

BETWEEN BERLIN AND MOSCOW: POLISH WESTERN THOUGHT IN THE TWENTY-YEAR INTERWAR PERIOD*

Marek Masnyk

University of Opole,
Opole, Poland

This article is not primarily focused on presenting arguments and views held by Polish political groups with reference to the territorial shape of the Polish state after the First World War. Instead, its aim is to draw attention to actions taken by these groups towards the defence of Polish western lands. One of the key problems of Poland's foreign policy after 1918 was the question of relations with its neighbours, chiefly Germany and Russia (and the Soviet Union). For many years, the most serious problem faced by post-Versailles Europe was that of the Germans striving to revise the legal order, to break their political isolation, and return to the prestigious circle of world powers. Those endeavours threatened the security of Poland in a direct way. Defence of the Polish state and its territories on the western outskirts of the Second Republic lay at the heart of establishing so-called "Western thought" in the country. Related to Western Europe, this ideology played a significant role in shaping society's views on, and attitudes towards, the most vital problems of the Polish nation and state.

Keywords: Poland's foreign policy after 1918; Germany-Poland relations; Polish Western thought; Poland-Russia-Ukraine relations; public opinion in Poland.

Статья не столько является попыткой репрезентации споров и взглядов польских политических групп по вопросам национальной государственности после Первой мировой войны, сколько раскрывает действия по защите западных польских территорий как во внутренних, так и во внешних аспектах. Одной из ключевых проблем внешней политики Польши после 1918 г. был вопрос восстановления отношений с соседними государствами, в основном с Германией, а также с Россией (Советским Союзом). На протяжении многих лет самой серьезной проблемой, с которой столкнулась Европа после подписания Версальского мирного договора, была

* *Citation:* Masnyk, M. (2020). Between Berlin and Moscow: Polish Western Thought in the Twenty-Year Interwar Period. In *Quaestio Rossica*. Vol. 8, № 2. P. 591–603. DOI 10.15826/qr.2020.2.482.

Цитирование: Masnyk M. Between Berlin and Moscow: Polish Western Thought in the Twenty-Year Interwar Period // *Quaestio Rossica*. Vol. 8. 2020. № 2. P. 591–603. DOI 10.15826/qr.2020.2.482.

проблема отношений с Германией, стремившейся пересмотреть установленный договором правовой порядок, разорвать политическую изоляцию и вернуться в круг мировых держав. Эти стремления непосредственно угрожали безопасности Польши. Защита государственного суверенитета на западных приграничных территориях Второй Речи Посполитой лежала в основе зарождавшейся «западной мысли» («западной идеологии»), которая сыграла важную роль в формировании взглядов и отношения общества к наиболее насущным проблемам нации и государства.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика Польши после 1918 г.; польско-германские отношения; польская западная мысль; польско-русско-украинские отношения; общественное мнение в Польше.

The Second Republic of Poland returned to the map of Europe not only because of the then favourable geopolitical situation, resulting from the military and political defeat of the partitioning powers, but also thanks to the military effort and engagement of Poles themselves. With weapons in hand, clad in uniforms of armies fighting on opposite sides of the conflict (and often against the interests of their own neighbours), Polish soldiers won their country's independence. In the programmes put forward by different independence political groups, deriving still from the nineteenth century, a particular place was occupied by the Polish lands lying in the Prussian Partition. One of the leaders of the national camp, Jan Ludwik Popławski, sketched a vision of Poland's future as "a country between the Oder and the Dnieper, between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathians and the Black Sea" [Kulak, s. 596]. Succeeding Popławski, the role of the chief ideologist of the National Democracy Party (a right-wing party operating between the World Wars) was taken over by Roman Dmowski, who was the first to observe that the issue of independence included "two vital questions – Germany and Russia". Although, with reference to the lands remaining under Prussian rule, he postulated regaining Poznań Province, Western Prussia and Silesia, he saw the "key to solving the Polish question" as remaining in the Russian state [Kulak, s. 71–73].

Territorial visions of the future of Polish statehood were not exclusively the domain of ideologists belonging to the nationalistic current. They were also formulated by leaders of the peasants' movement, including followers of Piłsudski, as well as representatives of other political groups. In many statements delivered by leaders of the Entente in the years 1917–1918, one can perceive hopes for rebuilding Polish statehood, while the Polish National Committee, founded by Dmowski in Paris in August 1918, was recognized to be Poland's official representative body. Numerous enunciations, including US President Woodrow Wilson's address of 8 January 1918, did not define the borders of the future Polish state in a precise way. They limited themselves to declaring that Poland should "cover lands inhabited by people of unquestionably Polish origin" and "have a free and safe access secured to the sea" [Pajewski, s. 252].

