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POLITICS, PROPAGANDA AND NATIONAL AWARENESS  
IN THE POLISH-SLOVAK BORDERLAND AFTER  
THE FIRST WORLD WAR

It is common knowledge among historians that after the First World War national awareness began growing by far much faster than it had done in the preceding decades. This was especially the case in the borderlands in relation to which the policy of the newly created states stimulated a "completion" and "equalization" of the levels of national awareness, the latter expressing itself occasionally with unprecedented force.

Conflicts about the borderlines, about the incorporation of even very small territories into particular states, no matter what had been the conditions and forms of the respective decisions, would pass from sharp outbursts into a chronic condition. "Completion" and "equalization of the levels", acceleration of national options—when the feeling of national identity was not satisfactory at the threshold of independence—all these factors were rather limited, situational, brought about by local circumstances that were changing, external in relation to individuals and society. Indeed, it is no easy task to reproduce the "real" feeling of national identity at the beginning of the period between two wars, one can assume however that this feeling did not correspond to the political statements made at that time, neither did it accord with the reconstructions made by the historians who would mostly refer to the sources of a "higher order", explaining the policy of the state and of political parties and groups.

The political and diplomatic history concerning the formation of the state frontier between Poland and Czechoslovakia—after the falling apart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the late

October—early November 1918 till June 1958—has been investigated well enough and so we can do here without its systematic description.<sup>1</sup> What we are interested in here is the dispute over the delimitation of the boundary between the lands of the former Galicia and Slovakia.

The main object of the dispute was a relatively small portion of the borderland districts above all that in the areas of Spisz, Orawa and Czadeckie (the northern part of the Trenczyn district). To Poland was assigned an area of 583 km<sup>2</sup> situated to the south<sup>2</sup> of the “one thousand-year-old” historical frontier of the “St. Stephen Empire”—this argument of “ancientness” was raised both in Prague and Budapest.<sup>3</sup> This meant that the area which passed under the Polish rule amounted to less than 0.18<sup>0</sup>/<sub>10</sub> of the

<sup>1</sup> Many writers have contributed to our knowledge of that boundary's history. I am mentioning only some of them: H. Batowski, W. Balcerak, K. Bader, A. Bartlova, A. Bielovodsky (Miškovič), V. Chaloupecký, M. S. Durica, S. Faltan, F. Houdek, K. Jablonka, J. Klimko, J. Kozeński, M. Koźmiński, J. Kramer, R. Kvaček, L. Liptak, V. Olivova, E. Orlof, W. Semkowicz, A. Szklarska-Lohmanowa, P. Wandycz, J. Valenta, J. Zieliński.

<sup>2</sup> M. Koźmiński, *Polska i Węgry przed drugą wojną światową, październik 1938—wrzesień 1939. Z dziejów dyplomacji i irredenty* [Poland and Hungary before the Second World War, October 1938—September 1939. *From the History of Diplomacy and Irredentism*], Wrocław 1970, p. 17-19, (sources) note 8; P. D'Olay, *Les frontières de la Hongrie de Trianon*, Budapest 1935, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> In Budapest because it was the question of “a thousand-year-long tradition”, sustained till the peace treaty by arguments of international law and later linked to the ideology of integral revision. As the years went by the “historical principle”, although still deeply rooted in people's minds, was losing the value of a real-policy argument as regards its claims for a territory. It is significant that the first theoretical deviation from the Hungarian axiom of “historical rights” occurred as early as June 1920 when, in the framework of a broader political conception, Budapest showed a readiness for territorial concessions in Poland's favour precisely in Spisz and Orawa. (More on this: M. Koźmiński, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34). In Prague because the authorities there considered themselves successors to the territorial sovereignty of the lands belonging to the St. Stephen's Crown which in the light of the accords (the so called Pitsburg one), declarations (made in the Turczański St. Martin), peace treaties (of Versailles, Saint-Germain, Trianon) and finally in the light of the constitutional law (Czechoslovak Republic's Constitution of 29 Feb. 1920) signified taking into possession Slovak territories. Of course, the afore-mentioned declarations and legal acts did not forejudge the line of State boundaries. I would like to draw here attention to the fact that in the boundary dispute would be modified, as concrete needs emerged, the importance of the quoted principles and their arguments (e.g. historical rights and the right for self-determination, legal-historical arguments, the ethnical, strategic-political, economic-social, State and local ones).

