nobody wanted to end up in premature retirement, including as regards political activity.

Polish owners of huge estates in the East, who were the elite of that land, found themselves in a situation of a peculiar conflict between their own economic interests, for which the most beneficial solution was simply to restore the relations existing in the Commonwealth before its Partitions, and the policy of the Chief of State – of the state whose citizenship those people (citizens of the former Russian Empire, according to the letter of international law at that time) wished to regain. The programme presented by Roman Dmowski's camp was highly acceptable to this group. In the national camp, as Jan Molenda noted, processes of far-reaching political and organisational disintegration took place in the years 1908–1918, weakening its social base. In order to take over power after November/December 1918, the electorate had to be expanded. In 1917, the Germans applied a two-track policy towards the inhabitants of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. In ethnically homogenous Warsaw, support was shown to the Poles. On the other hand, the Vilnian Poles were assigned – undeservedly, even in the eyes of German officials – the role of pariahs in the Lithuanian state, which was being built in parallel to the Kingdom of Poland. The German agenda followed the idea of 'cutting at the seams' the nineteenth-century Polish community that had remained mutually supportive before the Partitions and during the insurrections and uprisings. A *divide et impera* policy was pursued. As a result, the pro-Byelorussian policy of Józef Piłsudski was unacceptable to the Poles grouped in the Polish National Council of Grodno Land, whose emotions were artfully incited by the Germans to the extreme. If the then-elites of Grodno and Vilnius had properly identified this plan, the fate of this region would have been different. Had the Vilnian Poles joined the Lithuanian National Council under the humiliating conditions offered to them, perhaps the German idea, which was also in Russia's interest, would have been thwarted. But this is what did not happen.

From this point of view, the activities of the Warsaw-based Provisional Council of State, which was building the foundations of Polish statehood, while relying on eminent lawyers from Vilnius weakened the intellectual elite of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which served German interests in Lithuania. The people who remained in Vilnius displayed poorer political qualifications, which made them unprepared to meddle in great politics, yet they were impelled by a sense of duty to do so. Due to their economic and professional position, the Polish elite of Vilnius had to maintain closer relations with Germany, which gave German officials an opportunity to inform their attitudes and opinions. Given that these people showed a tendency to impose their opinions on others, while having an immeasurable confidence in their own judgement of the situation, it was possible to skilfully control the behaviours of Poles through them. While consistently supporting the Lithuanians in precisely chosen circumstances, the Germans did not prevent the Poles from demonstrating their aversion towards the favoured group, which obviously did not lead to a pacification of sentiments. By means of the Polish frustrations that they masterfully incited, the Germans implemented their programme: simply fighting the Polish cause with Polish hands.¹

The reconstruction of Poland in the form of a nation-state, at odds with co-citizens of the former Commonwealth, was a 'lesser evil' for both Russia and Germany, who intended to fight for their influence in a new, more subtle way, initially in the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.² It cannot be ruled out that more far-reaching measures were also taken into account. The Germans had the possibility of drawing up such plans until the takeover of the supreme authority in Upper Silesia by the Inter-Ally Plebiscite Commission,

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- 1 Joanna Gierowska-Kałaaur has devoted extensive research into this particular issue, producing the following publications: principally, J. Gierowska-Kałaaur, *Aleksander Szklennik "Wspomnienia o wydarzeniach w Wilnie i w kraju."* *Dziennik. Część I-II*, Series 'Metamorfozy społeczne', Vol. 18, Warsaw 2018–2019, pp. 960+1067 pp; also, eadem, 'Społeczeństwo polskie Ziemi Północno-Wschodniej byłej Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów wobec niemieckiej okupacji Ober-Ost', in Grzegorz Kucharczyk (ed.), *Pierwsza niemiecka okupacja. Królestwo Polskie i kresy wschodnie pod okupacją mocarstw centralnych 1914–1918*, Warsaw 2019, pp. 561–668.
 - 2 See J. Gierowska-Kałaaur 'Death-Agony and Birth Pangs: Inheritors of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under German Occupation 1915–1918', *Central Europe Journal*, Vol. 17, 2019 [printed 2020], 110–25; eadem, 'German policies with respect to lands of former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in World War I era: pro-Lithuanian and pro-Belarusian, or directed against Polish aspirations?' *Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. History*, Issue 142, 2019.

which took place on 20th February 1920. The Soviets had been able to do so since January 1920.³

The persistent conviction about the existence of a German-Bolshevik understanding on the division of Lithuanian-Byelorussian lands is confirmed by the fact that during all these years, no fundamental controversy ever emerged in the public forum between the two parties involved, although it is also a fact that in 1919, German volunteers supported Lithuanians, making it impossible for the Bolsheviks to occupy the entirety of Lithuania.

As we know, an attempt was made in March 1918 to proclaim the independence of Byelorussia in Minsk. The Byelorussian movement was allowed to operate in the area delineated from the west by the German trench-line of 1915, and in the south by the Polesia area, which were handed over to Ukraine by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. In the east, the Byelorussians were allowed to operate up to the Bolshevik-German front-line.

From 1918, Soviet propaganda began to persuade Byelorussians that the primary threat to the independent existence of the Byelorussian state was the imperialism of an 'aristocratic Poland'. It must be admitted that both the behaviour of the Polish army and of the Polish social groups gathered around the Polish Council of Grodno Land (whose anti-Byelorussian sentiment peaked in March 1919 through the influence of the Germans) were conducive to this propaganda, which overlapped with the *modus operandi* well-established in this territory – as concisely reflected in the popular adage, still in circulation today: 'Take when you are given, run away when you are struck.'

Actual German-Bolshevik cooperation in the field began when the Germans, after signing the truce on 11th November 1918, began evacuating the occupied eastern areas. German-Soviet cooperation continued from then on with varying degrees of intensity.

After 11th November 1918, the Poles could plan their future and career on the basis of their ties with the national camp or with the (broadly understood) Piłsudski camp. The Poles proved very active in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Naturally, they sought support from the political leaders of a party that was close to them in terms of its social agenda, rather than resorting to the Chief of State, whom they considered a 'Bolshevik' and who remained in conflict with them.

3 W. Petter, 'Niemcy i Reichswehra w wojnie polsko-sowieckiej (1919–1920)', in A. Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Rok 1920. Z perspektywy osiemdziesięciolecia*, Warsaw 2001.

The programme of the Government presided over by Jędrzej Moraczewski was in conflict with the interests of the landed gentry and, especially, with the economic interests of Poles from the Borderlands. The estates owned by the landowners had been salvaged, sometimes with enormous sacrifice, during Russian rule. During the Bolshevik Revolution, they were a factor of strengthening Polish identity in the lands of the former Grand Duchy, the home country of their proprietors. At the same time, these possessions represented the only possible source of income for these people. The group which shared negative opinions of the Moraczewski Cabinet felt a strong threat to its pre-Partition social position, resulting from the new Government's achievements and the announced package of democratic decrees.⁴ The extant balance sheet of the ZCZW covers the period starting 18th November 1918,⁵ i.e. day one of the Moraczewski Government – the Warsaw-based follow-up of the Lublin Government – in office.

In the discussions preceding the ZCZW's establishment, these people had to adopt a stance opposed to Józef Piłsudski's proposal. Unfortunately, they did not change it either after the decision was made, and their opposition was enhanced by the fact that a different social agenda was demonstrated by the avant-garde of the national camp in Paris. Moraczewski's cabinet was thus quickly dubbed crypto-Bolshevik. It was not realised that this government functioned as a sort of safety anchor to prevent a course of events similar to that which occurred in 1917 in Russia from occurring in the (broadly taken) Polish territory.

The position of the Church authorities and the clergy towards the insurrections/uprisings, conspiracies and national liberation struggle – specifically, the uprisings of 1830–1 and, especially, 1863–4 – varied. Some bishops joined patriotic activities, but many opposed all efforts in this respect. In 1894, Pope Leo XIII addressed an encyclical to all bishops on Polish soil, calling on priests and believers to respect the principle of tri-loyalism. The Vatican's stance became even more unfriendly towards Polish aspirations of independence with the development of the socialist movement in Polish lands. For many, Piłsudski, the architect of the ZCZW, remained a socialist. A new era was commenced with Pope Benedict XV's note, while the appointment of Bishop Jerzy Matulewicz

4 C. Lusiński, 'Społeczno-gospodarcze ustawodawstwo dekretowe Naczelnika Państwa', in A. Ajnenkiel (ed.), *Rok 1918. Odrodzona Polska w nowej Europie*, Warsaw 1999, pp. 92–101.

5 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1664: 'General balance sheet of cash turnovers of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories as for 18th October 1918 to 31st March 1921'.

enabled the Vatican to continue in the former Grand Duchy lands the policy announced in the said note, with the help of Lithuanian Catholics.

The situation was not facilitated by the fact that between the ZCZW, established in 1919, the Polish Army, and the Catholic Church, a specific triangle of power created by these very actors formed in the Eastern Territories. The Church's cooperation with the ZCZW was hampered by the fact that the regular clergy members were involved in the activities of Polish social organisations that acted in opposition to the Chief of State's policy. The possibility of reaching an agreement in the Legislative Sejm was blocked by the activity of 31 clergymen who were led by Archbishop Józef Teodorowicz, known for his scepticism towards Piłsudski's political line.

The Catholic Church must have at least felt hurt by the Commissariat-General's actions aimed at endearing the Orthodox Church. One example of an activity criticised by the Catholics were the decisions concerning real property and salaries, which were very favourable to Orthodox priests (popes). Neither the Catholic Church hierarchy nor Polish society approved of these equal rights. The nationalist camp pushed through the nation-state agenda. The Jews knew how to take advantage of the trade opportunities offered to them by the landowners. The latter, skilfully stimulated by the actions of the Treasury Minister Leon Biliński on the one hand, and by the political programme of KNP, for which they opted, on the other, monetised everything they could.

The fact of establishing a temporary administrative apparatus under the ZCZW's umbrella in the lands whose state identity had not yet been determined in terms of international law, should be considered as an attempt to implement the Polish *raison d'état*, comprehended in a far-sighted manner, in a way that did not interfere with the interests of the ethnicities/nationalities inhabiting these lands. Regrettably, as practice has shown, this method collided with the interests of Poles from the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as they themselves perceived it. They felt so harmed by the years of discrimination by the Germans that they considered it obvious that they should now be enjoying some special rights. A vast majority of the landowners would not accept that the only programme meant to bring them support would give equal rights to those whom they did not consider equal. The latter, on the other hand, disliked the idea of equal obligations, since everyday practice under the ZCZW's rule had clearly shown that such equal rights remained a matter of declaration. In the former Grand Duchy territory, the countryside tended to preserve the old system of decision-making factors (the master, the village head [*wójt/vogt*], and the parson). The modification seen in *Anno Domini* 1919 occurred through some of the clergy breaking away from this triumvirate; they were graduates of the Lithuanian

Samogitian Theological Seminary. When the Vilnian Poles refused to rebuild the Lithuanian state with German support, they began to treat the Poles as intruders. The numerous testimonies concerning the activities of the Samogitian Seminary graduates prove beyond any doubt that this school trained Lithuanisers excellently, and not Christians. By their behaviour, Lithuanian priests engendered a sense of threat among all members of Polish society in Lithuania, undermining the existing social structures, which the Polish landowners otherwise sought to preserve. Those landowners declared their Catholicism and emphasised the historical role of Poland in the Christianisation of Lithuania.

Germany's policy in Central and Eastern Europe (later on followed by the Russians) stood in opposition to the policy proposed by Piłsudski (long before the latter was formulated). The Chief of State's Vilnius Proclamation of 22nd April 1919 was addressed not to specified nations but to all inhabitants, and these 'inhabitants' varied greatly. There were Lithuanians, Byelorussians, as well as Jews, who always stayed somewhere aside, and there were the Poles, who distinguished themselves by their seminal engagement, fuelled by the disappointment at a lack of relief from Warsaw in December 1918.

In response to his appeal, Piłsudski endured the withdrawn silence of the Lithuanians, the growing expectations of the Byelorussians, and a violent Polish counteraction, of which he had far-sightedly not informed Paderewski in advance. Piłsudski was very well aware of the reasons for the state of mind of all of these 'inhabitants', and of their mentality at that time. He was equally well aware that only the implementation of the plan of his Eastern policy could restore the former position of the Commonwealth/Republic in the new, twentieth-century realities. He decided to wait for some to grow wiser, some to determine or refine their sense of national belonging, others to mature socially, and all of them to notice their vital common interest in building a federal state. He was stalling, counting not only on reflection on the part of Lithuanians, the formation of a Byelorussian 'Piedmont', but also on the maturation of the Borderlands' Poles to the challenges of the new century. He believed in his multi-ethnic nation and its wisdom. Acceptance of the democratic system proposed by Moraczewski's Cabinet also made it possible, under conditions somewhat different from those before the Partitions, to save members of the Polish diaspora in the Borderlands and to support a future subjective, and not objective, policy of the state of which he was the leader.

It is only natural that this scenario met with opposition from the Germans and the Russians. However, the opponents of Piłsudski's agenda also included Poles, who, after a long period of subjugation to the tsarist regime, had fallen in the preceding years under the influence of the 'special policy' pursued in this

area by the Germans. The political line that they represented only made sense in a bygone reality; their programme was personified by the KNP in Paris. The rationale behind the choice made by Vilnius's Poles in January 1919 is in essence understandable. However, their choice was not final; their attitudes evolved. On 7th April 1920, Stanisław Kognowicki (mentioned in this study) sent a draft to Tadeusz Wróblewski laid out by the commission elected to elaborate a plan for a federation of Poland and Lithuania. The same letter mentions the efforts of another commission that worked on designing an agrarian reform; these efforts resulted in a 22-item outline of the law on parcelling (subdividing) the landed property in the North-Eastern Borderland area, drawn up in Vilnius on 12th June 1920.⁶

The example of Commissioner Tadeusz Krzyżanowski from the District of Volhynia (Chapter IX) clearly shows that the conscientious execution of entrusted duties, even by someone whose political opinion differed from the programme of the Chief of State, could bring positive effects to all of the interested parties. The hopes Piłsudski placed in the Polish political elites of the Borderlands were, apparently, not in vain!