The opinions of Dmowski quoted above seem to be of key importance. It is this politician who associated the shifting of Poland's borders with solving the question of Eastern Prussia, since – as he argued – it was only then that it would be possible “to provide [Poland with] an independent development of the country in the time of peace and safety in the case of a conflict” [Hauser, s. 11]. He formulated his aspirations concerning demarcation of the borders in the east in a slightly different way from that proposed by the followers of Piłsudski. Namely, he advocated the conception of building a national state, yet did not take into account aspirations of the nations living in Poland's eastern lands, that is the Ukrainians, the Belarussians and the Lithuanians. Thus, on the threshold of the second independence there existed two opposing conceptions: the idea of the *Piast* Poland and that of the *Jagiellonian* Poland. Acknowledging the role of Popławski in formulating the former is unquestionable. It is he who marked out the west-bound direction of Polish political thought, formulating its historical interpretation and then justification on a national and political basis [Kulak, s. 52–53]. A continuator of Popławski's views, while not seeking to diminish his own output and accomplishments, was Dmowski, for whom the conviction of the inevitability of a Polish-German conflict was to be of key importance to the territorial shape of Poland.

In 1918, Poland regained her independence, as acknowledged above, in part thanks to an unexpected coincidence: the former partitioning powers – Germany and Russia – were experiencing deep internal political and economic chaos caused by, not only the consequences of the defeat of the former, but also those resulting from the systemic revolution in the case of the latter. The Bolshevik coup d'état in Russia pushed that country onto the outskirts of European and world politics, while the November Revolution in Germany paradoxically gave the Germans the republican system which both political elites and a considerable part of the public opinion had regarded as “a scourge” earlier – a punishment for having provoked the global conflict. The third of the partitioning powers – the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy – disintegrated, splitting into several, national states (not necessarily ethnically uniform) and the place of a former imperial power was filled by a small country with its stately capital city of Vienna on the Danube River. Thus, the Versailles system put an end to the functioning despotism of three monarchies (Germany, Austro-Hungary, Turkey) and the fourth of them – tsarist Russia – fell apart under the Bolshevik revolution. The Versailles system, by enabling a number of medium-sized and small states to reappear in Europe, did not solve the problem of their borders, despite the fact that the criterion that was accepted while delineating them was the so-called ‘ethnographic factor’. The situation in which Germany and Russia found themselves after the First World War would not last forever, and was only a transitory stage following which these states could regain their international position and become a serious threat to the Polish Republic. The survival of the Polish state was, thus, dependent on a proper assessment of real threats and the selection of the right alliances. Therefore, the political

thought of the twenty-year interwar period had to determine and define the Polish reason of state.

For many years one of the most serious (if not the most serious of all) political drawbacks of the post-Versailles Europe was the state of Polish-German relations resulting from Berlin's endeavours to revise the border between the two states, while also seeking to break its political isolation, return to the circle of great powers, and regain equality in international relations. The tension present in relations between Warsaw and Berlin existed throughout the period of republican Germany. Despite the propagandist anti-Polish campaign launched on a broad scale and directed against the "Poles' pushing westwards" (*Polen Drang nach Westen*), which included questioning the post-war changes in the borders and calling them wrongful, unjust and temporary, and dubbing Poland "a seasonal state" (*Saisonstaat*), Weimar Germany's achievements were far from impressive [Kotłowski, s. 186–188]. The security of Poland was based – as Warsaw firmly believed – on her own military strength and alliance with France. The changes in the system of political forces, which followed England and France during 1924 (among others in consequence of the failure of France's politics towards Germany in the Ruhr in 1923), exerted a strong influence on Poland improving her political relations with the West. Signing the Locarno Treaties revealed the value of the Polish-French alliance. It is abundantly clear that France, from the very beginning, treated its Polish ally as a vassal, and skilfully used the alliance as a means of exerting pressure on Germany. To Poland – a state reborn after 123 years of captivity – relations with her neighbours, both in the east (Russia and the Soviet Union) and in the west (the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich) were made the focal point of Polish foreign policy.