Hungarian territory (together with the affiliated Croatia-Slovenia) and what is even more important those territorial acquisitions constituted as little as 0.15% of the Polish Republic's territory; 583 km<sup>2</sup> was at the same time 0.42% of the Czechoslovak Republic and over 1.19% of its Slovak lands.<sup>4</sup>

In the political and international relations of the states in question those frontier changes, though very small, did play a role quite out of proportion to them if not without precedence.<sup>5</sup> Among the numerous boundary conflicts, Poland as well as Czechoslovakia were then involved in, the dispute over the Polish-Slovak frontier—considered from the political, strategic and economic point of view—appears to be the least essential. This was unlike the conflict over the Cieszyn Silesia<sup>6</sup> or the differences of political views, or rivalry on the European diplomatic scene. However,

<sup>4</sup> My own calculations, initial data: P. D'Olaj, *op. cit.*, V. Prucha a kolektiv, *Hospodárske dejiny Československa v 19. a 20. storočí*, Bratislava 1972, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> In Middle, Middle- and South-Eastern Europe, after the First World War, 13 new, revived and completely transformed states emerged. The length of new State frontiers grew by over 6 thousand km. The delimitation of the frontiers, meant the appearance of new or reviving of ancient conflicts over the border-land territories. Among similar conflicts the one over Orawa, Spisz, Czadeckie was noted for the nature of the disputable territory. It concerned an area which was sparsely populated, deprived of natural resources, of towns that could symbolize historical links or would be distinct centres of national culture. On the typology and theory of boundary conflicts cf. S. Tägil (coordinator), *Studying Boundary Conflicts, A Theoretical Framework*, "Lund Studies in International History", vol. 9, Lund 1982. The fact that the object of dispute included important parts of the High Tatras, mountains fixed in tradition, folklore and in the whole of the Polish culture kindled emotions. One can notice here an analogy to Voralberg, eventually an Austrian federal land; but from the 13th century it had been a separate territorial unit and in 1919 it was given up by his Swiss neighbour against the conflicting opinion of its inhabitants.

<sup>6</sup> The Cieszyn Silesia was—like the afore-mentioned Voralberg—a historically separate territory with a status of principality dating from the late 13th century. It was thickly populated, well-urbanized and industrialized, of major economic importance—so it was completely different from Orawa and Spisz. And what is more important from our point of view the national make-up of the Cieszyn Silesia (well-known owing to J. Chlebowczyk's studies) was more clear and univocal. The first partition, settled by the local Polish and Czech representatives on 5 November, 1918 was broken by the government in Prague in less than three months time. The conflict assumed international dimensions and was resolved *ad hoc* by an arbitrary decision of the Bowers on 28 July, 1920 which, as has been said, concerned also the disputed Polish-Slovak territories.

there was a natural *iunctim* between even the smallest territorial disputes and the conflicts of interest at the international level.

In the years 1918 - 1924, and later, there was a clear assymetry of Polish and Czechoslovak territorial postulates and claims: the Polish ones, stated extensively in the projects of the plebiscite area of October 1919, covered territories to the south of the "historic" border which were several times bigger than what Poland would eventually obtain, and this was by no means a maximum programme;<sup>7</sup> the Czechoslovak claims did not on the whole exceed the former Hungarian boundary although the maintenance of the latter did not satisfy the more ambitious politicians and publicists.<sup>8</sup> This assymetry was not so much the result of pure ambition however, or not only of it, as it could be explained by the many-hundred-years-long past and by the national awareness of the neighbouring peoples at the time when national states were just emerging. We shall deal with that awareness later on but now let us look at that distant past which evokes first of all the Polish colonization in the areas to the South of the Carpathians.