However, it took too long for Poles in the eastern lands of the former Commonwealth to reflect on this. Despite the reorientation of the Borderlanders remaining in Vilnius, Piłsudski was unable to implement his innovative concept. Members of the very influential Polish National Council from Grodno remained imperturbable; the machine set in motion by the Volhynian landed gentry had already moved too far. As if these obstacles were not enough, one month earlier the Coalition had presented Maurycy Zamoyski with a note blocking the carrying out of the plebiscite announced by Piłsudski in the Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

At that point, everyone stood in opposition to Piłsudski: apart from the KNP, public opinion, the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, the Sejm, the Church, the Lithuanians, the Jews and the Byelorussians were all opposed to his concept. He was likewise disappointed by the Borderland Guard, in which he had probably placed too much hope. The Poles from the Kaunas region and from Vilnius were isolated in their consideration, which simply came too late.

Józef Piłsudski lost as a politician. The speech delivered in Vilnius in 1923 tells, between the lines, the drama of a man who had lost, above all, against his own society. Fighting an external enemy is normal; the hardest thing is always to deal with an internal enemy.

6 Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka [LMAB], Fond 292–96.

By the very fact of its continuous existence in exile since the summer of 1917, the Polish National Committee represented at least an alternative to the Government in Warsaw, and after 11th November 1918, it would disrupt the unity that the reborn state needed so much. Poland was, de facto, the arena of a power struggle. The national camp had lost its first battle. The Regency Council, established with the consent of the Germans, decided to hand power over to Brigadier Piłsudski, freshly released from internment. The national camp had not given up its fight for a position worthy of its merits and for the future shape of the Motherland. From the perspective of Paris, the latter was dangerously inclined towards Bolshevik ideas. Piłsudski, for this part, reaffirmed his desire for close and friendly cooperation with the national camp, whilst he did express the inescapable conditions.⁷ He sought cooperation with the KNP that resided in Paris and had been recognised as the official Polish representation since 1917, through Ignacy Paderewski, albeit the activity of the KNP and its supporters did not contribute to the country's stabilisation that Piłsudski was pursuing, and even ridiculed the Chief of State and undermined the credibility of his international involvement. The developments of December 1918 to January 1919 implied a disastrous extension of the processes of the political maturing of the Vilnian Poles, which ultimately resulted in their undoing.

Paderewski achieved some success in negotiations with the KNP, although it came too late to retain the possibility of restoring the Commonwealth of the Two Nations in a modern form. The involvement of the Borderlands' Poles in collaboration with the KNP (Chapter I) – which, in an ironic twist, was fulfilling the objectives of the German 'special policy' – caused these Poles to take part in executing a policy carried out by the centres bringing about their demise. The Borderlander Poles had placed their bets on the national camp that was close to them socially, aware that the archaic social system they were striving to preserve could only be saved on a scrap of the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania – and that at the expense of the clusters of Polish communities which would have to remain beyond the borderline. Hence, their determined struggle against the ZCZW to incorporate everything possible directly into Poland, contrary to Piłsudski's concept.

7 The condition being, however, that "The Parisian Committee is due to recognise its headquarters in here. The ruling entity is responsible before the country in here. That one [in Paris] is irresponsible." W. Jędrzejewicz and J. Cisek, *Kalendarium tycia Józefa Piłsudskiego*, Vol. 2, Warsaw 1998, p. 23.

To what extent the defeat of Piłsudski's Eastern programme was influenced by either coincidence, lack of political foresight, or someone's premeditation, remains a question with no unambiguous answer. The conducted query does not justify the conclusion that the destruction of the ZCZW's programme was controlled by the KNP milieu, while it does permit the conclusion that it was accomplished by the hands of this camp's supporters. The effects of their activity were simply exploited by the politicians of this group.

The domestic Polish dispute, which prevailed for less than the first two years of the revived state, led to its considerable weakening internationally. Moreover, it consolidated many stereotypical opinions about our national traits. Many of the findings made during the research into the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands compel us to consider whether the resistance from Polish national(ist) politicians, Polish society and officials of state authorities, including those of the ZCZW, were actually spontaneous or organised. Or perhaps they had been foreseen and exploited by someone? This is, however, a potential subject for another study.

The events took place not only in the closely monitored territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but also at the conference desks in Paris, near which the informants of all interested parties were undoubtedly present. It would seemingly have been difficult to find a more consistent representative of Polish national political thought than Roman Dmowski, and such a politician is highly recognisable for his followers. The drawback of the KNP's policy was that Dmowski's behaviour remained predictable to both the German and the Russian parties. Politics is the art of seizing opportunities. A politician whose actions can be predicted, however, does not pose the same threat to his rivals as an unpredictable one.

Piłsudski was precisely such an unpredictable politician. If he had not been tied up by Polish hands, this could have been his invaluable asset in the game for the Eastern lands, and would have posed an immense threat to the objectives of Russia and Germany. The only enemy he could yield to was Polish society. Was this force used to limit the Chief of State's field of operation as much as possible? Piłsudski encountered intense counteraction from Polish society's opinion to the attempt to implement the internal programme announced in the Proclamation. During the time the ZCZW was in operation, we can observe a series of consequent behaviours.

Was it possible to foresee that the restrictive policy enforced by the Minister of the Treasury Leon Biliński from July 1919 (Chapter II) would primarily affect the landed gentry temporarily residing in Warsaw, and provoke them to ruthlessly protect their property in their estates (Chapter IX)? One could surely have

predicted that the inhumane treatment of peasants and farmhands would radicalise society, which already had a certain image of what their situation might look like if Bolshevism had prevailed on these lands (Appendix). It should not have come as a surprise that unplanned requisitions, unjustified and unexpected changes in the front-line, taking an Orthodox church by force in a village inhabited by 200 Orthodox believers and 14 Catholics, would make cohabitation of these two religions impossible in that village, whereas the military authorities ignoring ZCZW authorities' orders would lower their trustworthiness and prevent them from fulfilling their missions (Chapter IV).

As the relations between the ZCZW and the military were put in order, an inexplicable change occurred in the attitude of the Legislative Sejm to Józef Piłsudski's Eastern policy (Chapter V). Influential individuals with a high opinion of themselves made demonstrative decisions and created new divisions, arousing new antagonisms via carefully constructed and interpreted procedures and regulations, which conflicted with the idea behind the establishment of the ZCZW, while being in line with the directives of the national camp announced in print (Chapter VII).

The work of destroying the Eastern program was ultimately completed by the Borderland Guard, bestowed with too much trust by Józef Piłsudski. The ZCZW was exploited as a source of funds for the 'period of great development' of the Guard, which left aside not only the latter's own declarations but also the interests of the state, outweighed by the interests of the peasants. After some reflection, I have refrained from including in this study a separate chapter on the relations between the ZCZW and the Borderland Guard; to those interested in this subject, I recommend the studies by Tadeusz W. Nowacki,⁸ Zofia Tomczonek,⁹ and those written by myself.¹⁰

8 T. W. Nowacki, 'Szkic do dziejów Zet-u', Chapter II. 4: 'Rok 1918. Straż Kresowa', in T.W. Nowacki (ed.), *ZET w walce o niepodległość i budowę państwa. Szkice i wspomnienia*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 130–143.

9 Z. Tomczonek, *Ruch ludowy na kresach północno-wschodnich Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Białystok 1996.

10 J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warsaw 1999. The structure of the Borderland Guard's authorities and the related political shuffles is discussed by the same author in an extensive introduction to J. Gierowska-Kałuża (ed.), *Raporty Straży Kresowej 1919–1920. Ziem Północno-Wschodnich opisanie*, Series: 'O Niepodległą i granice', Vol. VII, Warsaw–Pułtusk 2011, p. 1173.

Piłsudski's hopes placed in the Lithuanians did not come to fruition, not so much because of the opposition (once from the Polish Committee), but because of the national camp's policy at the beginning of 1919. It was an extremely unfortunate coincidence that Juzoas Gabrys sought contact in Paris not with the delegation of the Chief of State but, surprisingly enough, with the KNP. Shortly after the announcement of the Vilnius Proclamation, Władysław Grabski disavowed it, informing the Lithuanian delegation at the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the Sejm was positive about incorporating Vilnius into Poland.

The destruction was completed by the so-called 'Polish uprising' in Kaunas, launched in August 1919 in unclear circumstances, the triggering of which, let us state it very clearly, did not fit Józef Piłsudski's political concept.¹¹

The current state of research does not allow a determination of definitively who actually prevented the implementation of the ZCZW's foreign policy programme associated with the announced plebiscite. Perhaps further archival surveys, including in KNP fonds, will contribute to answering this question.

If the premature outbreak of the solely 'Polish' uprising of August 1919, which preceded the Polish-Lithuanian uprising proposed by Gabrys, was actually the idea of the Chief of State, this would be a fact which would put in question the entire line of the policy proposed before the uprising and continued afterwards (Chapter VIII). If Piłsudski was indeed the real instigator of the premature outbreak of the Polish uprising in Kaunas – as is accepted in all the existing literature on the subject – he should not have hesitated in September and, without looking at the Entente, militarily taken the city of Kaunas.

For the abandonment of the Polish intervention in Kaunas after August 1919, however, the Chief of State can be held responsible as a strategist. Could it be that, to the detriment of effectiveness, having already crossed the Rubicon, he returned at the least strategically advantageous moment to the tactics announced in the April Proclamation? No-one has ever accused Józef Piłsudski of incompetence as a 'military man', while this would have been a cardinal tactical error. That is why this particular 'omission' can absolutely not be ignored.

The hopes placed in the Byelorussians, as a factor that could have taken on the role of an alternative foundation for the federation in the future, proved

11 New light on this particular issue has been shed by the 'Deposit' of Walery Sławek found in Moscow (as part of the 'Trofieinyi Fond') and, especially, a 'Notebook' containing entries from July to August 1919. See Zob. J.Gierowska-Kałużur, '12. "Depozyty" Walerego Sławka przechowywane w Moskwie. ("Biuro Detaszowane Oddziału II Naczelnego Dowództwa 1919")', *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 47, 2012, 208–72.

to be futile during the period of formal independence of the ZCZW (until the end of May 1920), due to the breakdown of the Byelorussian movement and too little time for their consolidation. The expected outcome came too late. The negotiations with the Byelorussians were hampered by the fundamental errors made on the occasion of the first findings of the Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmałowski (Chapter IX).

Piłsudski was aware of his isolation. His contemporaries, who would have raised hopes for loyalty to their superior and who understood the idea and declared their commitment to it, were probably too humble to step forward into prominent positions – whereas individuals showing determination in view of the circumstances actively attempted to find their own, dignified and well-paid place. Among such people were most of the senior employees of the ZCZW, including Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmałowski. It was a time of small roles played by great and modest people, and of great roles played by ambitious small people (Chapter III). If the latter had maintained loyalty to their assumed responsibilities – as Commissioner Tadeusz Krzyżanowski did in Volhynia's County of Włodzimierz, despite his undoubtedly nationalist convictions – perhaps success would have been within reach (Chapter IX).

As Czesław Miłosz wrote in his poem *Traktat moralny* [A Moral Treaty], “The avalanche turns and twists/As pebbles it knocks down get 'midst.”

* * *

The group of professional politicians that formed the ‘core’ of the Polish National Committee displayed insight in their analysis of the situation. If they did not coordinate the moves and steps described in this study, they might have at least inspired them – and certainly took advantage of them to the benefit of their party and its leader, Roman Dmowski. As a consequence of multiple factors, the Chief of State de facto implemented their political programme, rather the one of his own.

The idea advocated by the national(ist) politicians was finally carried out in two stages, by means of the Treaties of Versailles and Riga, and the Yalta Treaty. The discussion on which of these agendas was better for Poland – the Dmowski concept, which was eventually put into practice in the aftermath of the arrangements of Yalta and Teheran, or the federative concept promoted by Józef Piłsudski, referring to the tradition of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations and rejected by Polish society – is not part of this study, though it is implied by it.

As the subsequent decades have shown, the national camp put into practice a programme tailored to one generation's lifetime. In its final shape, the Versailles/Riga system carried an encoded inevitability of the breakout of a new conflict.

Piłsudski was aware of this inevitability but did not manage to change the course of events.

It is generally accepted that a politician's success is testified by his (or her) efficiency. Roman Dmowski, who finally implemented his adopted political programme, no doubt proved more efficient than Józef Piłsudski. The latter's political platform eventually completely failed. And yet, years later, those Poles who thwarted the implementation of the Chief of State's programme by putting into practice their own political vision suffered defeat, too.

Piłsudski would say bitterly, several years afterwards, that everyone 'knew better' what to do than him, the responsible Chief of State, who was permeated with the nineteenth century – the era full of respect for Polish history.

After the Treaty of Riga, analysing of the course of events and meticulously establishing who was to blame for what, was not in the interest of the Polish internal compromise, so arduously attained by the Chief of State. A 'thick line' policy was applied, in fact. Today, one would also not seek to determine the scope of one's personal responsibility for the erroneous decisions made based on ideological (or economic) incentives.

A hundred years afterwards, in the face of proven political mechanisms that have long been in operation in our region of the world, conclusions should be drawn indeed from the chapter of the Eastern policy pursued by Piłsudski, entitled 'the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories'. Nations that ignore history are doomed to repeat it.