As mentioned earlier, the state of Polish-German relations remained largely dependent on Berlin's efforts to revise the borderline between the two states. While Germany remained weakened as a result of the restrictions imposed on it by the Versailles Treaty, a threat from that side was limited. Yet, following the signing of the Locarno Treaties, the value of Poland's alliance with France acquired a different significance. Historical antecedents caused the subject matter of Germany to raise particular interest on the part of Polish public opinion. In the 1970s and 1980s, studies on Polish political thought emphasized, in particular, interest in western ideology, very often referred to interchangeably as 'Polish Western thought', the notional scope of which was perceived by its very creators themselves in a very pragmatic way. The interwar period invested it with a much wider meaning, determined by the baggage of new experiences drawn from the contest over the shape of the western border of Poland. Therefore, it is in this context that Western thought played a vital role in forming views and attitudes held by society towards the most important problems of the nation and the state. In the social dimension, it also refers to popularizing Polish Western thought, that is, its impact and influence on public opinion, being treated as a part of Western thought (public opinion as a form of social awareness, with a tendency towards cognitive and valuating elements

dominating it). Reference to the notion of Western thought, as it appeared for a number of years in the relevant historical literature, was, in fact, an attempt at defending of the Polishness of the western lands, both in the internal aspect (as a justification of Poland's rights to regain the lands of the former Prussian Partition) and the external one (defence of the rights of the Polish population in Germany) [Mroczko, s. 10–11].

A historian is never able to fully learn about or explain the role of public opinion in the process of influencing the realization of given political conceptions. With all certainty, this is not the fundamental factor, but obviously plays an inspiring role, initiating changes and shifts of some actions on the part of the centre of authority on politically and socially significant issues. Public opinion, understood as a part of Polish Western thought, played an important role in shaping society's views and attitudes towards their western neighbour, where the ideas of revision of the borders established in the Treaty of Versailles were thriving. Additionally, actions for the defence of the rights of Poles in Germany, especially those living in the Polish-German ethnic-language borderland, made an important, although not the most important, contribution to the question of protecting the Polishness of the western lands of the Second Republic of Poland. It is for these reasons that problems of minorities played a very important role in bilateral Polish-German relations, while also influencing the nationalistic policy of Poland in its internal aspect (the attitude towards national minorities in Poland) and relations with her neighbours (Czechoslovakia, Russia, Lithuania).

To a certain degree, the opinion that the problem of national minorities in interwar Europe was the consequence of the way the new post-war order was built is true and justified. The creators of the Versailles system became victims of the "trap of a plebiscite", which was meant to concern itself with the settlement of territorial conflicts. The principle of nationality failed, so did that of the self-realisation of nations, which attributed the deciding role to the subjective factor of wholly unrestricted people's will to express their preferences in the form of a plebiscite. In taking the final decision on the delimitation of borders it was strategic, economic – hence chiefly political – reasons that were the deciding factor. Therefore, instead of compact ethnic states, Europe obtained multinational states and the problem of national minorities generated conflicts and arguments between states. Fritz Stern, the American historian of Jewish heritage living in Wrocław, and Doctor honoris causa of, among others, Wrocław University (2002), formulated the thesis that the First World War initiated a new 30-year war in Europe, with nationalisms clashing with one another in the background [Stern, s. 148]. In the years 1918–1921, the Polish state *in statu nascendi* annexed territories inhabited by almost all the minorities that had taken part in the civil war in Central Europe. That was a peculiar *bellum omnium contra omnes* (a war of all against all). All those battles – the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918–1919, the Polish-Lithuanian contest over Vilnius in the years 1919–1920, and the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1920 – became a part of the idealized myth of Polish independence [Böhler, s. 100]. For Polish Western

thought, which was then taking shape, arguments over Greater Poland and Upper Silesia in the years 1919–1921 were of much greater importance.