The colonization was a fact proved by the sources and com-

<sup>7</sup> It concerned especially the Czadeckie area, districts Stara Lubowla and Kieżmark, 16 "Russian" communities in the former Szariski district, as well as district Spiska Sobota to mention only those territories which had been excluded from the plebiscite area by the decision of the Supreme Council. Cf. K. Jablonka, *Zmiany granicy na Spiszu i Orawie w latach 1918 - 1945* [*Boundary Alterations in Spisz and Orawa in the years 1918 - 1945*], in: *Podhale w czasie okupacji 1939 - 1945*, ed. J. Berghauzen, Warszawa 1972, p. 140 - 141. J. Paderewski's note to G. Clemenceau of 7 October, 1919 is even quoting data (according to the census of 1900) from which it would appear that in the Stara Lubowla district 7,253 Poles were living and in the Kieżmark district—13,377 (respectively for nearly 11 or over 23 thousand inhabitants), see The Jagiellonian Library, Manuscript Department, Władysław Semkowicz Legacy (further: BJ RKP, Sp. W.S.), 9585 IV, k. 18.

<sup>8</sup> They presented sources and Hungarian studies—from the first Arpads to the late 18th century—which were more or less convincing; occasionally the "historic boundary" would run further to the north and would comprise the "Zakopane sack" with Nowy Targ, Nowy Sącz being a frontier town. The Slovak acceptance of the boundary traced in the 19th century (taking into account the decision of the Arbitration Commission for the Morskie Oko area of 1902) was to be understood as an expression of Slovak moderation, but in 1939 it would be the proof that "no Slovak would give it up again", comp. A. Miškovič, *Napravená krivda Vrátané kraje vo Spiši, Orave a Čadčianskom okrese*, Turčiansky Sv. Martin 1941, pp. 166 - 177 (and the included photocopies of maps).

petent works on it.<sup>9</sup> What may be arguable is its size and reasons and what is more important—its significance at a time of new radical decisions concerning the boundaries. It had no clear counterpart in a Slovak colonization to the north of the Tatras; even if it had taken place time obliterated both the vestiges and awareness of the Slovak settlers, say, in the Podhale area. This does not mean though that during the period of Galician autonomy there were not Slovaks in Polish territories, itinerant craftsmen, settled gardeners, but those were individuals and families dispersed among the local population rather than uniform communities with a tradition of their own.<sup>10</sup> It was only the delimitations of the years 1918 - 1924 which raised the problem of a Slovak minority in Poland where, let us add, for over a hundred years the Czech colonization already had been known.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time we do find Poles in Slovakia—on the “Hungarian side” and in the “Upper Land”<sup>12</sup> as it was put—they were either seasonal workers, coming just from the Podhale, or farmers, inhabitants of the northern communes of Orawa and Spisz. True, the origin of their colonization is distant but quite clear. There were some villages in which the Poles prevailed and much more numerous ones where they formed a small minority. Relatively densely they inhabited the areas at the very border, then they could be found in “islands” of settlements or quite simply in working class suburbs of towns, of Budapest at least.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> It seems that—with all the reservations—most reliable are in this respect the historical-philological studies, see M. Małeck i, *Język polski na południe od Karpat, Spisz, Orawa, Czadeckie, wyspy językowe* [Polish Language to the South of the Carpathians, Spisz, Orawa, Czadeckie, Linguistic Islets], Kraków 1938; a comprehensive literature given there (pp. 102 - 107).

<sup>10</sup> We find many mentions on ambulant Slovak craftsmen in memoirs literature. The absence of Slovak settlements is proved indirectly by the fact that there is no mention of them in the Slovak polemical writings of the late 1930s which were otherwise referring to historical arguments (cf. note 8).

<sup>11</sup> J. Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita wielu narodów* [The Commonwealth of Many Nations], Warszawa 1985, pp. 248 - 254.