In his thoughts, Józef Piłsudski reached far ahead of the time he happened to live in. He proposed a solution that would have beneficially situated Poland as well as Lithuania the twentieth-century history and, moreover, would have perhaps helped another world war to be avoided. Parliamentary democracy is a peaceful war against everybody. One cannot rule a state based on a democratic system on one's own, in opposition to all the other state factors, in the longer run; such a country would not be democratic any longer. It is quite plausible that if Józef Piłsudski did not respect, deep inside, the principles of democracy and self-determination so much, he might have used methods opposing these principles to implement his programme, designed in a way that would meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Postscript

This study was written 20 years ago but – a rare thing – has lost none of its relevance as its argument is based exclusively on the numerous archival records completely unknown to date. The present edition has bibliographical notes complemented only wherever absolutely necessary.

This book has inspired some scholars while reassuring others that exploring the addressed topics is legitimate. A list follows below of the basic literature on the subject-matter in question (by date of publication) that has come out after the first (Polish) edition of this book was published.

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Appendix I

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Baranowicze	Byelorussian: Баранавічы, Baranawiczy
Belmenti	o ^b
Beresteczko	Ukrainian: Берестечко
Berezyna (river)	Berezina (river)
Biała Podlaska	Polish: Biała Podlaska
Białohusze	o
Białowieża	Polish: Białowieża
Białystok	Polish: Białystok
Bielsk Podlaski	Polish: Bielsk Podlaski
Biłgoraj	Polish: Biłgoraj
Bobrujsk	Byelorussian: Бабруйск, Babrujsk
Bobty	Lithuanian: Babtai, Babta
Bogudzięki	Byelorussian: Багудзенкі, Bahudzienki
Borysów	Byelorussian: Барысаў, Barysaŭ
Braclaw	Ukrainian: Брацлав
Brasław	Byelorussian: Браслаў, Brasław
Brześć Litewski n/ Bugiem	Byelorussian: Брэст, Берасьце, <i>Brest, Bieraście</i> ; Brest–Litovsk
Bug (river)	Byelorussian: Заходні Буг, Zachodni Buh; Ukrainian: Західний Буг, Zachidnyj Buh (river)
Bukańce	Lithuanian: Bukonys
Chełm	Polish: Chełm
Choława	o
Chotyniec	Ukrainian: Хотинець
Cimkowice	Byelorussian: Цімкавічы

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW ^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Czekiszki	Lithuanian: Čekiškė
Czerwony Dwór	Lithuanian: <i>Raudondvaris</i>
Datnów	Lithuanian: <i>Dotnuva</i>
Daugi	Lithuanian: Daugai
Derażnia	Ukrainian: Деражня
Doksyce	Byelorussian: Докшыцы
Dołminów	o
Domaszewice	o
Druskienniki	Lithuanian: <i>Druskininkai</i>
Dryświaty	Byelorussian: Дрысвяты
Dubno	Ukrainian: Дубно
Dwór	o
Dziewałtów	Lithuanian: Deltuva
Dzisna	Byelorussian: Дзісна́; Lithuanian: Dysna
Dźwina	Daugava river
Ejregoła	Lithuanian: Ariogala, żmudz. Ariuogala
Ellerna	o
Galicja	Galicia
Gonczary	o
Grodno	Byelorussian: Гродна/Нrodna, or: Гародня, Горадня
Gródek	Ukrainian: Городок, <i>Horodok</i>
Guściany	o
Hajna	Byelorussian: Гайна
Hłusk	Byelorussian: Глуск, Hłusk
Homel	Byelorussian: Гомель, Homiel
Horbaczewo	o

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW ^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Ihumeń	From 1923 Byelorussian: Чэrvень; Russian: Червень
Iłuksza	Latvian: <i>Iļūkste</i> ; Lithuanian: Alūksna
Janów	o
Jaswojnie	Lithuanian: Josvainiai
Jewje	Lithuanian: Vievis
Jeziorany	o
Jeziorosy	Lithuanian: <i>Zarasai</i>
Jurjowo	o
Kalesicze	o
Kalwaria	o
Karolin	Lithuanian: Karalina
Kiedańce	o
Kiejdany	Lithuanian: <i>Kėdainiai</i>
Kijów	Ukrainian: Київ, Kyjiw
Kleck	Byelorussian: Клецк, Lithuanian: <i>Dūda</i> , <i>Dūdos</i> ; Byelorussian: <i>Клюшчаны</i>
Kłuszczany	o
Kobryń	Byelorussian: Кóбрын, <i>Kobryn</i>
Konstantynów	o
Kormiałów	Lithuanian: Karmėlava
Korytno	Byelorussian: Карытнае
Koszedary	Lithuanian: <i>Kaišiadorys</i>
Kowel	Ukrainian: Ковель
Kowno	Lithuanian: Kaunas
Kozakiszki	Lithuanian: Kazokiškės
Krakinów	Lithuanian: <i>Krekenava</i>
Krasnystaw	Polish: Krasnystaw

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW ^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Kroki	Lithuanian: Krakės
Krzemieniec	Ukrainian: Кременець, Kremeneć
Kuźna	
Lepel	Byelorussian: Лепель, Lepiel
Lida	Byelorussian: Ліда, lit. Lyda
Lubar	Ukrainian: Любар
Lublin	Polish: Lublin
Lwów	Ukrainian: Львів, <i>Lwiw</i>
Łabunów	Lithuanian: Labūnava
Łankiesia	
Łohojsk	Byelorussian: Лагойск, Łahojsk
Łopie	Lithuanian: Lapės,
Łopienica [Wielka]	Byelorussian: Нгуніавічы
Łuck	Ukrainian: Луцьк, Łućk)
Łunna	Byelorussian: Лунна
Łyntupy	Byelorussian: Лынтупы
[Mariampol]	Lithuanian: <i>Marijampolė</i>
MarijnooGórka	o
Melegjany/Mielegjany	Lithuanian: <i>Mielagėnai</i>
Memel (German)	Lithuanian: <i>Klaipėda</i>
Merecz	Lithuanian: <i>Merkinė</i>
Mińsk	Byelorussian: Мінск, hist. Менск
Mohylew	Byelorussian: Магілёў, Mahiloŭ
Mojsicze	Byelorussian: Мойсічы
Mołodeczno	Byelorussian: Маладзечна
Moniszkańce	Lithuanian: Moniuszkańce
Mostołtowicze	Lithuanian: Mastaltavičiai

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW ^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Motal	Byelorussian: <i>Мóталь</i>
Motykały	Byelorussian: Матыкалы
Mozyrz	Byelorussian: Мазыр, <i>Mazyr</i>
Muchawiec (river)	Byelorussian: Мухавец (river)
Niedzingio	Lithuanian: <i>Nedzingė</i>
Niemen (river)	Byelorussian: Нёман (<i>Nioman</i>); Lithuanian: <i>Nemunas</i> (river)
Niemenczyn	Lithuanian: <i>Nemenčinė</i>
Niemoniuny	Lithuanian: Nemažūnai
Nieśwież	Byelorussian: Нясьвіж,
Nowo Świąciany	Lithuanian: <i>Švenčionėliai</i>
Nowogródek	Byelorussian: Навагрудак, Nawahrudak;
Olewk	Ukrainian: Олевськ
Olita	Lithuanian: <i>Alytus</i>
Oława	Lithuanian: Alovė
Opitołoki	Lithuanian: Apytalaukis
Opsa	Byelorussian: <i>Опса</i>
Orla	Byelorussian: Орля
Osipowicze	Byelorussian: Асіповічы, Asipowiczy
Ossowo	Byelorussian: Асовыя, Asowuja
Ostróg	Ukrainian: Острог (<i>Ostroh</i>)
Oszmiana	Byelorussian: Ошмяны, <i>Oszmiany</i>
Pacunele	Lithuanian: <i>Pociūnėliai</i>
Peczele	o
Pińsk	Byelorussian: Пінск, <i>Pinsk</i>
Pleszczenica	Byelorussian: Плешчаницы
Plusy	Byelorussian: Плюсы
Płasownik	O

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW ^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Pobojsko	Lithuanian: <i>Pabaiskas</i>
[Podlasie}	Podlachia
Ponatery	Lithuanian: Panoteriai
Podole	Ukrainian: Поділля, Podilla
Polesie	Byelorussian: Палессе, Ukrainian: Полісся
Połowce	o
Poniewież	Lithuanian: Panevėžys
Poniewieżyk	Lithuanian: Panevėžiukas
Porzecze	<i>Парэчка</i>
Prusewice	o
Pruzana	Byelorussian: Пружаны
Przyborów	o
Ptycz (river)	Byelorussian: Пціч
Radziwiłłmonty	Byelorussian: Красная Звезда, <i>Krasnaja Zwiazda</i>
Radzyń Podlaski	Polish: Radzyń Podlaski
Równe	Ukrainian: Рівне / Riwne
Rumszyszki	Lithuanian: <i>Rumšiškės</i>
Sejny	Polish: Sejny (lithuanian: Seinai)
Siesiki	Lithuanian: Siesikai
Skomile	
Skurcz	Ukrainian: Скірче
Słonim	Byelorussian: Слoнiм
Słuck	Byelorussian: Слyцк lub Слyцк
Smolewicze	Byelorussian: Смaлявiчы, Smalawiczy

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW ^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Sokółka	Polish: Sokółka
Szaty	Lithuanian: Šėta
Szyleny	Lithuanian: Šilėnai
Trokienniki	o
Turniany	o
Tylża Sowieck	Russian: Советск, Sowietzk; German: Tilsit
Uniewież (present Nieżyn)	Ukrainian: Ніжин, Nieżyn
Upniki	Lithuanian: Upninkai
Wędziagoła	Lithuanian: Vandžiogala
Widze	Byelorussian: Відзы
Wieprze	o
Wieprz (river)	Polish: Wieprz (river)
Wierchowice	Byelorussian: Вярховічы
Wiljec	o
Wilejka	Byelorussian: Вiлейка
Wilki	Lithuanian: <i>Vilkija</i> ,
Wilno	Lithuanian: Vilnius
Wiłkomierz	Lithuanian: <i>Ukmergė</i>
Witebsk	Byelorussian: Віцебск, Wiciebsk
Witunicze	Byelorussian: Вітунічы; Wituniczy
Włodawa	Polish: Włodawa
WłodzimierzWołyński	Ukrainian: Володимир, Wołodymyr
Wodokty	Lithuanian: <i>Vadaktai</i>
Wołkowysk	Byelorussian: Ваўкавыск/ <i>Vaŭkavysk</i> Waukawysk
Wołyń	Ukrainian: Волинь
Wysokie Litewskie	Byelorussian: Высокае

Names of cities, towns and estates appearing in the documentation prepared by ZCZW^a	The names of the cities and towns mentioned in the text are in force AD 2022
Zasław	Byelorussian: Заслаўе, Zasaŭje
Zdzięcioł	Byelorussian: Дзятлава, Działawa
Zwiahel/Nowogród Wołyński	Ukrainian: Новограда Волинський, Nowohrad Wołyński
Zambrów	Polish: Zambrów
Zawierz	Byelorussian: Завер'е, Zawierje
Ziembin	Byelorussian: Зёмбін
Żabczyce	Byelorussian: Жабчыцы
Żejmy	Lithuanian: Žeimiai
Życin	o
Żyrmuny	Byelorussian: Жырмуны
Żytomierz	Ukrainian: Житомир, Żytomyr

^a “Wykaz gmin znajdujących się na terenie podległym Zarządowi Cywilnemu Ziemi Wschodnich z podziałem na okręgi i powiaty,” in J. Gierowska-Kałuża, *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja?*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 115–122.

^b o- undetermined

APPENDIX II

EVERYDAY PRACTICE IN THE DISTRICTS OF WILNO, BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI, AND MINSK IN THE LIGHT OF REPORTS BY AGENTS OF THE ZCZW'S CONSCRIPTION-AND-ENLISTMENT DEPARTMENT

The chronological arrangement of the extracts from the reports of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department of the ZCZW, from all counties of the Brześć Litewski, Vilnius, and Minsk Districts, from the period in which conscription/enlistment agents were active (1919), reveals individual events, moods and causes of the escalation of tension, leading to the fiasco of policies announced in the April Proclamation. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the contribution of external and internal factors on the process that led to the complete undermining of the slogans that inspired the Proclamation for the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

To best reflect the atmosphere in those areas and those years, I present fragments of the reports almost verbatim. I have adopted this approach also because I feel that the evaluation of these facts goes beyond the framework of history and touches upon the individual morality and social views of the reader.

JULY 1919

I. District of Vilnius

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY OF TROKI¹

The celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the Union of Lublin, organised on 6th July in Troki County, were attended by 3,000 people, including the Karaites and Jews delegated by their organisations.

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY OF ŚWIĘCIANY²

The celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the Union of Lublin, organised in the County, were attended by 5,000 people; well-known Byelorussian activist

1 BPW, Dział Starych Druków i Rękopisów [Old Prints and Manuscripts Section], ZCZW, No. 1773/14/II, c. 64–70.

2 Ibid.

Wincuk Urbanowicz [Vintsuk Urbanovich] served as secretary of the rally, and a resolution was passed in Polish and Byelorussian.

The celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the Union of Lublin in Oszmiana County took place in an atmosphere exceptionally favourable to Poland. Selected delegates visited the Chief of State. The enthusiasm resulted in numerous enrolments of volunteers for the Polish Army (Lieutenant Jastrzębski in person brought over 100 volunteers on foot to Vilnius).

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY OF WILEJKA³

In the parish of Żyrmuny, where 80 % of the population consider themselves Polish, the Lithuanian priests settled at the parishes. They were entrusted with the distribution of food, posted announcements in this matter only in Lithuanian, and they also banned Polish recitals in church.

The Uhlans of the 13th Vilnius Regiment, Dąbrowski's unit, attacked the *sołtys* [village administrator] and committed a robbery. Here and there, Bolshevik sentiments resulting not so much from agitation but from the detrimental activity of the field gendarmerie (Orla Commune, Gonczary) and the excesses of some military units (Major Dąbrowski, Lieutenant Siemaszko), which took a toll on the population here.⁴

The Jews of Wilejka County spread rumours about the imminent return of the Bolsheviks, which deterred Poles from joining the Polish Army.