From the principle of national states, there emerged the postulate of the protection of national minorities. An attempt was made, initially, by minority treaties that originated – to a great extent – from worries held by Jews and Germans concerned about the consequences of the changes introduced into the political map of Europe. One of the basic systems of international protection of minorities' rights was the so-called "Little Treaty of Versailles" (28 April 1919) and minority clauses were also included in, among others, bilateral agreements with Russia (1921) and the Polish-Czechoslovakian agreement (1925). The furthest-reaching attempt at regulating the issues relating to minorities was the Upper-Silesian Geneva Convention drawn up between Poland and Germany on 15 May 1922. Although it stayed in force for only fifteen years, despite German diplomatic efforts to have it prolonged, it exerted a strong influence on Polish-German relations. Efforts at protecting the rights of Poles in Germany constituted a relevant, if not the most important, sphere of actions aimed at defending the Polish character of the western lands of the Second Republic. Consolidating this problem area in the national-political consciousness of Polish society resulted from, in part, the need to oppose the German policy of questioning the Versailles settlements and the Germans' continued efforts to have their eastern border changed.

The question of the Polish minority in Germany was widely perceived through the prism of treating the regulations of the Geneva Convention by Poland and Germany – up to 1937 – and the November Declaration. For Polish public opinion, the possibility of the Polish minority availing themselves of rights they were entitled to maintained a martyrological and interventional character. Many decisions and moves on the part of the government were made under the pressure of public opinion. Irrespective of the state of the Polish-German relations, the belief that the lands that had not been incorporated into the reborn state would return to Poland someday anyway was still perpetuated. This offensive, let us call it – aspirational – current of Polish Western thought was definitely weaker than the one dominated by the more defensive current – one oriented towards defence of the western lands. As early as at the turn of 1921/1922, a German military intervention was expected. Reports of attempts to provoke disturbances that would interfere with preserving the peace were not exaggerated either. Consequently, the issue of Upper Silesia became one of the integral elements of Polish Western thought. Stanisław Kozicki, one of the founders and popularisers of this current in Polish Western thought, postulated that the border between Poland and Germany should be "secured and consolidated politically and strategically." Nevertheless, according to Kozicki, it was an obligation not only imposed on the government, but also on society as a whole, since "a conflict between Germany and Poland was not only a competition between two states, but one between two nations, as well" [Masnyk 2011, s. 31].

In the immediate years following the First World War – more or less until the end of 1924 – Polish public opinion showed a considerable interest in the state of the Polish-German relations, yet the concern was of a one-sided nature. After the organizational structures of the Polish national movement in Germany had been consolidated by the turn of 1922/1923, attention shifted to looking for possibilities for supporting the Union of Poles in Germany in various areas of its activity (a minority school system, participation in local-government and parliamentary elections, economic life). On the other hand, the press kept fixing the image of an ages-long Polish-German conflict in the consciousness of Polish society. The lack of deepened reflection over this problem area resulted from the complexity of the political, economic and social situation of the reborn Polish state. Public opinion was primarily interested in the restoration of the Polish state's possession of institutions of public life, and of relations with its neighbour in the East [Masnyk, 2011, s. 55].

Thus, a great deal of interest was shown in the question of Polish-Ukrainian relations. In the last year of the war, the Polish and Ukrainian nations, which were so close to each other historically and culturally, but which also had opposing interests and territorial aspirations which excluded one another, found themselves on a collision course. For nearly four years – from the Brest Peace until March 1923 – the eastern question was a vital part of the discourse surrounding Polish political thought [Juzwenko]. Already at the time of the peace talks in Lithuanian Brest, the issue of tearing off the Chełm region cast a shadow over Polish-Ukrainian relations. In the months that followed, a potential flashpoint emerged over the problem of Eastern Galicia and the outbreak of the Polish-Bolshevik War, leading up to the diplomatic settlements that practically did not leave the front pages of contemporary daily newspapers [Figura, 2001].

The vectors of European politics changed direction dramatically after 1925. The threat to the Polish western lands grew stronger from the revisionism in the politics of the Weimar Republic, which was gaining force. The foreign policy of Gustav Stresemann consistently led to putting an end to the country's political isolation and Germany more clearly began to define its aspirations of becoming a world power. We can speak of a triumph of German diplomacy during the Stresemann era, and one of the victims of the dismantling the French security system in Central Europe was Poland. In Germany's domestic policies, this contributed to an increase in nationalism and revisionism, one of the arguments for the justification and realization of Stresemann's diplomatic efforts was the minority problem, which – in practice – meant a rise in the discrimination of the Polish population in Germany. The diplomatic offensive of Germany striving to have the borders revised in a peaceful way ended together with the death of its creator. For obvious reasons, Stresemann's policies did not enjoy a positive reception in Poland. Still, he remained respected and appreciated. One day after his death, one of the publicists wrote that in Poland he had been "hated by some but impressive for others" and that "Stresemann was not a celebrity

who was put forward, but distinguished himself with his own value and abilities" [Masnyk, 2015, s. 44]. The fears that after his death the foreign politics of Germany would incline towards discarding the methods applied to date were rightly justified. It was clear, though still not to all, that peace in Europe and the security of Poland were under threat. The atmosphere was full of dramatic tensions; question marks persisted regarding the development of the internal political situation. Worrying news reached Poland: Germany had embarked upon a violence path.

Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933 was not coincidental – quite on the contrary – it had been thoroughly planned and carefully put into motion, beginning with the failed Munich Putsch of 1923. This "stray from Braunau" – as Hitler was dubbed by Christian von Krockow, the German political scientist and historian – had learnt his "Munich lesson" well enough [Krockow, s. 178]. Inasmuch as Hitler initially spoke about the rebuilding of the German Reich extending from Klaipėda to Bratislava and from Królewiec (Kaliningrad) to Strasbourg, in his *Mein Kampf* he justified the purposefulness of striking Russia, by making use of the concept of "Lebensraum". Creating a living space for Germans on the debris of the Soviet Union would not be possible while respecting Poland's neutrality at the same time. In Hitler's plans, Poland stood in the way of German expansion, both eastwards and westwards. In this sense, Berlin's increasingly categorical demands towards Poland in the 1930s were not only a direct reason, but also a pretext for starting a new war.

A fairly large section of Polish public opinion was not able to fully appreciate the drama of those events, nor perceive the consequences of the changes to come. Many political commentators were naïve to believe that, in Germany itself, "there were only a few people who would be glad to see Hitler in charge of the country." Among Polish conservatives, there dominated the belief that "Hitler was a weak man who sometimes resorts to brutality to mask the lack of energy" [Masnyk, 2015, s. 45]. In Upper Silesia, representatives of "the Western idea" within the Piłsudski's camp aptly assessed that Hitler's taking over the power would mean a definitive end to the existence of the Weimar Republic and, undoubtedly, a deterioration of Polish-German relations. However, in Germany, a fight was going on, which pushed dealing with Poles aside until later. Moreover, even if soon after Hitler's taking power no basic settlements in this respect were expected to follow, there were serious warnings against the consequences of the forthcoming dictatorship.

During the first weeks of his rule, Hitler radically soothed the tone of his public appearances, posing as a proponent of peace and – at the most – equality of international standing for Germany. Roman Dmowski, cited above, realized perfectly well Hitler's far-fetched plans. He rightly thought that German aggression would not stop at the Polish lands. The target was the east of Europe, including tearing the Ukraine from the Soviet Union. The political realism enforced then took account of the standpoint made by Poland's other key neighbour. Despite his hostile attitude towards the

politics of Russia, Dmowski expressed the opinion that "Russia is Russia, therefore a stable and still primary factor in the external location of our state. As such it must be one of the main objects of our political thought" [Kulak, s. 74]. For these reasons, he was positive about the Polish-Soviet non-aggression pact signed in 1932. The pact weakened concerns about the eastern border, and following the signing of a treaty with Germany on 26 January 1934, enabled Poland to regulate independently, by means of bilateral agreements, relations with her two powerful neighbours.

Germany, in the views expressed by the national-democrats, was perceived as a long-time enemy; on the other hand, Germany being reigned by the far right, was admired by Dmowski, Giertych and Stanisław Kozicki – one of the most outstanding creators and popularisers of the national ideology [Wrzesiński]. In each of the political currents of the Second Republic of Poland, we could (without any great effort) find "bold pens" who made penetrating analyses of the new political situation in Germany. Conservatives, national-democrats, socialists and peasant activists, as well as analysts with no clear political affiliation wrote about those events, and their possible consequences. One of them was Kazimierz Smogorzewski – among the most outstanding publicists of the Second Republic, although often forgotten and passed over in considerations of Germany in Polish political thought and discourse of the period. Upon Hitler's securing of power in Germany, Smogorzewski commenced his affiliation with *Gazeta Polska* (*The Polish Gazette*) as its correspondent in Berlin. In his numerous reports and commentaries, he tried to give an insight into the essence of National Socialism, to understand the reasons for which Adolf Hitler's movement enchanted German society with its demagogical bait. According to Smogorzewski, the First World War put an end to dynastic Europe and gave rise to the formation of national Europe. The act of finishing the process commenced by Otto von Bismarck fell to Hitler.