<sup>12</sup> In the original “Felvidék”.

<sup>13</sup> See among others: J. Reychman, *Dzieje polonii węgierskiej* [The History of Poles in Hungary], “Problemy Polonii Zagranicznej”, vol. 5, 1966 - 1967; M. Gotkiewicz, *Na tulaczach szlakach górali* [The Highlanders in Ertle], “Wierchy”, vol. 25, 1956; W. Semkowicz, *Granica*

Surely a part of them must have had the feeling of Polish identity, and the majority probably a specific sense of Polish descent. The number of the former might be measured by the census statements, the Hungarian censuses being universal and including a question about the "native tongue". And just the language would become the subject of scholarly disputes and political manipulations. But only collective data are available, concerning particular territories at the level of districts (subsequent salt-mine districts).

Polish would be registered in the blank spaces entitled "other languages" which weakens evidently the validity of our conclusions. In seven borderland districts only 37 thousand of those speaking "other" languages were noted down in 1910.<sup>14</sup> Let us assume that the majority of them were Polish. The Hungarian demographical works speak about 52 thousand of those who then declared their language as being Polish; these data concern the whole territory of the St. Stephen Crown (including Croatia-Slavonia).<sup>15</sup> The Polish sources referring to that concensus quote the number of 11 thousand (sic!) Poles but another estimate indicates that there were 163 thousand of them.<sup>16</sup>

The data embracing the whole territory of the Hungarian state (moreover—with Bosnia) seem, however, to be both exaggerated and not relevant for the area in question. The official Czechoslovak figures for the years 1920 - 1921 suggest that there were only 2.5 thousand Poles in Slovakia.<sup>17</sup> But they reflect the

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*polsko-węgierska w oświetleniu historycznym [Polish-Hungarian Boundary in Historical Light]*, "Pamiętnik Polskiego Towarzystwa Tatrzańskiego", vol. XXXVII, 1920; R. Kantor, E. Krasińska, *Potomkowie osadników z Polski we wsiach Derenk i Istvánmajor na Węgrzech [The Descendants of Polish Settlers in the Hungarian Villages Derenk and Istvánmajor]*, Kraków 1981, *Prace Etnograficzne*, No. 15, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", vol. DCXLIX.

<sup>14</sup> My own list based on: *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1910-évi Népszámlálása*, Budapest 1912, pp. 25 - 26, 35 - 36.

<sup>15</sup> Without Croatia-Slavonia—49 thousand, see L. Thirring, *Magyarország népessége 1869 - 1949 között*, in: *Magyarország történeti demográfiája*, ed. J. Kovácsics, Budapest 1963, p. 303; L. Katus, *A magyarországi nemzetiségi kérdésről (1868 - 1918)*, "Historia", IV, 1982, No. 4 - 5, p. 20 quotes—41 thousand, i.e. 0.2% of the St. Stephen Crown's population.

<sup>16</sup> E. Romer, J. Weinfeld, *Rocznik Polski. Tablice statystyczne [Polish Yearbook. Statistical Tables]*, Kraków 1917, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> J. Purgat, *Od Trianonu po Košice. K maďarskej otázke v Česko-*

then general tendency in the states dealing with the problems of minorities to lower the presented data, apart from the leaving out quite a numerous category of people who had foreign citizenship, or were stateless, while being permanent residents.