MESSAGE OF 20th JULY 1919⁵

The celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the Union of Lublin organised in Stare Świąciany were attended by representatives of all the nationalities.

MONTHLY REPORT ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE CONSCRIPTION-
AND-ENLISTMENT INSPECTORATE IN WILNO FOR THE PERIOD [OF]
1st JULY-1st AUGUST 1919⁶

“And, for reasons unknown, volunteer-soldiers from Lithuania have not yet been equated in rights with recruits from the Crown [i.e. former Kingdom of Poland, within the ex-Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth]. This matter has been repeatedly raised by the Inspectorate over a long period of time, completely to no avail.”

3 Ibid., No. 1773/14.

4 Ibid., No. 1773/14, c. 67.

5 Ibid., No. 1773/14.

6 Ibid., No. 1773/14/II, c. 64–70.

MESSAGE OF 26th JULY 1919⁷

A rally in Łuntypy with 4,000 participants. “The national antagonisms have no deeper foundation; they are a product of Lithuanian agitation near the demarcation line and of Bolshevik agitation based on the inadequate food supply.”

REPORT FROM GRODNO AND THE SURROUNDING AREA⁸

(23rd July) The parish priest in Nowo-Święciany funded a monument to the Bolshevik commissar Jankowski, who was executed by the Polish authorities, and decorated it with flowers.

*II. District of Brześć Litewski*REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF KOBRYŃ⁹

The administrative authorities did not receive the relevant instructions and orders concerning aid to the families of volunteers. The Łabno estate, mothballed by the occupants, has been leased to Mr Kulmaszewski for 5 Marks per morgue, and he offers the peasants a sub-lease of 30 Marks per morgue. In these circumstances, the population is not interested in national and political issues.

The Polish schools that existed in secret [i.e. supported with private funds] in Russian times are waiting for help from the Government.

The Jews are the only the people's only source of information, because the Orthodox population does not read illegal press [*resp.* propaganda publications], as they cannot manage Polish. Those who have returned are mistrustful; those who have survived wish to see any law enacted.

III. District of Minsk: not covered yet.**AUGUST 1919***I. District of Vilnius*REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF TROKI¹⁰

The local police are bullwhipping the population, which causes a dislike of the Polish administration.

7 Ibid., No. 1773/14.

8 Ibid., No. 1773/14/III, c. 350

9 Ibid., c. 351 i nn.

10 Ibid., c. 307.

REPORT FROM WILNO, BEFORE CITY COUNCIL ELECTION¹¹

The *krajowcy* [= members of 'Fellow Countrymen' movement] are seeking to create the Grand Duchy of Lithuania out of Lithuania and White Ruthenia, and the Polish community are showing their desire to incorporate the Eastern Territories into Poland. Two organisations have been formed:

1. The Union of the Unity and Force of Poland, consisting mainly of Poles from Polish Livonia postulating an eastern border along the lines of the great rivers of the Upper Dnieper, Berezina, and Dźwina [Daugava]. Within these borders, the Union has proposed a legal-and-state programme involving the Baltic States.
2. The Popular National Association [ZLN], bringing together National Democrats and non-partisans.

II. District of Brześć Litewski

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI¹²

The administration is not very resilient, as the officers have too little life skills and manners. Byelorussian agitation is carried out by popes [i.e. Orthodox priests] and Russian intelligentsia, while Bolshevik agitation is carried out by the Jewish element.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF SŁONIM

In its editorial, issue No. 5 of pro-Kolchak *Rodnyi Krai* called for armed action against the nests of two-headed and one-headed eagles, fuelling the expectations of the distribution of land through armed violence.

On 25th July, a gang of eight attacked the 'Bogudzięki' ['Thankgod'] estate owned by Strawiński. The gang¹³ issued an appeal to create a party of *chervenoarmeets* [members of the Red Army] communists and a Forests Committee, proclaiming themselves to be friends of the destitute and enemies of the bourgeoisie and

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., No. 1773/14, c. 210.

13 The gang was commanded by former Russian soldier Alexeenko, who was reportedly clever; it was reportedly subsidised by Jews. Their idea was to set fire and assassinate *burżuj*s [derogatory for 'the bourgeois'] and 'canaries' [gendarmierie soldiers], especially Polish ones. Having set the estate on fire, the incinerators rescued the good[s] of the workers with alacrity. BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 238.

kulaks. The assaulted Strawiński sought rescue with [General Stanisław Szeptycki, who on 29th July dispatched an infantry company [of] 1st Platoon of Uhlans under the command of Lieutenant Rylski.

III. District of Minsk: not covered yet.

SEPTEMBER 1919

I. District of Vilnius

REPORT No. 43 FROM THE COUNTY OF WILEJKA¹⁴

(23rd September) The gendarmerie station in Dołminów issued a written regulation in Russian that eggs were to be provided via the Jews, for which the rabbi had to collect [money]. The priest present at the rally stated that anyone who would not accept allegiance to Poland would be deported from the country. Another priest announced that land would be divided among the volunteers of the Polish Army, which at first caused widespread surprise, but then the number of volunteers immediately increased.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF NOWOGRÓDEK¹⁵

Bolesław Kuroczyński, a gendarme in Stołowicze, is particularly unpopular (he is known as a bribe-taker). He also served with the Germans. The Communal Distribution Committee has auctioned off American donations.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF OSZMIANA¹⁶

The people are resisting the introduction of the Byelorussian language in church, as done by ten Byelorussian priests of federalist convictions. The Orthodox clergy, on the other hand, are conducting agitation among the people in the spirit of Great Russia, with positive results. The administrative offices are staffed by local landowners.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF ŚWIĘCIANY¹⁷

There is a strongly rooted fear of 'serfdom'. Those who are breaking the county authorities' regulations [and] do not ensure their execution are treated by the

14 Ibid., No. 1773/14/III, c. 276 (verso) and 278.

15 Ibid., c. 297.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., No. 1773/14/III, c. 288 (verso) and 290.

people with mistrust and reservation. A particularly bad impression is always brought about by any indecisiveness, which is interpreted as the most obvious proof of the Government's bad intentions. To stand with commoners reinforces sympathies for the good old days, when the authority was real and not of the kind that has to ask the nation 'what to do'. There is a general opinion that the gendarmerie only think about their own needs and conveniences. They arrange their accommodations with comfort; for instance, one of them settled at the Puttkamer Palace in Rajce. Looking for Bolsheviks and criminals is hardly something they would think of. They should be barred from conducting searches among peaceful people.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF ŚWIĘCIANY

The landed citizens [= landowners], not wanting to "be aligned with commoners", abstained altogether from preparations for and participation in the People's Congress. In the context of the economic disaster of the entire country, the citizens are speculating with the Jews (for instance, Mackiewicz, younger brother of the Commissioner in Kłuszczy District). And the head of circuit one, Wasilewski, a Lithuania maniac by conviction, is using his official position to spread agitation.

REPORTS FROM THE INSPECTORATE OF WILNO¹⁸

There is prominent participation in a lively campaign in support of the integration of the non-Polish population. There is also a shortage of common salt as a consequence of the improper functioning of an inadequately organised provisioning office, which only supplies localities near the railway lines.

There is an increasing tendency for officials to treat the people in a tactless and rude manner, which causes dissatisfaction. The people say that the real Government is only in Warsaw, and here it is all just 'lords' with whom one cannot talk. There was a recorded case of peasants knowing about the Chief Commander, in the village of Kalesicze. In several cottages his effigies were displayed, signed 'Our Chief of State – friend of the people'.

REPORT No. 40 FROM THE COUNTY OF NOWOGRÓDEK¹⁹

There is a shortage of food, shortage of seeds for sowing, epidemics are raging, the Białystok regiment has requisitioned horses, doubt is growing among the

18 Ibid., c. 260.

19 Ibid., c. 279.

people as to whether the agrarian reform will be implemented, and thus part of the population doubts the sincerity of the Polish authorities' intentions.

INFORMATION FROM THE COUNTY OF OSZMIANA²⁰

The gendarmes in the county are spreading a rumour that the law on agricultural reform will not be in force in Lithuania. The administration of Oszmiana County is festering and the people are oppressed. This does not promote conscription. The Orthodox population, formerly Uniate, wants to have Catholic priests in the Counties of Oszmiana, Dzisna, and those adjacent to them. The Catholic clergy, dissatisfied with the dean priest, is seeking to have him removed.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF WILEJKA²¹

The Byelorussian Catholic community does not want Byelorussian schools, while Orthodox Byelorussians, demonstrating daily a lack of trust in Polish officials, will be happy to send their children to Byelorussian schools, to which numerous teachers, previously known for their Russification bent, are applying with certificates of completing Byelorussian teacher training courses and authorisations from the Byelorussian Council. The atmosphere is locally disturbed by the head of the Mołodeczno circuit, Mr Budgin, "a grouch, maltreating everyone."

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF ŚWIĘCIANY

On 14th September a popular rally took place under the slogans of protest against persecution in the Kowno [Kaunas] region. 2,000 participants shouted 'Long live our *bat'ka* [father] Yazep Piłsudski'.

REPORT No. 44 FROM THE COUNTY OF GRODNO²²

(24th September) Inebriated with alcohol by the Jews, the gendarmes "are behaving in a way that discourages the local people from the Polish Government whose authorities they are representatives of." (The same report tells us that the author was attacked by four starving Bolshevik POWs, escapees from the camp in Grodno, and a conscription agent got away from them by riding a bicycle quickly.)

20 Ibid., c. 280–280 (verso).

21 Ibid., c. 274 (verso).

22 Ibid., c. 274.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF LIDA

On 8th September, a demonstration against Prussian violence in Upper Silesia was organised in the County of Lida. About 1,000 people live in terrible conditions in the county “as the factories are not on [not operating], there is no income, they eat only whatever they get from the Government, the children are yellowed [i.e. look sick] and can barely walk.” A sum of 3,500 Marks was collected during the rally, “a flower for the poor of Upper Silesia.”

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF OSZMIANA

“The only thing that attracts the local people, who are ignorant and almost uninformed in national matters, towards Poland is agrarian reform ... but there prevails a legitimate conviction that an official being a landed citizen cannot support agrarian reform.” The agents report a disturbing sale of land by the landowners to Jews (at exorbitant prices, 1,000 Roubles per *desyatin*). The ‘landed citizens’ persuaded the peasants to join the Polish Army, “and now he [the young master] has baled out and come back, while they stayed at the front. We will not be fooled again.”

*II. District of Brześć Litewski**REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI*²³

Lieutenant Frejlin, at the time of his appointment, imposed a 10,000-Rouble contribution on the village of Domaszewicze, without any reason. Many innocent people were shot by firing squad, by order of that Frejlin. After his arrest, 60,000 Roubles were found on him, but no money was returned to the robbed people.

The Polish co-operative in Lemieszewice was systematically crushed by a competitive Jewish co-operative. Bolshevik agitators spread rumours of the oppression of minorities by the Polish Government, but there was no Lithuanian or Bolshevik agitation in the area, and the Great-Russian one would not find an audience. The moods and class relations were, however, intensifying, and the ruthless treatment of the peasants angered the masses of peasantry, making them susceptible to Bolshevik whispers. The author of the information appealed: “As the main objective of the agitation is to spread fear of serfdom among the peasants, an appeal should therefore be issued, signed by the Commissioner-General Osmołowski, whom the entire population believes and trusts.”

23 Ibid., c. 261.

III. District of Minsk

REPORT FROM THE INSPECTORATE OF MINSK²⁴

The administration, lenient and permissive, tolerates the abuses by the 7th Lida Regiment. The Educational Society and the Minsk Land Council are operational. There is no Byelorussian agitation, but there is Jewish-Bolshevik agitation.

REPORT FROM THE INSPECTORATE OF MINSK²⁵

The Byelorussians are not hostile; they will be friendly if they see that the Government really takes care of them, “but also makes them feel the power and authority that the average Byelorussian yearns for.” The Administration [ZCZW] is superficial when it comes to dealing with the most important matters, unreliable and unstable in relation to harmful individuals (Greater-Poland army). The provisioning offices are unskilful, inept, and often unreliable.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BOBRUJSK²⁶

The Jews are settling old scores with the help of the army.

OCTOBER 1919

I. District of Vilnius

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF ŚWIĘCIAŃY²⁷

The inspector of the Conscription-and-Enlistment Department in Święciany has received a letter from the Lithuanian authorities stating that the Lithuanians feel obliged to help the families of their soldiers living in the area seized by the Polish Army, with a list of the families of the soldiers who deserve assistance attached.²⁸

In the Melangjan [i.e. Mielegiany/Mielegiany] Commune, the people complained about the negative attitude of the authorities towards them. “They say that the Sejm in Warsaw has given us equal rights, but only those elegantly clad and only-Polish-speaking have a voice here. We speak Lithuanian and wear *lapti* [bast shoes], so we have to bow to everyone and all matters we are concerned about are being decided without our involvement.”

24 Ibid., c. 278.

25 Ibid., c. 266.

26 Ibid., c. 273: ‘Report from the Counties of Ihumeń, Borysów, and Bobrujsk’.

27 Ibid., c. 259, ‘Report No. 53 of 19th October 1919, Inspectorate of Vilnius’.

28 Ibid.

*REPORT FROM THE INSPECORATE OF WILNO*²⁹

The moods of the population depend upon the conduct of the local authorities. The absence of any appeals or brochures is quite disquieting. The Byelorussians (Choława, Mojsicze) want Polish schools; the local Russians—[want their children to be taught] in Byelorussian.

REPORT FROM THE INSPECORATE OF OSZMIANA

Due to tactless behaviour by officials and the tense relations between the manor-house and peasants, a sentiment hostile to Poland is developing in some communes. The people respond to the Government representatives in accordance with their conduct, and thus the people show a certain reluctance towards the officials being [landed] citizens, who mostly take care of their own pockets and settle matters not without a certain bias.