Smogorzewski's published activity did not lack in comments and opinions on the question of the attitude taken by the national-socialist state towards religion. The writer observed a slow process of ousting religion from the public sphere, towards a position of merely tolerating churches and religious unions. "The German nation," he wrote, "are awaiting their fifth Evangelist, a saviour who will strengthen the German values of their character." The crowning moment of Smogorzewski's political punditry was an interview with Hitler himself, the only such interview given by the German leader to a Polish journalist. The occasion was the first anniversary of the signing of the non-aggression treaty between Poland and Germany, on 26 January 1934. The interview – to a great extent – was devoted to current German-Polish relations. The leader of the Third Reich declared in it his wish to establish new relations with Poland so that mistakes made by his predecessors would not be repeated. This interview with Hitler, in combination with his later appearances in the Reichstag, were full of such peaceful declarations. From that moment on, Polish-German relations and the situation of the Polish minority in Germany became an important field of close observation in Smogorze-

wski's analysis. He frequently commented on it in a deepened way, perceiving the issues in a wider perspective of problems faced by Europe of the day. He warned about the consequences of German revisionism, both for Poland and for peace in Europe [Masnyk, 2017, s. 696–697].

Very different views on this question were presented by Władysław Studnicki, often described by historians as the leading Polish Germanophile [Strządała]. The defining character of his opinions on the German question – understood in a very broad way, as developing from before the First World War and carried up until the post-Second World War period – was their anti-Russian character. For this reason, any analysis of Studnicki's views with reference to Germany (before 1918: towards the Prussian Partition, German policy of Germanization and conception of independent Poland) must take into account his attitude towards Russia and Austro-Hungary. In his “political” life, he covered the road from socialism to nationalism. His views evolved over a few decades, yet his geopolitical conceptions basically remained stable, with some elements of his outlook undergoing changes as the Germans and their politics were also developing: from the times of Wilhelm II up to the days of the Third Reich. The changes, which occurred over “epochs”, filled the mutual relations between Poland and Germany with new content. Before the First World War, Studnicki saw the key to Poland regaining its independence in the fall of tsarist Russia, hence his looking for allies, at first, in Austro-Hungary, and later – because of the country's strength and potential – in Germany. It was Russia, which, in Studnicki's conviction, was primarily responsible for the partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century. Thus, his “political Germanophilism” did not result from a fascination with Germany, but rather from the need to find an ally capable of defeating Russia. Furthermore, at the end of the First World War, he continued to advocate for Poland's closer gravitation towards Germany, underlining the significance of the Polish ‘Eastern Lands’, while simultaneously diminishing the importance of the western districts to the reborn Poland. Similarly, Studnicki argued that it would be more beneficial to Poland to have the port in Riga and that in Liepāja at the country's disposal, rather than the one in Gdańsk. He did not believe, either, in the possibility of winning the Plebiscite in Silesia, which would only fuel Polish-German antagonisms in the context of the Bolshevik approach on Warsaw. In the interwar period, Polish-German collaboration was supposed to provide a source of “Polish economic bravery”, raising its international prestige. Still, the major threat to the Republic of Poland, and to other European states, was that posed by Russia under Bolshevik rule. Thus, he postulated that Poland, together with Germany, should establish a Ukrainian state and, in view of protecting Poland and Europe, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkistan should also be separated from Russia.

Even in the 1930s, according to Studnicki, Poland and Germany had one common enemy in the East, and the Nazi conception of “living space” concerned a possible expansion of the Reich but within Russia exclusively, omitting Poland. His “fascination” with Germany weakened, yet only a lit-

tle, in the spring of 1939. After the annexation of Czechoslovakia, Studnicki noticed the possessiveness of Hitler growing stronger and stronger, and he started to fear that another war would break out. He did not believe in English-French alliances and their guarantees of safety. For Studnicki, the chief enemy was still the Soviet Union. Therefore, he agreed to make concessions to Germans concerning Gdańsk and the "corridor", and suggested that in any unavoidable conflict between Germany and the West, Poland should stay neutral and should not permit other armies to pass through her territory [Strządała].