After the decisions by the Ambassadors Council of 28 July 1920 (seemingly with the subsequent alterations right to the final delimitation of 1925), Władysław Semkowicz<sup>18</sup> estimated that in the Spisz and Orawa areas—where a plebiscite was to be held but never was<sup>19</sup>—“Of 72,000 inhabitants the Czechs obtained 48,000, that is 2/3 of the population. The Poles lost in the plebiscite area 30,000 Polish souls without winning a single Czech, a single Slovak. Outside the plebiscite area (in the Czadeckie region and the Spisz) the Poles left to the Czechs 50,000 Poles, losing together in the southern districts 80,000 [...]”.<sup>20</sup> Much later, after

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*slovensku*, Bratislava 1970, tab. 1, p. 301. Otherwise the first Czechoslovak census for Slovakia, held under the impact of a fight for boundaries at the peace conference, quoted as many as 56 thousand “others”. Cf. M. Koźmiński, *O świadomości narodowej na pograniczu węgiersko-słowackim po I wojnie światowej* [National Awareness in the Hungarian-Slovak Borderland after the First World War], “Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej”, vol. XX, 1984, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> Władysław Semkowicz (1878 - 1949), professor at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (from 1916), member of the Polish Academy of Learning (1923), medievalist, expert in history's auxiliary sciences, publisher, was actively participating in social and State activities. Apart from numerous scholarly works and popular publications he also left valuable manuscripts and collections of documents of public life which have been kept in the Jagiellonian Library. Fragments of his correspondence, preserved there, seem to suggest that he was an advocate of the “Slavonic idea” which expressed itself in his negative approach to the Hungarian and German opponents of that concept, but at the same time, in relation to Slovaks and Czechs, he was supporting, at least in boundary matters, the Polish reason of State as it was then commonly understood.

<sup>19</sup> The initiative of resolving the problem of disputed territories came from the Polish side; it was put forward on 22 June, 1919 (I. Daszyński) at the Polish-Czechoslovak negotiations in Cracow (21 - 29 June). The decision of holding a plebiscite was taken (12 Sept., 1919) by the Supreme Council, and on 16 October the extent of the plebiscite area was fixed. The plebiscite object became null and void after the decision taken by the Ambassadors' Council on 28 July, 1920. The developments of the dispute on the diplomatic level are discussed by writers mentioned in note 2; but we find with them fairly numerous, small inaccuracies, inconsistency in the dating of meetings and international negotiations, etc.

<sup>20</sup> The note: no date, B. J. Rkp. Sp. W. S. 9585 IV, k. 172; we find those data in the publication: *Spisz, Orawa i Ziemia Czadecka w świetle stosunków etnicznych i przeszłości dziejowej* [Spisz, Orawa and Czadeckie Area in the Light of Ethnical Relations and Historical Past], Kraków 1938 (which includes detailed statistics for over 50 communities).

Munich, the "loss" grew under the pen of a contributor to the paper "Polska Zbrojna" ("Armed Poland") to 120 thousand.<sup>21</sup>

A Slovak publicist—after the agreement between the foreign minister of the "Slovak Republic", M. Černák and the Third Reich's minister, J. Ribbentrop, of 21 November, 1939—did even better when he expressed his joy in the Bratislava "Slovák" over "return to our country of 35,000 Slovak souls living in 32 villages and settlements".<sup>22</sup> This time the number of Slovaks exceeded by far not only the estimate of their number living in Poland before the Second World War which was 1,000,<sup>23</sup> but also the number of all the inhabitants in the territories which, apart from the Cieszyn Silesia, had been incorporated into Poland in 1918-1924 or in 1938 at the cost of the Czechoslovak aspirations. Because, immediately after the First World War, Poland had received with a territory of 583 km<sup>2</sup>, as has been already mentioned, a population of 25 thousand,<sup>24</sup> and in December 1938 additionally 220 km<sup>2</sup> with around 2.5 thousand people.<sup>25</sup>

Neither considered estimates nor the categorical, for the most part groundless, statements explain those divergences: could there be, after the initial territorial changes, 2.5 or 120 thousand Poles in Slovakia and 1 or 35 thousand Slovaks in Poland? Even if we do accept the quite improbable data then in 1930 or 1931, the Poles in Slovakia would make from 0.08 to 4.1% of the whole population, and the Slovaks in Poland—correspondingly—0.003 to 0.11%.<sup>26</sup> Among the problems of nationalities in the prewar Poland and prewar Czechoslovakia, Slovaks in this country, or even Poles in Czechoslovakia, when we do not take into account the international context, constituted probably the least acute problem. We do know otherwise that the numerical indicators do not by themselves determine directly the "acuity" of the national minority

<sup>21</sup> T. Prus-Faszczewski, "Polska Zbrojna" of 2 Oct. 1938, cit. after A. Miškovič, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> J. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>24</sup> See note 4.