REPORT FROM THE INSPECORATE OF WILNO

The as-yet-unregulated issue of provisioning and the unsettled issue of financial assistance to the families of the volunteers diminish the authority of the Government of the Republic of Poland, and the grievances are justified. A local-government election has taken place, although the competences of the local governments have not yet been defined. Byelorussian Orthodox Christians voted for Polish candidates at their own initiative, without nominating their own. The most disliked are circuit chiefs who are recruited among landed citizens. They are at the same time the first and the last court instance in the counties, where magistrates' courts are not functioning at all.³⁰ There are no people who would be sincerely devoted to the Byelorussian cause, nor is there any elementary awareness. There are no publications in the Lithuanian language that might counteract the strongly chauvinistic Lithuanian agitation.

The landed citizens have taken advantage of the Commissioner-General's vague regulation on the donation of one-third of the harvest they have not sown. Count Czapski in Oszmiana County also collected one-third from the portion that constituted servitude dues. Clashes in this respect occurred en masse, and the grain taken away from the farmhands went straight from the field to Jewish hands. The owners refused to lease the land to peasants, either by not sowing it or by relying on Jewish mediation.

The Grodno Forest Board introduced fees for collecting brush-wood and moss.

29 Ibid., No. 1773/14, c. 258.

30 Ibid., No. 1773/14/III, c. 270 verso.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF GRODNO

Secret distilleries have been organised into a secret association which pays the penalties for its members imposed by the Government upon the detection of a distillery. Secret brewing activities have been organised in the northern part of Vilnius County.

*II. District of Brześć Litewski**REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI.*³¹

In Brześć Litewski County, where provisioning is not in operation, Byelorussian and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) activity has been developing. In view of the shortage of livestock and grain, the fact that the agricultural clerk in Brześć publicly auctioned off post-German rye caused an uproar. The Jews bought it and immediately sold it at usurious prices to the [local] people. In turn, the provisioning clerks paid the employees of their estates in kind with the goods entrusted to them.

*REPORT FROM THE DISTRICT OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI*³²

In the Żabczyce Commune of Pińsk County, the gendarmerie actively intervened “regulating the relations” between the Skirmuntt manor-house in Porzecze and the peasants, who were forced to work in the manorial areas [i.e. fields] under threat.

The people are grumbling about abuses by the army and the gendarmerie by comparing the Polish (dis)orderly conduct with German and Bolshevik rule. The friendly attitude of even the Belarussian population towards the Polish state is shifting in some localities, due to the odd behaviour of the local landowners. They are seeking excessive profits and selling grain only to Jews – the speculators from whom the hungry peasants must then buy it at a much higher price. These circumstances, including the misery of the farmhand mass, the fear of serfdom and provisioning indispositions, are gradually pulling the people away from Poland and preparing fertile ground for Bolshevism.

31 Ibid., No. 1773/14, c. 271.

32 Ibid., c. 245.

III. District of Minsk

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF IHUMEN³³

The Bolshevik (meaning, Jewish) agitators [original wording] are masters of the situation in terms of agitation. The proclamations in the Polish language are ineffective. The Christian population holds almost exclusively Bolshevik currency that is accepted by Jews at a ratio of 1:7 of the nominal value. Even the intelligentsia succumbs to Bolshevik agitation. Among lower county officers there are some former Bolshevik activists. They are taking advantage of their position to attest for one another. There are many Bolsheviks staying in Ihumeń itself – going unpunished – and when the authorities arrest someone, their comrades in the Polish county offices testify to his integrity.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF ŚLUCK

The owners of estates, with the help of the gendarmerie, are collecting payments from peasants for the pastures they used under Bolshevik rule.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF MINSK

(11th October 1919) The Polish intelligentsia in the counties and the village nobility [*szlachta zaściankowa*] are outraged that Russians, at one time faithful tsarist servants and famous ‘Pole eaters’, and later servants of the Bolshevik commune, are sometimes multitudinously employed in offices.³⁴ The Polish administration is superficial, unreliable and unstable. It tolerates illegal requisitions by the military authorities, and the unreliability of the provisioning offices disappoints even those who have eagerly been looking forward to the arrival of the Poles.

The Bolshevik agitators caught by the local population and handed over to the gendarmerie are being released by the latter, “hence the people, fearing revenge, are ceasing to act.” Cooperation comes from folk teachers hostile to Polish statehood and Jews who circulate around villages without any obstacles. There is a shortage of salt, but bread is available. The urban population is frantically bustling about, forming associations. The rural intelligentsia is indifferent to everything except their own safety and comfort.

A lack of uniforms, underwear, footwear and scarce food rations is the reason for the desertion of 20 % of the Minsk Riflemen Regiment.

33 Ibid., c. 257.

34 Ibid., c. 266.

REPORT FROM THE DISTRICTS OF NOWOGRÓDEK AND ŚLUCK³⁵

The agent finds three reasons why his action does not bring the expected result. Firstly, the carelessness of the military authorities about the families of volunteers, who often suffer poverty without a way out. Secondly, the Bolshevik, Byelorussian, and Russian agitation against our army. Thirdly, the egoism of large-scale landowners turning the population not only against themselves, but also against Poland and all things Polish.

One example: in Nieśwież, patriotic rallies were held every week (on 7th, 14th, and 21st September 1919). The prices of grain in the Nieśwież area doubled the Jews flooded the settlements and villages to buy out the grain. The wives of the volunteers reported to the authorities with verbal complaints³⁶ about not only having been deprived of any assistance or allowances that they were due from the military authorities, but also the resilient administrator of Prince Radziwiłł's estate of Karolin (the organiser of 'Borderland Aid', holding products from various agencies, charged quite exorbitant fees for them) ordered them to get out of their apartments, provided no heating fuel and gave no opportunity to work. Having no money, they could not leave, as in order to apply for a passport they needed a photo, and the Jews were profiteering on photographic services.

The relations between the manors and the peasants were so tense that there were cases of arson of the estates. Despite the economic prosperity, the Jewish population assumed an intransigently hostile and Russificationist stance. "The Jewish Bolshevik agitators are a dark, powerful force that Poland will be able to win over by nothing. Their agitation is spreading with impunity and great success."³⁷

The 'Byelorussian' agitation, conducted by former officials and Russian teachers, triggers local separatism and prepares the ground for future Russian rule.

Józef Piłsudski's visit to Minsk boosted the sentiments among non-Poles. "Prince Radziwiłł is practicing personal and other politics in Nieśwież. During the official stay of the Chief of State in Minsk, he did not take any part in the ceremony; this absence left a very negative impression on the local Polish community. As Prince Radziwiłł holds great personal influence here, his standpoint during the plebiscite should be taken into account."³⁸

35 Ibid., c. 251: 'Report No. 59 of 28th October 1919'.

36 The local authorities have charged fees for applications – and thus written complaints, too.

37 The county's centre is Mir, Commune of Korelicze.

38 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 252: 'Report No. 59 from the Counties of Nowogródek and Śluck (28th October 1919)'.

The agent sought the reason for the impunity of the Bolsheviks in the East in the fact that the authorities are releasing the “notorious agitators, Bolsheviks and communists” arrested at the request of the community to the indignation of honest people, justifying their actions by the lack of incriminating material not provided by the gendarmerie. The managerial positions of police chiefs are entrusted to people with a shady, or overly clear past,³⁹ while the inferior (regional) posts are occupied by landed citizens subordinate to the former.

Only a part of Polish society is favourably inclined towards the ZCZW. The others have been alienated by the abuses of lower administrative executive bodies.

REPORT FROM THE COMMUNES OF HORBACZEWO, GRÓDEK, AND HŁUSK (County of Bobrujsk)

The universally hostile attitude of peasants towards landed citizens is partly explained by the conduct of many among the latter. There are mass conflicts with tenants (at Korytno, the estate of A. Wańkowitz, the administration has not extended the contracts). The farmhands are being evicted and have to build dug-outs in the woods in order to survive the winter, the mills are charging stupendously exorbitant fees for grist, and the last straw is the “liquidation-oriented economic policy of some landowners who, presuming that Bobrujsk County will remain outside the border of Poland, want to sell everything to the Jews for profiteering as fast as possible, instead of selling to co-operatives, provisioning offices, or even to their own farmhands.”

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BORYSÓW⁴⁰

The Assembly of Representatives of Communal Social Organisations⁴¹ resolved as of 23rd October 1919 in Łohojsk that:

1. Parish School Councils, to be joined by delegates of individual communities, will be established;
2. Solely Christian co-operatives will be established;
3. Christian Democracy Associations will be set-up in each parish;
4. A thanksgiving resolution for salvation from the Muscovite invasion, with a demand to be annexed to Poland, will be issued;

39 Public security posts are filled by communists, e.g. Antoni Kołodkiewicz in Kleck.

40 Ibid., c. 233.

41 Including the Communes of Hajna, Łohojsk, Prusewice, Ziembin, Jurjewo, Smolewicz, Pleszczenica, Ossowo, and Witunicze.

5. Material support will be offered to the Polish Army. The collection was to be conducted by the parsons.

NOVEMBER 1919

I. District of Vilnius

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF WILEJKA⁴²

In the small town of Krasne, a meeting of 50–60 Jews was held on 1st/2nd November at Mendzik Hurewicz's house, during which a secret vote was held.

II. District of Brześć Litewski

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF PIŃSK

Of the 24 County's communes, 14 were entirely ruined and the county all came off as a nomadic camp from which ten people a day emigrated, in a body, beyond the Bug [River] or into Ukraine.

There were no facilities available with which to bring the lumber for the fire victims in, for there were no horses available and nothing to machine the timber with, as there were no saw-mills. Of the 20 pre-war Pińsk factories, only one was in operation, and its functioning was under threat due to a lack of Polish match wrappers and stickers. Due to the lack of fuel, even the telegraphic posts were burned, so the wires were lying around on the ground.

The people do not understand the election ordinance, and treat the introduction of Polish as the first stage of re-baptising them into Catholicism. The people here were demoralised owing to a lack of homogeneity in the authorities. Not only has the gendarmerie not subjected itself to civilian authority, but it has not even been in touch with it, treating the peasants' property as its own. The fact that the landowners are not returning to their estates is commonly understood as a symptom of instability of the Polish authority. The peasants are certain that the Polish army, composed of peasant soldiers under the command of Polish officers, is going eastwards in order to institute serfdom there. The numerous proved instances of theft of foodstuffs (provisioning) by the village-heads [*wójt*s] responsible for their distribution have not intensified pro-Polish sentiments.

42 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 220

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI

The hail has smashed the sown areas and the Jews are carrying the cereal away to the Bolsheviks, having bribed the gendarmerie.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI⁴³

The Orthodox [locals] are complaining that the authorities are not willing to hire them to do service, saying that the Russians have been tormenting the Poles for 125 years, so now we will be tormenting you a little. Doctors are issuing cleanliness certificates necessary to be allowed to travel without inspection but still for money, charging fees even for those absent. Many a landowner from the Commune of Wysokie Litewskie is behaving in a not-at-all-civic manner towards the Homeland as they are selling grains whilst neglecting the local hungry peasants, to the Jews for profit. The Jews profiteer completely with impunity, paying considerable bribes to the local gendarmerie. Farmers' associations and co-operatives are malfunctioning due to the lack of goods, whereas the Jewish shops are full of all sorts of goods. The appropriate factors ought to extend possible aid to co-operative activity so that the commerce can finally be pulled out of Jewish hands. The Provisioning Commission is presided over by R. Jaczynowski, owner of the estate of Juncewicze in the Commune of Połowce, an active man, who has selected the peasants who were to take part in a trip to Poznań. Former Russian officials Kassian and Dmitry Kitsko, who have received no posts with the Polish administration, are propagating Byelorussian ideas amongst the people. Epsztein is spreading Bolshevik ideas. The locals have elected Bolshevik agitator Kornel Gryzuk as a member of the Wierchowice Commune Council.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF PIŃSK⁴⁴

Here and there, the people like the arrangements of Bolsheviks, under whose rule one could profiteer with impunity and earn enormous sums. The whole population of Telechany Commune has been displaced to do coerced labour in Germany or in the Congress Kingdom, and those of Hotyń Commune to Russia [*sic*].

43 Ibid., c. 236.

44 Ibid., c. 230.

III. District of Minsk

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BORYSÓW⁴⁵

Small-holders interested in agricultural reform are seeking to have the greater ownerships parcelled out. The Byelorussian population is expecting Poland to satisfy their economic needs, as they would join the Polish Army in exchange for material benefits.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF KOBRYŃ⁴⁶

According to Skirmunt[t]'s opinion, Polish partisan troops carried out a whole series of requisitions and executed an innocent in Mołodeczno man. Christian co-operatives in Janów and Motal are about to collapse owing to the deadly Jewish competition. The population of the County of Kobryń is politically colourless. The opinion "We don't care who is to rule us, be it a Jew or a Gypsy, as long as there's peace and bread at last" is common and prevalent.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF SŁONIM⁴⁷

The people are indifferent, as long as they feel all right. The sentiments about agrarian reform being best are everywhere, which is creating a positive influence. Everyone would like to receive more land or buy it cheaply. They are willingly listening about the agrarian movement in Poland, asking when agricultural reform will come about in this area as well. Abuses are occurring in social organisations, for example the Board of the Zdzięcioł Co-operative is hiding obtained products from the poor people whilst selling and distributing them to their acquaintances. The Jews are pursuing an enormous and efficient counteraction to those few impulses and social efforts of the Polish people, and of the others who are favourably disposed towards Poland. They are persuading the common people that Poles and the Polish Army are seeking to institute serfdom, counter-agitating the setting up of Farmers' Association co-operatives saying that Poles are cunning pieces-of-work, willing to cheat the people so that they can collect money through these organisations. This abject people is yielding to the smart Judas-like fabricators who are making colossal profits from it. A yearning of the villagers for the tsar and for the pre-war welfare is gradually emerging, and Denikin is coming into view as a 'blissful saviour'.