Studnicki's geopolitical conceptions fell apart in the face of the outbreak of the Second World War. In fact, they posed a certain threat to the defined Polish Western thought: the shift of the main vector of Polish foreign policy eastwards could mean a serious hazard for the Polish reason of state in the western lands. The founders of Polish Western thought were able to anticipate Hitler's intentions correctly. The nationalistic-socialist revolution, which was going on in front of the world's eyes, was heading for war. Kazimierz Kierski wrote, "Whoever still had any doubts about the future Germans' attitude towards the Polish, whoever should still nurture illusions as to a peaceful compassion between us, I would recommend that they read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*" [Masnyk, 2015, s. 51].

To Kozicki, the essence of the Polish-German conflict after 1933 did not change and the Germans' steps towards reconciliation were – as indicated by other publicists – of the tactical nature. The declarations by the leaders of the Third Reich regarding any drawing up of a political agreement on rejecting war when resolving disagreements were initially, and for a short time after, responded to kindly. However, in the longer run, they were perceived as "Germans' delaying tactic and lulling the Polish into a false sense of security." The events in the months and years to come confirmed those fears. Public opinion was greatly concerned about the changes in European politics and the Germans' aspirations to rule Central and Eastern Europe and to dominate the continent as a whole. It was with grave apprehension that the liquidation of Austria and the annexation of Czechoslovakia were observed. Only those who had taken the trouble to read the second volume of *Mein Kampf* knew Hitler's real plans, which anticipated stopping the long-time German expansion to the south and to the west of Europe, and redirecting it eastwards. Putting an end to pre-war colonial and trading policies, Hitler announced a transition to agrarian politics (the politics of the future). When he wrote about new lands in Europe, he meant, first of all, Russia and "the fringe states subjected to it". In this sense, the German demands on Poland in 1939 were not the direct cause, but only a pretext to start the Second World War. The war of the Third Reich against the Soviet Union would not have been possible if the neutrality of Poland had been respected. Hitler took the decision to launch a programme that substantially exceeded traditional German revisionism, one whose aim was to transform the Reich into an empire. For the founders of Polish Western thought a time of great trial would follow.

Список литературы

- Böhler J. *Wojna domowa. Nowe spojrzenie na odrodzenie Polski*. Kraków : Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2018. 336 s.
- Chałupczak H. *II Rzeczpospolita a mniejszość polska w Niemczech*. Poznań : Instytut Zachodni, 1992. 374 s.
- Eberhardt P. *Twórcy polskiej geopolityki*. Kraków : Arcana, 2006. 275 s.
- Fiedor K. *Polska i Polacy w polityce Trzeciej Rzeszy 1933–1939*. Łódź : Wyższa Szkoła Studiów Międzynarodowych, 2005. 288 s.
- Figura M. *Konflikt polsko-ukraiński w prasie Polski zachodniej w latach 1918–1923*. Poznań : Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2001. 362 s.
- Figura M. *Rosja w myśli politycznej Władysława Studnickiego*. Poznań : Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2008. 315 s.
- Hauser P. *Powrót na mapę. Walka o granice państwa polskiego po I wojnie światowej*. Poznań : Instytut Historii UAM w Poznaniu, 2010. 38 s.
- Juzwenko A. *Polska prasa na Górnym Śląsku wobec wschodniej polityki Polski (listopad 1918 – marzec 1921)* // Sobótka. 1974. No. 1. S. 75–102.
- Kulak T. *Jan Ludwik Popławski 1854–1908. Biografia polityczna : 2 t.* Wrocław : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1989. T. 2. 275 s.
- Masnyk M. *Między Niemcami a Rosją – poglądy Romana Dmowskiego w sprawie polskich ziem zachodnich // Twórcy polskiej myśli zachodniej / red. W. Wrzesiński. Olsztyn : Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, 1996. S. 64–75.*
- Masnyk M. *Hitler, narodowy socjalizm i stosunki polsko-niemieckie po Machtübernahme w dyskursie II Rzeczypospolitej (subiektywny przegląd opinii i stanowisk) // Studia Śląskie. 2015. T. 76. S. 43–53.*
- Masnyk M. *Kazimierza Smogorzewskiego uwagi o Niemczech po Machtübernahme // Człowiek, prawo, państwo: Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Stanisławowi Leszkowi Stadniczeńko / red. W. Żylko. Warszawa : Wyższa Szkoła Finansów i Zarządzania, 2017. S. 689–697.*
- Masnyk M. *Opinia publiczna byłej dzielnicy pruskiej wobec polskiego ruchu narodowego w rejencji opolskiej (1921–1939)*. Opole : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2011. 283 s.
- Mroczo M. *Polska myśl zachodnia 1918–1939 (kształtowanie i upowszechnianie)*. Poznań : Instytut Zachodni, 1986. 429 s.
- Pajewski J. *Odbudowa państwa polskiego 1914–1918*. Warszawa : Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978. 384 s.
- Stern F. *Niemcy w pięciu wcieleniach*. Warszawa : Rosner i Wspólnicy, 2008. 503 s.
- Strządala G. *Niemcy w myśli politycznej Władysława Studnickiego*. Opole : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2011. 208 s.
- Wrzesiński W. *Stanisław Kozicki wobec problemów polskiej myśli zachodniej w latach II Rzeczypospolitej // Twórcy polskiej myśli zachodniej / red. W. Wrzesiński. Olsztyn : Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, 1996. S. 140–153.*