<sup>25</sup> H. Batowski, *Kryzys dyplomatyczny w Europie. Jesień 1938—wiosna 1939* [*The Diplomatic Crisis in Europe. Autumn 1938—Spring 1939*], Warszawa 1962, p. 72.

<sup>26</sup> My own calculations; sources as in notes 17, 21, 22 and J. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 35.



problem. And those deformations on the size of the Polish minority in Slovakia and respectively of the Slovak one in Poland cannot be simply put down to a "fight for the souls" or to the census abuses, statistical manipulations, or to the exploitation of the ignorance of either one's own or international public opinion. It seems instead that they were the result of a false interpretation of the historical reality—in this case—of the very criteria in the definition of "nationality".

Of the objective criteria that of the language was applied, of the subjective ones—the real or supposed acts of people's self-determination. In view of the linguistic similarity of the minority in question it is a well-known fact that "the Slovak language is for instance much more related to literary Polish than the Kashubian dialect, considered one of the dialects of the Polish language".<sup>27</sup> References were made to the historical grammar or to the comparative lexicology. In this "war of the philologists" both the living and dead specialists provided the arguments.<sup>28</sup>

Of course a similar role had to be played by the historians who would supply information on even the earliest incorporations of the disputed territories, on the successive phases of settlement, on the treatises arrived at, etc. The conclusions would assume the form of definite statements, for example: "The whole northern and south-eastern area of the Tatras and of the adjoining region, situated in the river-basin of the Dunajec and the Poprad, had been peopled by the ethnically Polish element at the very dawn of Polish history".<sup>29</sup>

However, all those philological, historical or ethnographical

<sup>27</sup> J. Perlin, Introduction to J. M. Tortos, *Polityka językowa a języki mniejszości. Od Wieży Babel do daru języków* [The Language Policy and Minority Languages. From the Babel Tower to the Gift of Tongues], Warszawa 1986, p. 7. In this case—with the new States and subregions—there was applied a particular "law" of minimizing internal differences and maximizing the external ones. Cf. E. Haugen, *Dialekt, język, naród* [Dialect, Language, Nation], in: *Język i społeczeństwo*, selection and introduction M. Głowiński, Warszawa 1980, pp. 169-194.

<sup>28</sup> Authorities were referred to: S. Czambel, S. Kinezsa, M. Malecki, L. Niederle, K. Nitsch, F. Pasternak, J. Stanislav, Z. Stieber, A. V. Sembera, V. Važný and others.

<sup>29</sup> W. Semkowicz, *Argumenty historyczne, Elaborat pozytywny* [Historical Arguments, Positive Elaborate], no date, B. J. RKp. Sp. W. S., 9587 IV, k. 37-39.

writings had a very limited, statistically almost undetectable influence on the national minorities on both sides of the Tatras. After all they could reach only educated people, not very numerous among them, that is priests and teachers who had for the most part already passed the threshold of national option. Now they could engage in the spreading of those aprioristic views. As the announced plebiscite never happened, one cannot estimate the effects of their endeavours.

And yet the respective documents suggest that those extreme estimates of the national identity—apart from the afore-mentioned reasons—resulted from the fact that all writers took for granted the idea that the members of minority communities, and even persons arbitrarily included in them, shared a common national awareness. So all the vague feelings of identity, occasionally contradictory in themselves, undecided and changing under the impact of immediate impulses, by no means of ideological nature, were simply left out. One cannot determine the number of those transitory states. But it seems that just in them one should seek the reasons for the deformations of estimates and of statistical data.