45 Ibid., c. 242.

46 Ibid., c. 240.

47 Ibid., c. 238.

The school administration is rather inauspiciously propagating education in the county. Former Russian teachers were admitted to governmental teacher training courses in Zdzięcioł, who have assumed a definitely inimical stance towards Polishness and brought Russian agitation to the courses.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BOBRUJSK⁴⁸

Two Polish uhlans forced the village administrator [*sołtys*], by way of a beating, to exchange 500 Duma Roubles into tsarist ones. Resulting from the poisoning of wells, with a lack of medical assistance in the county, typhoid fever is raging. In Osipowicze, due to a lack of available jobs Russian officials have asked the Polish authorities to facilitate for them passage to the south of Russia.

In BOBRUJSK, the POLISH SOCIAL COMMITTEE (24 members) associates all the [local] social organisations. Chairman Zahorski with the Rev. Dean Pacewicz are at the head.⁴⁹

DECEMBER 1919

I. District of Vilnius

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF WILNO⁵⁰

The output of peasant farm-holdings is the same as before the war. However, the [landed] citizens have not sown even a 100th of their portion of arable fields, which leads one to envision considerable diminishment of the 1920 harvest. The residents possess passable stocks, which might be sufficient until the next summer, were it not for the destructive and economically disastrous system of our troops collecting war benefits. The way in which the army is being supplied causes a lack of trust for the Polish Government. Comparisons of the conduct of Polish versus Bolshevik soldiers prove to be in favour of the latter, who are said to be characterised by a certain restraint, and even indulgence.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF GRODNO⁵¹

The issue of reconstruction has not kicked off. A major part of Druskienniki has been burnt; there are 15 burnt houses in Stara Ruda, 40 in Porzecze, 12 in

48 Ibid., c. 233.

49 The Central Welfare Council (30 members) is chaired by the Rev. Dean Pacewicz and J. Jeśman, J. Milicer is a member of the Board; the Polish Women's Club (25 members) is chaired by Mrs Emeryk and Mrs Wojewódzka.

50 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14, c. 213.

51 Ibid., c. 216.

Szandubra, etc., etc. Illegal, as it was protection-based, division of cereal has been detected in Jeziorany. The wealthy received nine *pud* each, the poor got nothing. Circuit head Strzałkowski is forcing the peasants to do labour for his own private benefit. In Łunno, the Borderland Guard has reactivated a youth club founded once by the Christian Democracy. In the concentration camps [i.e., situated in the central part of a given area], captives are fed unsatisfactorily. “The peasants consider the present rule ‘lordly’ because of the fact that they are not protected by the Government, or cared about, whereas the landowners (landed citizens) are privileged.”

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF DZISNA⁵²

There has been a shortage of everything in the shops since the arrival of the Polish Armed Forces. This is the reason behind the sentiments recalling “the good old times when the tsar reigned and everything was in ample supply.” Landless and small-holders are very interested in the agrarian reform, while peasants have assumed a wait-and-see attitude.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF WILEJKA⁵³

Among the peasantry, the rural areas are divided into two groups characterised by considerable tension in relations: landless and small-holders versus the more affluent, who possess more land. The lease prices of land have risen several dozen-fold.

The Russian clergy and Russian railwaymen are pursuing active Russian agitation. The Byelorussian people are asking for Polish schools, rather than Byelorussian ones.

A general conviction prevails that the Polish Government and administration are good for nothing at all, and the Poles are not delivering anything for they know that the Bolsheviks will come over quite soon.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF LIDA⁵⁴

In the Commune of Tarnowo, the abuses of the military are deterring the local people from Poland, who claim that it was even better under the Germans and Bolsheviks, as they did not steal that much and did not so oppress the people.

52 Ibid., c. 222.

53 Ibid., c. 220.

54 Ibid., c. 218.

II. District of Brześć Litewski

REPORT FROM THE COUNTIES OF PRUŻANA, WOŁKOWYSK, and PIŃSK⁵⁵

Mostly the Jews are profiteering, although Polish landowners are also doing the same, preventing the villagers from making purchases. This practice has led to no action from the authorities whatsoever.

The people are also deprived of the opportunity to obtain timber from forests, in spite of that they are stocked with boughs which are only destroying the proper forest management. The [landed] citizens such as Princes Puzyna, Ponichwicki, and Tarnowiecki, and Countesses Potocka and Szakter, and others sold out the forests to Jews who are chopping the wood for firewood, refusing to sell it the peasants even if warmly requested and offered good money. This practice has caused illnesses to spread in the underheated huts and mass demises of malnourished peasants with no medical assistance available.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF PIŃSK⁵⁶

In the face of extraordinarily widespread anti-Polish agitation, one may presume that there exists some clandestine organisation that manages the whole action. The headquarters of this organisation – as they suppose – is in Stolin. The Bolshevik agitator, former Bolshevik commissar Aleksander Chlebcewicz [*Khlebtsevich*] was detained by the gendarmerie and was about to be executed by firing squad, but the head of the region in Stolin (Małyszyci) interceded and bailed for him. Chlebcewicz pursues his activity further and is untouchable. Mrs Pawłowska from the village of Białohusze, a Russian general's widow and who is conducting animated anti-Polish agitation to the benefit of 'the revived Russia,' is enjoying enormous esteem.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF WOŁKOWYSK⁵⁷

The *povretentsy* [= those returning from wartime exile and resuming their abode] [find themselves living] in really awful conditions, and the local people do not really come to their rescue. The Borderland Guard, the Committee for the Unification of the Borderlands with Poland, and the Popular National Association [ZLN] are active in the area. Byelorussian agitation is usually

55 Ibid., c. 215.

56 Ibid., c. 212–213.

57 Ibid., c. 223.

propagated by the priests, who are making the common folk believe they are Byelorussian. They are striving to introduce the Byelorussian language into the church and collecting signatures of support at Byelorussian addresses. Fr. Hermanowicz from Łopienica is particularly ardent. In the same Łopienica, due to the return to the Catholic clergy of the local Orthodox church that had served as a Catholic church before 1831, a Catholic-Orthodox conflict exists, for the Orthodox people have been left without a church.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI⁵⁸

Bread and potatoes grow more expensive unceasingly. The people in Brześć Litewski are suffering hunger because the Provisioning Office has not been dispensing any products for four months, and deliveries of foods from over the Bug is forbidden. Government officials and provisioning officials are being supplied on a regular basis. The people are living in dug-outs. Requests to dispense lumber free-of-charge that might be transported by navigable rivers are multiplying. Almost all the communes have co-operatives that appear deserted. The village administrators [*sołtyses*] say that September 1919 saw 50 wagons of farming implements arrive in Brześć, which the Farmers' Association had to sell to the poor people for a low price, on the intermediation of Mazurkiewicz. Nobody received anything; the implements disappeared. A Provisioning Office warehouseman, Waszczuk, is committing numerous abuses in Brześć Litewski, via a Jew named Konik and nine other Jews, and drawing benefits from them. For the Jews (a proven fact) are stealing as goods are being unloaded. There is an abundance of goods in the Jewish shops. No-one has seen the cheap commodities from Warsaw and Poznań that have been promised by the [Borderland Guard] instructors.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF PRUŻANA⁵⁹

The *povretentsy* are facing a very tough situation. No products are being dispensed to them by provisioning offices, the explanation being given that they have not been listed as the [eligible] population. Those people, feeding on weeds and rotten fruit, feel rejected by Poland. "No wonder the hungry men, left with nothing to do, recollect every-once-in-a-while those old times when everything was in abundance and the country was ruled by the tsarist gendarme."

58 Ibid., c. 211 and 214.

59 Ibid., c. 229.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BRZEŚĆ LITEWSKI⁶⁰

The provisioning in Brześć Litewski is not working. An ordinance exists here that forbids the delivery of food-stuffs from over the Bug, so a shortage of essential products is being felt in the city, which is in turn adroitly taken advantage of by individuals ill-disposed towards us, arousing dissatisfaction with Polish rule amongst the local people, who only recently eagerly awaited the entry of the Poles.

Regarding the burdensome and misconceived “certificates of cleanliness” required to buy a railway ticket, doctors charge two to three Roubles per set of papers per person without ever inspecting the latter. The peasants, not ready to spend money on the certificate, started travelling without a ticket, which is generating losses hundreds of thousands.

REPORT OF THE COMMUNES OF ŻYCIN,⁶¹ TURNIANY,⁶² AND MOTYKALY⁶³

“The head [wójt] of the Commune of Życin, Wincenty Trzeciak, said that the gendarmes will destroy Poland, that the Lithuanian-Byelorussian people hate all the Poles because of the Polish gendarmes.” In Trzeciak’s words, ‘Colonel Guzikowski, the colonel of the gendarmes of the Brześć Litewski County’, and Ensign [originally misspelled, *horonży*, the appropriate form being *chorąży*], Śmigielski have committed the grossest offences, whom the people locally consider to be at least bribed, if not Bolshevik agents.⁶⁴ The people were severely disturbed by the fact that import of goods from Poland, as opposed to the rural co-operatives, was not barred to Jews. The small farmers’ association shop had salt for sale but the price had been so reduced by Jewish merchants in their own shops that the economic account told the buyers to supply themselves with salt from the Jews, which as-a-matter-of-course undercut the roots of their competitors’ rationale. However, irritation turned not against the Jewish merchants but against the Poles who, in the common conviction, had to sell salt to the Jews at cheaper prices than to the others.⁶⁵

60 Ibid., c. 227.

61 Commune in Bobrujsk County, ZCZW’s Minsk District.

62 Commune in Brześć Litewski County.

63 Ditto.

64 BPW, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section, ZCZW, No. 1773/14/II, c. 78.

65 Ibid., c. 78.

III. District of Minsk

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF BORYSÓW⁶⁶

The need for magistrates' courts is pressing, for cases are being resolved on an ongoing basis by the region's head. The county is lacking social organisations and co-operatives. Most of the small-holder peasants who even cannot afford to feed their own families are impatiently waiting for a resolution of the agrarian affair.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF SŁUCK⁶⁷

The ZCZW ought to establish fees chargeable on building materials and fuel. The relations-inflaming incident [occurred] at the Radziwilmanty [i.e. Radziwiłłmonty] estate. Mr Moszczyński, [landed] citizen and refugee from the Kingdom [of Poland] during the war, settled [there] together with his family and belongings. He fled during the Bolshevik invasion, leaving behind several dozen cows of the Holstein-Friesian breed. When the Bolsheviks began to slaughter them, the farmhands replaced their wretched cows with the Holstein ones. After the Bolsheviks retreated, Mr Moszczyński came back and with the help of army troops and gendarmes, severely criticised the peasants, took the cows away from them, and never rewarded them for their attitude. Mr Czerwiński, steward of Prince Radziwiłł from the estate of Cimkowicze, is making [the peasants] work the fields and taking half of the crops harvested.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY OF SŁUCK⁶⁸

The Catholic and the Orthodox people are very inimically disposed towards Jews. The Orthodox people are intimidated by the conduct of the local [landed] citizens who, taking diverse offices, are afflicting them.

REPORT No. 99 W. 137/144/20R FROM THE COUNTY OF MINSK

Dated 1920, this closes the collection and, in a way, summarises the situation.

“The local [landed] citizens are so preoccupied with their personal material affairs that they absolutely cannot and indeed are not willing to accept any participation in social life. The Russian intelligentsia, for a change, are busting about immensely ... new schools are emerging with teachers and popes' daughters who still spread hatred towards every single thing Polish ... In recent times,

66 Ibid., c. 226.

67 Ibid., c. 224.

68 Ibid., c. 221.

especially amongst the Orthodox a despairing dissatisfaction emerged with the policy of the local landowners, who the peasantry consider to be representatives of Polishness, and who are behaving these days in a way that is by no means civic as they are profiteering from grain and conducting regular business with the Jews.”⁶⁹

* * *

The launch of a cereals quota negatively affected attitudes towards Poland. The peasants consider it extremely unfair as they claimed that the Bolsheviks had taken into account the fertility of the soil and the number of members in the family. They appeared more humane then.

The Polish landowners, the majority of whom were stimulated by the ordinances of Leon Biliński and disillusioned about taking over power in Lithuania, were enforcing their ‘sacred right of ownership’ with extreme ferocity while preparing for emigration.

The Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories (19th February 1919 to 9th September 1920)

Extract

This study seeks to present a certain aspect of Józef Piłsudski’s Eastern policy during his time as leader of Poland. An aspect which has hitherto been somewhat overlooked in the extensive literature about this issue.

Three of the people in senior positions in the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories [*Zarząd Cywilny Ziemi Wschodnich (ZCZW)*] left their testimony for posterity. The memoirs of the Civil Commissioner Ludwik Kolankowski and Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmałowski exist. Michał S. Kossakowski, the Commissioner-General’s Representative in Warsaw and Osmałowski’s acting second-in-command, is the author of an extensive and invaluable diary. After I read their records of the events, I decided not to base my work on them; I assumed that the time and place when the records were made, not to mention the personalities of the authors, undoubtedly influenced the content.

Thus, I took up the effort to reconstruct the events from chancellery documents that were created during the 1918–20 period in question in Paris, Warsaw and in Vilnius [today’s Vilnius], and the territory of the ex-Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was largely facilitated by the fact that I managed to reach an extensive collection of ZCZW documents in the Old Prints and Manuscripts Section of the Public Library of the Capital City of Warsaw. This institution came to life in 1907, and until 1928 functioned as the National Library.

69 Ibid., No. 1773/14/III, c. 210.

The collection consists of rather haphazard although very interesting documents from the Personal Office of Commissioner-General Jerzy Osmołowski, which were evacuated hurriedly from the Borderlands in 1920. It also includes equally fascinating letters and fragments of memos, reports, etc.

It seems that between 1920 and 1939, those archival documents were in Osmołowski's possession. In the autumn of 1939, like many other people, he passed his documents to the Public Library. It is worth noting that he had been its patron before the war.