References

- Böhler, J. (2018). *Wojna domowa. Nowe spojrzenie na odrodzenie Polski*. Kraków, Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak. 336 s.
- Chałupczak, H. (1992). *II Rzeczpospolita a mniejszość polska w Niemczech*. Poznań, Instytut Zachodni. 374 s.
- Eberhardt, P. (2006). *Twórcy polskiej geopolityki*. Kraków, Arcana. 275 s.
- Fiedor, K. (2005). *Polska i Polacy w polityce Trzeciej Rzeszy 1933–1939*. Łódź, Wyższa Szkoła Studiów Międzynarodowych. 288 s.
- Figura, M. (2001). *Konflikt polsko-ukraiński w prasie Polski zachodniej w latach 1918–1923*. Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie. 362 s.
- Figura, M. (2008). *Rosja w myśli politycznej Władysława Studnickiego*. Poznań, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM. 315 s.

Hauser, P. (2010). *Powrót na mapę. Walka o granice państwa polskiego po I wojnie światowej*. Poznań, Instytut Historii UAM w Poznaniu. 38 s.

Juzwenko, A. (1974). Polska prasa na Górnym Śląsku wobec wschodniej polityki Polski (listopad 1918 – marzec 1921). In *Sobótka*. No. 1, s. 75–102.

Kulak, T. (1989). *Jan Ludwik Popławski 1854–1908. Biografia polityczna : 2 t.* Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego. T. 2. 275 s.

Masnyk, M. (1996). Między Niemcami a Rosją – poglądy Romana Dmowskiego w sprawie polskich ziem zachodnich. In Wrzeński, W. (Ed.). *Twórcy polskiej myśli zachodniej*. Olsztyn, Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, s. 64–75.

Masnyk, M. (2011). *Opinia publiczna byłej dzielnicy pruskiej wobec polskiego ruchu narodowego w rejencji opolskiej (1921–1939)*. Opole, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego. 283 s.

Masnyk, M. (2015). Hitler, narodowy socjalizm i stosunki polsko-niemieckie po Machtübernahme w dyskursie II Rzeczypospolitej (subiektywny przegląd opinii i stanowisk). In *Studia Śląskie*. T. 76, s. 43–53.

Masnyk, M. (2017). Kazimierza Smogorzewskiego uwagi o Niemczech po Machtübernahme. In Żyłko, W. (Ed.). *Człowiek, prawo, państwo: Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Stanisławowi Leszkowi Stadniczeńko*. Warszawa, Wyższa Szkoła Finansów i Zarządzania, s. 689–697.

Mroczo, M. (1986). *Polska myśl zachodnia 1918–1939 (kształtowanie i upowszechnianie)*. Poznań, Instytut Zachodni. 429 s.

Pajewski, J. (1978). *Odbudowa państwa polskiego 1914–1918*. Warszawa, Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe. 384 s.

Stern, F. (2008). *Niemcy w pięciu wcieleniach*. Warszawa, Rosner i Wspólnicy. 503 s.

Strządała, G. (2011). *Niemcy w myśli politycznej Władysława Studnickiego*. Opole, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego. 208 s.

Wrzeński, W. (1996). Stanisław Kozicki wobec problemów polskiej myśli zachodniej w latach II Rzeczypospolitej. In Wrzeński, W. (Ed.). *Twórcy polskiej myśli zachodniej*. Olsztyn, Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, s. 140–153.

The article was submitted on 27.02.2020