If we take the language—first of all the *lingua del pane*—as a criterion that indicated objectively national divisions, then we must come to the conclusion that its practical application was made difficult not only by the linguistic similarity but also by the mixing up of various dialects.<sup>30</sup> While the studies made then could be helpful in reproducing the historical extent of the Polish, Slovak, Russian or German colonization, they did not necessarily show the current state of national awareness in the years immediately after the war. Perhaps it would have been useful to investigate the vocabulary and semiotics of the language used commonly in the disputed areas, but such researches had not been done. It is known, however, that this particular language was full of loan-words, especially of Hungarian origin, that it was by far unlike the literary Slovak or Polish. It was strongly influenced—

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<sup>30</sup> This particular phenomenon has not only been passed on in manuscripts, in printing and official correspondence but also given names by the contemporaries. So we find appellations given to particular dialects such as: "mountaineer's" "east-Slovak", "Orawian", "Russian", etc.

through school, military service, offices—by Hungarian, as well as by the neighbouring Polish language, it included traces of Germanisms, Russicisms, etc.

When we analyze documents of the daily life there, we find more linguistic information than any data on the national awareness of those concerned. And this is an indication that in those specific circumstances of the Polish-Slovak borderland with the cases of vague, undetermined or mixed national identity even a very good knowledge of linguistic relations cannot provide us with decisive arguments.

But we can get a better picture of national relationships there through deductive reasoning based on unconventional sources. The information they include has not been molded by an intellectual treatment, the documents of a higher class are usually submitted in offices, diplomatic chancelleries or by experts. But the obvious shortcoming of such sources is their accidentalness.

The already mentioned documents left by Władysław Semkowicz,<sup>31</sup> currently kept at the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow, seem less affected by this weakness and they in particular are the basis of our considerations. Their analysis, augmented by a random selection of similar Slovak and Hungarian collections,<sup>32</sup> makes it possible to draw some conclusions. 1. With the incomplete national awareness in the Polish-Slovak borderland the policy of the Polish or Czechoslovak state played a special role in trying to "complete" that awareness. 2. Despite the ideologically tinged and instrumentally treated propaganda that policy was mostly judged by its local, practical and material results. 3. The postwar general affirmation of national values was causing a dynamic transformation of people's awareness, it would almost force them to take a national option but such assumed identity did not prove durable and would change under the impact of circumstances.

And yet the territorial dispute over the Spisz, Orawa and Czadeckie areas, which from the Polish (i.e. governmental) position included also other regions, was in many respects a peripheral

<sup>31</sup> *Inventory of Manuscripts at the Jagiellonian Library No. 9001 - 10 000*, part II, 9501 - 9800, prepared by J. Grzybowska, Kraków 1982.

<sup>32</sup> In Bratislava, Štátny slovenský ústredný archív (SUA SSR), in Budapest Országos Levéltár (OL).

conflict. It happened at a period when other international events affected the very shape of Poland which reduced the importance of the Polish-Slovak border dispute.

The desintegration of the Austro-Hungarian state initiated the first stage of the conflict. In view of the actual break-up of the Hungarian authority, in the late October and early November 1918, people of the northern borderland were expressing their will in hundreds of petitions addressed to the emerging Polish, Czechoslovak but also Hungarian authorities. Later all the addresses of those petitions would refer to them,<sup>33</sup> each time underlining that it was the "will of the people" whose "unshakeable" desire was to find themselves within the borders of Poland or of Czechoslovakia or of Hungary. Remembering those days soon one would sing in the Podhale region: "Those lands once Polish / Polish have remained and the people who've been Polish / to Poland must return".<sup>34</sup>