The collection, taken abroad during the war, came back to the library on Koszykowa Street, where in order to protect it, it was not documented or made accessible to anyone. The librarians assumed, rightly, that a collection that no one knew about could not be taken to pieces or transported elsewhere. The intentional disarray of the archival material, made incomplete by fate and people, discouraged queries, which would undoubtedly take up much time and would not necessarily be successful.

By the end of the 1980s, in the new political reality and under new management, the collection was somewhat arranged by the employees of the Old Prints and Manuscripts Section. To date, I have been the only historian to browse the entire content of more than 24,000 double-sided cards. To get to know the era better, I also used the reports of the Borderland Guard, official correspondence, memos, private correspondence, official government publications, and finally, newspapers.

To find the elements that created the environment in which the ZCZW functioned, apart from the query in the aforesaid Old Prints and Manuscripts Section and in the collection of Manuscripts at the National Library in Warsaw, I made supporting queries in three Warsaw archives: those of the Polish Academy of Sciences [PAN], the Central Military Archives [CAW], and the Central Archives of Modern Records [AAN]; and in five Lithuanian Archives (the Manuscripts Department and the Rare Books Department at the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, the Manuscripts Department of the Lithuanian National Library, the Lithuanian Archives of Early Documents, the Lithuanian Archives of Modern Documents, and the Manuscripts Department of the Vilnius University Library [VUL]).

The study comprises some 500 pages, including extensive footnotes on resources. It also contains large annexes, which are the basis for the calculation that I use for my argumentation in the main text. The text has been separated into nine main chapters.

The introductory chapter is a necessarily simplified account of the general situation in the world and in Poland and in Lithuania as they regained independence.

Politics is the art of making use of opportunity. The striving for independence by some Lithuanian activists, evident since 1905, was such an opportunity for the Germans, who in 1917 occupied the larger part of the territory of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations.

If the Germans had helped to rebuild Poland in the borders of the Congress Kingdom, with the capital city in Warsaw to build a Lithuanian state, and perhaps a Byelorussian one, it would have created an appearance that Germany accepted the rule that the occupied territories should decide their own fate.

It also would have led to partitioning the territory of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations, which had been conquered through partitioning or military action. This offered a chance to exercise a *divide et impera* policy in that region. Such a plan would have been advantageous for Poles in the Congress Kingdom, and would not have created a conflict in the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the period in question, the Poles – citizens of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – were already divided. As it is commonly known, there were two conflicting programmes when it came to the Eastern Territories.

After the formation of the Paderewski Government, the politicians of the nationalist camp could only use the structures of the democratic state, created by ‘Brigadier Piłsudski’, to take over the political role for which they felt predestined. Thus, they had to win more votes.

The Poles from Vilnius and Grodno were hurt when Józef Piłsudski refused to grant them the military intervention they had asked for in December 1918, as he was absorbed in the Lwów affair. As early as January 1919, they had allied themselves with the alternative centre of power: the Polish National Committee [PKN] in Paris. The Poles from the territory of ex-Grand Duchy of Lithuania constituted a large and influential group. For them – from the vantage point of Grodno and Vilnius – the incorporation programme pushed forward by the nationalists was not only understandable, but obvious. Thus, since the first session of the first parliamentary body of the independent Second Republic of Poland, the Legislative Sejm held in February 1919, they made efforts to include their own delegates, who were chosen during the December gathering of Poles in Vilnius, among the members of Parliament.

At the same time, they ignored the political aspirations of Lithuanian and Byelorussian activists, since the Lithuanians and Byelorussians they saw every day did not show any signs of political aspirations, and local conflicts usually had an economic, not a national, background.

The quarrel over the position of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department in the Polish Government in Warsaw was in fact an argument over which policy concept towards the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania should be

implemented. If the incorporation one, then the Department should be moved to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. If the federation one, then it should remain in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Lithuanian- Byelorussian Department finally remained part of the Foreign Ministry.

A day before the Legislative Sejm commenced its work, Piłsudski announced a decree, countersigned by the Prime Minister, which brought to life the Military Administration of the Eastern Borderlands.

On 19th February 1919, when the Legislative Sejm was already in session, Piłsudski's decree named Ludwik Kolankowski, section chief at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department – a unit that was symptomatically already renamed as the Eastern Borderlands Department – as the Civil Commissioner-General with the Military Administration of the Eastern Borderlands.

On 22nd April 1919, the 'Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania formally introduced the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, with the Commissioner-General, equipped with large lawmaking, executive, and judiciary powers, at its head. This temporary administration, brought to life by Józef Piłsudski to fulfil his political agenda, operated formally for 19 months, and in reality for over 14 months.

The second chapter of my study is devoted to the six main stages of the ZCZW's operations.

- 1) The period between 8th (19th) February and 22nd April 1919 was a period of preparation. Its aim was for the ZCZW to gain political manoeuvring space as large as possible. It ended when, in the Vilnius that had recently been liberated from the Bolsheviks, the famous Proclamation was announced, which promised the people of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania that they would be able to decide their own fate. The first period ended with the resignation of L. Kolankowski as Civil Commissioner.
- 2) The period between 22nd April and 10th October 1919 saw the development of the civilian administration structure, which was based on the framework created by L. Kolankowski. Jerzy Osmolowski was made Commissioner-General and kept this post throughout the duration of the ZCZW. It was a period of a constant conflict with the military authorities, who considered themselves the Cadet's superiors. As far as this question is concerned, they went against the intentions of the Commander-in-Chief expressed in the order of 13th May 1919. Another order issued by Piłsudski, dated 10th October 1919, clearly stated that the Commissioner-General was responsible for his actions to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, and not – as before – to the Chief Command.

- 3) Between 10th October and 25th November 1919, the conflict between the Legislative Sejm of the Republic of Poland and Józef Piłsudski, questioning who had the right to decide Eastern policy, culminated. The Parliament's view on this matter was not stable. This was proved by the way the 23rd May 1919 parliamentary Resolution about the right of nations to self-determination was negated by a subsequent resolution, of 25th November, which ordered partial elections in those territories where the inhabitants had already demanded to become part of Poland. The conclusions presented by the Administrative Commission on 19th December 1919 aimed at changing the status of the ZCZW: an institution that had until then remained under the sole control of Józef Piłsudski would be turned into one of many ministries reporting to the Parliament in Warsaw.
- 4) The time between 25th November 1919 and 17th January 1920 was a transition period. It was then that action in the press that aimed at exempting the territory of Volhynia from the jurisdiction of the ZCZW culminated, and its demands were fulfilled as the prerogatives of the Commissioner-General were diminished. The Commander-in-Chief's order of 17th January 1920 greatly limited the Commissioner-General's competences. Jerzy Osmałowski did not apparently understand the situation, just as he had not during the conflict with the Chief Command of the Polish Army. He even planned to further divide the territories under his command into counties, along the line of the German-Russian front.
- 5) From 17th January to 1st June 1920, the Commissioner-General's Office tried to become financially independent from the state of Poland, by creating commercial companies.

The elections, announced in the Vilnius Proclamation, were made impossible by the decision of the Council of Ambassadors. This decision was passed to Count Maurycy Zamoyski in Paris on 6th March 1920. The foreign powers did not intend to accept as valid any plebiscite conducted by the Poles in the 'occupied' territory. I cannot disagree that this fact might have hastened the decision to cooperate with Symon Petliura in Ukraine. On 1st June 1920, an order by the Commander in Chief made the Commissioner-General subordinate to the Council of Ministers.

- 6) The military defeat of the Polish army, a hasty evacuation, and successful counter-strike were the events that dominated the last 100 days of the ZCZW. The period between 1st June and 9th September 1920 was not conducive to the Commissioner-General using his voting right in the Council of Ministers in matters regarding the Eastern Territories.

The third chapter of this work is an attempt to portray the higher functionaries of the ZCZW who were employed in the Commissioner's Office. A significant part of the management, which consisted of people with a defined political and social past, was convinced that the only chance of success for the Polish public good was to introduce the policy of incorporation. They also assumed it to be in their own best interests. A modern and honest Borderlands-oriented policy lost against functionaries who fought to keep their status and sympathisers of the Association for the Defence of the Property of Poles and the Committee for the Defence of the Borderlands. People who were supposed to implement the federation policy turned against the Commander-in-Chief who had nominated them.

Chapter IV is devoted to a thorough analysis of the conflict between the ZCZW and the Chief Command of the Polish Army. The question of wartime spoils played quite a large role. The Quartermaster's Office of the Polish Army had a policy of transporting out of the Eastern Territories everything that could be loaded onto a train, and the ZCZW tried to oppose that policy. There were embarrassing quarrels over what did and did not constitute wartime spoils. The position of the Chief Command was backed on 18th July 1919 by the Council of Ministers. From then on, not half but 98 % of so-called wartime spoils were transported from the territory under ZCZW command. In addition, soldiers, often cold and hungry, behaved towards the local people as if they were in a conquered, not a liberated, country.

Chapter V is an attempt to determine the reasons for the unstable opinion of the Legislative Sejm deputies regarding Polish policy in the East. In the light of discovered Foreign Ministry studies, it seems that it was the deputies connected with the nationalist parties who caused the reshuffling in the peasant/popular parties, creating new parties with positions close to those of the nationalist ones. The members of the Popular National Association [ZLN] club ignored the parliamentary Resolution of 23rd May on the right of nations to self-determination, and employed a policy of accomplished facts as they presented more and more proposals regarding the Eastern Territories. The socialist politician Mieczysław Niedziałkowski supported them. The leader of the socialists, Ignacy Daszyński, criticised the Prime Minister and the Government that cooperated with Józef Piłsudski. During a November session of the Polish Parliament, the nationalist politician Władysław Seyda called for allowing the situation of the lawful government of Russia, which in exchange for Polish protection against a German invasion would give up [*sic*] to Poland the cities of Grodno, Vilnius, and Minsk.

The Jewish deputies in the Sejm, dissatisfied with the act about an eight-hour working day from Monday until Saturday, which was disadvantageous to the

Jews, stopped supporting the advocates of the federation concept. They also publicly threatened to turn against the interests of Poland.

In Chapter VI, I discuss the way the Poles in the Borderlands – both remaining on the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and those who awaited further developments while staying in the capital – approached the programme announced in the Vilnius Proclamation.

The Poles were divided. A group of wealthier Poles was decidedly sceptical towards all projects promoting self-determination for the eastern territories. As a result of an organised social action loyal supporters of Piłsudski's political platform lost their positions in the local communities.

People from outside the Borderlands, emissaries of the Borderland Guard, conducted actions from the summer of 1919 to introduce social changes on the territories under their command.

With the ZCZW's plebiscite funds they strengthened the position of their organisation and created an environment in which it could seize power in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania regardless of the further turn of events.

In February 1920, Maciej Glogier, the Polish Government's delegate and President of the Radom Court, arrived at the site of the announced plebiscite. He consulted representatives of all Polish political options and Byelorussian representatives. Incorporation supporters wanted no elections at all. Federation supporters did not want them either, although for different reasons. There was at the time no chance of conducting a plebiscite on the entire territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The ZCZW's preparations for the act of self-determination announced in the Vilnius Proclamation were thus finished. Józef Piłsudski considered his course of action. The note of the Council of Ambassadors of 6th March 1920 made conducting a legal plebiscite impossible. It ended the matter at a moment when the Polish political elite of Vilnius, which remained somewhat apart from the ZCZW, became ready for a Poland-Lithuania federation. A community commission was chosen to work out a plan of this federation, a working version of which was prepared.

Chapter VII deals with educational problems on the ZCZW's territory. I have divided it into two parts: from June to October 1919 and from October to the end of the ZCZW.

Władysław Lichtarowicz, a supporter of the federation, headed the Education Department from June to October 1919. He created the structure of his unit and against unimaginable difficulties he started a new school year. He created schools according to the will of the inhabitants of the territories under his command. The choice of language by the local inhabitants was a sort of quasi-plebiscite.

The effects were not to the liking of the old Polish teacher elite, who were convinced of the missionary role of Polish education in the Borderlands. Indeed, the Borderlands were very Russified.

The General Commissioner did not appreciate the importance of education. Through concessions in education, he wanted to appease the enmity of the Polish Borderland elite. So he gave the education matters into the hands of his associate Edmund Iwaszkiewicz, who since his tenure in the Polish Council of the Minsk Land remained on good terms with the opponents of Osmołowski. At the end of October, a reorganisation took place. The Education Department was liquidated and a supporter of the nationalists, Lucjan Zarzecki, was placed at the head of the new Education Section. As a result of a number of moves by the new head, teachers who had been newly employed by Lichtarowicz applied for dismissal from their posts in great numbers. Non-Polish educational establishments were also feeling discriminated against, as the Education Section employed the legally-defined school supervision only against them. Relations were not made easier by the fact that unlike Polish schools, other schools received state aid only based on subjective approval and under the condition of giving up their freedom to set their own curriculum, which was synonymous with accepting the curriculum set by the Education Section of the ZCZW.

Chapter VIII is devoted to Poland's and the ZCZW's programme regarding the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which – characteristically – were considered separately.

A plan that was implemented by Polish state bodies until August 1919 had been worked out in the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Western Byelorussia was to be incorporated into Poland, whereas in Eastern Byelorussia an autonomous country in a federation with Poland was to be created. Due to an underestimation of Lithuania's political aspirations, it was maintained that if it had agreed to a military and economic union with Germany, it would likewise become part of such a union with Poland. This plan fell apart in the summer of 1919.

Through a detailed analysis of the letters of Bronisław Krzyżanowski, sent from Paris in two copies to three addressees: Józef Piłsudski, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I can state with a much certainty the hypothesis that the emigrant Lithuanian politician Juozas Gabrys requested the Poles, through Krzyżanowski, to take part in an uprising in Kaunas/Kowno in September 1919, which was planned by the Lithuanian opposition.

The most detailed and key correspondence reached Piłsudski after almost three weeks, in September, after the ignoble ending of the August uprising. So did the second of Krzyżanowski's letters, which mentioned the September date

for the joint Polish-Lithuanian revolt in Kaunas. On the other hand, officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acted successfully in the third week of August to hasten the previously planned solely Polish uprising in Kaunas. On the day that Piłsudski approved the Foreign Ministry's plan, only one of Krzyżanowski letters from Paris had reached him. The letter mentioned Krzyżanowski's previous correspondence, which had not yet been delivered. The mentions and suggestions in the text, lacking context, distorted the meaning of the lost letters. We are not able now to determine the true decision-making process in regard to the Polish uprising in Kaunas in August. However, we have to consider the possibility that in August, Polish Nationalists defeated the Polish-Lithuanian uprising planned for September. The failure of the Kaunas uprising marks a clear end of a period. From that moment, Marian Świechowski, analyst of the ZCZW programme, abandoned support for the federation idea in his memoranda, and proposed that Piłsudski immediately intervene with military forces in ethnographic Lithuania instead. Those suggestions were never approved. Piłsudski sent Leon Wasilewski to Lithuania.

In November 1919, the Lithuanians broke off, in fact, any attempts at reconciliation. After the failure of Wasilewski's mission, Piłsudski did not decide for military intervention in Lithuania. The lack of this decision is symptomatic. If Piłsudski were the true initiator of the premature Polish uprising in Kaunas, as has been assumed in all studies to date, he should not have hesitated in September and right then – without paying attention to the Entente – taken possession of Kaunas with military forces.

The second solution to the impasse was, at that time, to recognise the independence of ethnographic Lithuania in exchange for political guarantees for Poland. This solution was turned down not only by the Lithuanians but also by the Chief Command of the Polish Army, which under the pretext of strategic necessity started to retreat from occupied territories, trying to provoke the Lithuanians into making a military move for Vilnius.

These facts disorganised the life of the people under the ZCZW's jurisdiction, and successfully tarnished the image of Poland not only in the Borderlands, but also in the international arena, where the Lithuanians still calmly and masterfully championed their cause.

Yet another important cause of the difficulty in realising Józef Piłsudski's Eastern Policy was the incompetence of Jerzy Osmałowski. The Commissioner-General himself was responsible for the Polish-Byelorussian December crisis: he did not give the Commander of the Minsk Region the necessary information orally, but in the form of written Polish obligations to the Byelorussians.

Raczkiewicz and Jeleński's position towards the Byelorussians, which resulted from a lack of information, offended them and initiated an avalanche of emotion.

The breakthrough in Polish-Byelorussian relations were the talks in Minsk on 23rd and 24th March 1920. They seemed to deal with education and schooling, but in fact they were political concessions of great importance. In the existing situation it was impossible to specify more concretely the new pro-Byelorussian direction in Polish politics. The Polish partners committed themselves to recognising Byelorussian as an official language in the Minsk region and, when possible, in other regions of Byelorussia, and to introducing Byelorussian in all schools without such language courses in the Minsk region as well as, wherever possible, in other regions.

Soon, numerous Byelorussian organisations resumed operations. Still, the announcement of the resolution of the Byelorussian Republican Union, which called all the nationalities (ethnicities) in the country to work together to rebuild the country based on the Proclamation of the Chief of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, in the first days of June 1920, unfortunately came too late.

The ZCZW was not the same ZCZW it had been before being made subordinate to the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Chamber of Control in Warsaw. There were no possibilities to implement the guidelines of Józef Pilsudski's unique Eastern Policy.

Chapter IX is devoted to a description of the situation in the Volhynia region. The different economic conditions and social makeup in this region propelled me to deal with this region separately. Nevertheless, due to this difference the process of the destruction of Pilsudski's policy, which we encounter in the entire territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, is easier to observe. This different social makeup created an opportunity for the Polish state to win the votes of the landless classes at the expense of the landowners, who faced a new challenge. Poles were used to giving their lives for their Motherland, but not for their land.

ZCZW officials were to convince the sons and grandsons of Polish uprising participants to accept this new form of patriotism, which would guarantee survival not only to those people, but also to Polish influences in the Eastern Territories of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. As day-to-day practice showed, the administration pursued by the ZCZW was to convince people of what it itself did not in the most part understand. The single example of Commissioner Krzyżanowski from the Włodzimierz Wołyński County proves clearly that conscientiously fulfilling the tasks, even by a man from a different

political option than Pilsudski's agenda, could bring positive results for all interested sides.

Summing up, in the Volhynia region we deal with an intensified version of the process of the social negation of Pilsudski's policy. This process, in a less tangible form, occurred in other regions under the ZCZW's jurisdiction and was the only factor uniting those territories.

The period after exempting Volhynia from the ZCZW's jurisdiction is not in the scope of this study. However, the enclosed four-page postscript concerning this question makes it painfully clear how the situation in the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations could have looked in 1919 if there had been a national agreement on the Eastern Policy of the democratically elected Chief of State.

Józef Pilsudski lost as a politician. Fighting an outside enemy is a normal thing. The hardest is always fighting an enemy from within. In the pages of Marshall Pilsudski's lecture delivered in Vilnius in 1923, we find the drama of a man who lost against his own people.

Translated by Anna Kiwiel

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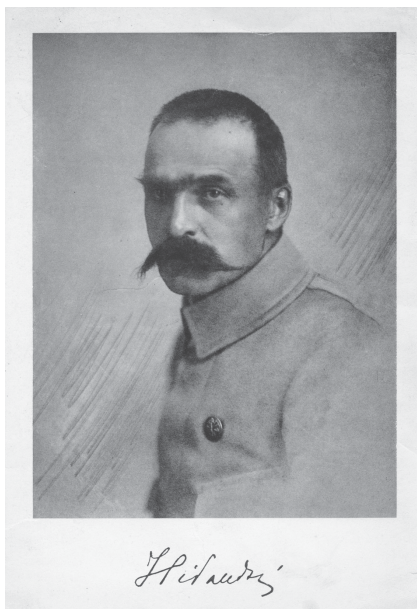


Figure 1. Photograph given to Z. Parnowski by Waclaw Sieroszewski in 1920 (owned by the book's author).

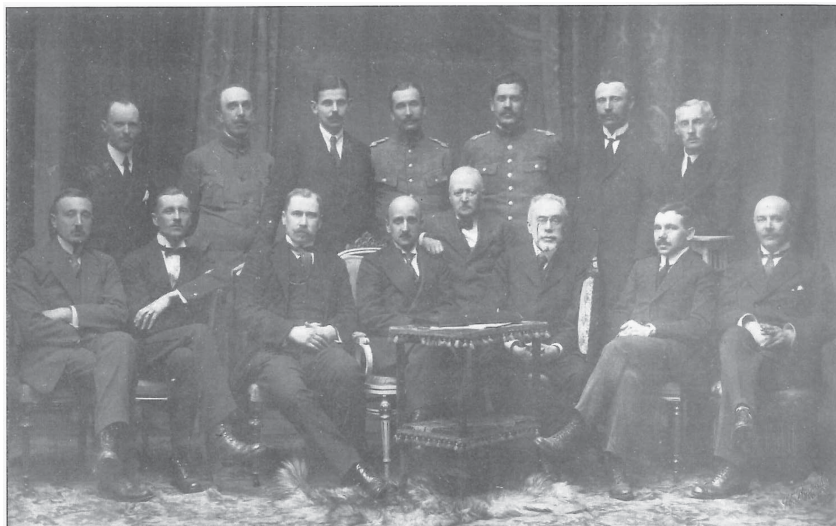


Figure 2. Eastern Borderland Defence Committee members (seated, L to R:) Olgierd Gordziałkowski, Władysław Raczkiewicz, Mirosław Obiezierski, Michał S. Kossakowski, Jerzy Osmołowski (2nd R); (standing, L to R:) Antoni Jundziłł, Marian Parafianowicz, Czesław Krupski, Michał Obiezierski, Mieczysław Boguszewski, Władysław Puśłowski, Emanuel Obrąpalski (Mechanical Documentation Archive, Warsaw).

W Y K O N A W C Z A R E T S I N D Z A I M	PREMIER	Jędrzej Moraczewski 17.XI-18 do 16.I-19	Ignacy Paderewski 16.I do 27.XI-19	Leopold Skulski 14.XII-19 do 9.VI-20	Władysław Grabski 23.VI do 23.VII-1920	Wincenty Witos 23.VII-20 do 9.IX-21	
	Wicepremier (Minister bez teki)	Win. Witos od 20.XI do 16.I-19 F. Wójcik od 17.05-19 T. Hołczak od 17.05-19 M. Małowski od 17.05-19				Ignacy Daszyński do 4.I-21	
	Spr. zagraniczn.	Leon Wasilewski	Premier	W. Wacławski do 16.XI 1919 r. Stan. Patek	Ks. Eustachy Sapieha		
	Spr. wewnętrzn.	Stanisław Thugult	Stanisław Wojciechowski	Józef Kuczyński	L. Skulski do 28.VI-21		
	Spr. wojskowych	Kancelaria Nacz. Wodza	Puk. Wacławski do 11.I-19	General Józef Leśniewski do 9.VIII-1920		Gen. Kazimierz Sosnowski	
	Skarbu	Władysław Byrka	Józef Engel od 4.IV 1919 r. St. Kępczyński od 31.VI 1919 r.	Leon Biliński	Władysław Grabski do 24.XI-20	J. K. Steczkowski	
	Sprawiedliwości	Leon Supiński do 2.IX.19	Bronisław Sobolewski	Jan Hebdzyński	Jan Morawski	S. Nowodworski	
	Wyzn. Rel. i O.P.	Ksawery Prauss	J. Łukasiewicz	Tadeusz Łopuszański		Maciej Rataj	
	Rolnictwa i Dóbr Państwowych	Franciszek Wojda	St. Janicki	Zygm. Czerniowski	Franciszek Bardel	Franciszek Bujak	Jul. Poniatowski
	Komunikacji	St. Stączęk	Julian Eberhard	Kazimierz Bartel do 13.XII-20		Z. Jasiński	
	Poczt i Telegr.	T. Arciszewski	Hubert Linde	Ludwik Tołłoczko		Władysław Stesłowicz	
	Przem. i Handlu	Jerzy Iwanowski	Kaz. Chąćcia	Ant. Olszewski do 26.VI-20	W. Chrzanowski do 24.X		
	Pracy i Op. Sp.	Bronisław Ziemięcki	Jerzy Iwanowski	Ed. Pełowski do 5.III-21			
	Robót Publiczn.	Józef Pruchnik od 29.XI-18 do 31.VII-19		T. Jesionowski	Antoni Kędzior	Gabriel Narutowicz	
	Apropowizacji	Antoni Minkiewicz do 30.IX-19	Oskar Sobański	St. Śliwiński od 5.XI-19 do 12.I.21			
	Zdrowia	W. Chodźko do 13.XII-18	Tomasz Janiszewski	D r r . W i t o ł d C h o d ź k o			
	Kultury i Sztuki	Zenon Przesmycki				Jan Heurich	
	Dzielnicy prusk.	Władysław Seyda od 16.VIII-19 do 3.VII-20				Wład. Kucharski	

Figure 3. A chart depicting the administrative structure.



Figure 4. Ludwik Kolankowski, a photographic portrait from the time concerned (Polish Academy of Sciences Archive, Warsaw).



Figure 5. Jerzy Osmołowski, photo from a later date (Capital City of Warsaw Public Library, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section).

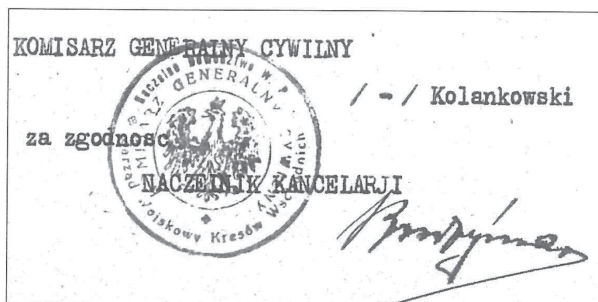


Figure 7. Official stamp of the General Civil Commissary, featuring the Crowned Eagle (Capital City of Warsaw Public Library, Old Prints and Manuscripts Section).



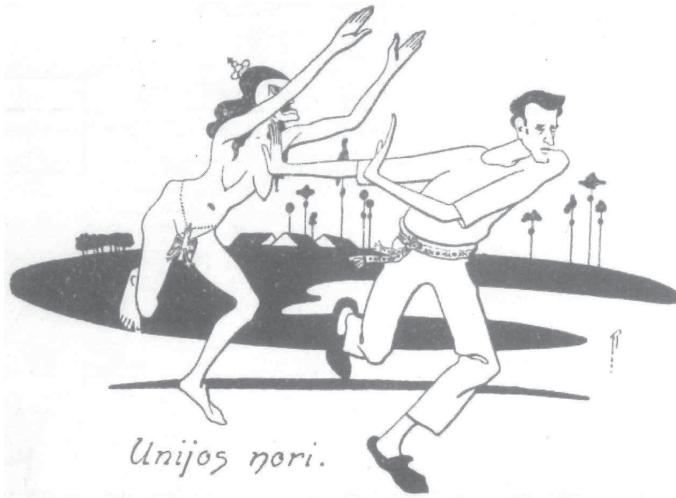
Figure 8. ZCZ.W revenue stamps (featuring the Eagle without crown).



Figure 9. Official stamp of the Stefan Batory University (Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka).



Figure 10. Food stamps issued by the Municipality Office of Wilno (featuring the Crowned Eagle), drawing by Ferdynand Ruszczyk (in *Wilno i Ziemia Wileńska*, vol. II, Wilno 1931).



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dvarų ginti ir mūs pavergti.
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Figure 11. Lithuanian anti-Polish propaganda postcards (owned by the book's author).



Figure 12. Areas subordinated to the Civil Administration of Eastern Territories (1920).

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