A leaflet being spread on the Slovak side began with a question: "What do the Poles want?". "Do not believe the Poles they wish to liberate Orawa and Spisz"—it goes on to say—"Their aims are worse than that, what they want is to detach Orawa and Spisz [...]. Indeed they want to detach the whole of Slovakia from Bohemia in order to unite later economically with Slovakia".<sup>35</sup> Another leaflet signed "Družstvo Československé", in accordance with the obligatory Czechoslovak doctrine, begins with a sort of incantation: "Slovaks and Czechs make up a common great Czechoslovak nation whom nobody in the world will ever defeat". And then it tries to persuade: "Slovaks are in no need of any autonomy, besides Czechs cannot grant it to us since the Czech and Slovak languages form a common czechoslovak language. In some five years time those two languages [sic!—M. K.] will get so much united [...] that there will be only one, so sweet to us all [...] czechoslovak language".<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> State authorities, self-governments, social organizations, the press and propaganda publications; sometimes they reach the stage of scholarly studies; it is often difficult to verify them, to establish their inspiration, determine the degree of their representativeness.

<sup>34</sup> *Pieśń Podhala z lat walki [Polish Tatra Highlands' Song of the Years of Struggle]*, 1920, BJ 223 071 III Res. Vol. 1, 6.

<sup>35</sup> BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9585 IV, k. 196-197.

<sup>36</sup> *V Jednote sila, ibidem*, k. 197.

In the Budapest Archives we find a petition of the Highlanders who "though they speak the language of that state (i.e. in Polish) they have with it (i.e. Polish state) contrary economic interests", and with the "so called Czechoslovak state [...] they have in common neither linguistic, nor economic, nor any other interests", therefore, numbering "150 - 160 thousand" they wish to belong to Hungary<sup>37</sup>.

However, neither the activities of the numerous "defence committees" (more or less spontaneously called into being on both sides of the border, as well as in Budapest) nor the mass meetings scrupulously registered by the activists (at which protests were voiced either against the negligence of "the leading military circles to retain Spisz and Orawa" or "against the Czech occupation")<sup>38</sup>—none of them had any influence on the decisions of the central authorities, nor on those taken in Paris by the representatives of the victorious powers who were shaping up the "Versailles order". Whenever a local agreement was concluded (e.g. in December 1918 the local representatives and military authorities came to an understanding on the provisional delimitation of Spisz and Orawa), there would be an intervention by Lt-Colonel F. Vix, representative of the Entente in Budapest (13 Jan. 1919), respective decisions in Prague or Warsaw and the troops would be withdrawn or moved into the disputed territory. The authentic or put up will of the inhabitants was by no means respected.

The second stage of the dispute was opened by the decision of the Supreme Council on 10 October 1919 on the holding of a

<sup>37</sup> Koźmiński, *O świadomości...*, p. 90, note 152.

<sup>38</sup> The Committee at Nowy Sącz (chairman Sz. Kopytko, treasurer St. Komar) to the National Defence of Spisz Committee in Warsaw, 27 March, 1919, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S. 9585 IV. The character of the inspiration, the way pronouncements of the population representatives were organized are described, among others, in the letter of W. Goetel to W. Semkowicz of 25 Nov. 1919: "A delegation of the two inhabitants of Spisz (Weiss and Halczyn by name) is ready to leave Nowy Targ at any moment. A peasant from Czadeckie will also be ready [...]"; a cable of the Plebiscite Committee to W. Semkowicz of 3 May, 1920, no. 92: "A delegation made up of Halczyn, Borowy and Father Machay is coming today, May 3, to Cracow at 10 hours PM to leave immediately for Warsaw. Please hand them the memorial at the station, they will sign it as the representatives of Spisz and Orawa, not as the Committee delegates", *ibidem*, 9529 III, k. 164-165; 9585 IV, k. 56.

plebiscite in the disputed territories. The boundaries of the plebiscite area did not agree with the postulates of the Polish side; by the exclusion of the Czadeckie region, Poprad river valley and 16 western communes of the Szariska region that area was much smaller. Preparation for the plebiscite revived arguments of the opposite side. They were addressed to the mentality of the "simple man" and were to confirm or contradict his aprioristic views; they were spread in writing, in leaflets, but also by word of mouth, for instance by letting off prepared rumours. The propaganda was carried out by offices and commissions appointed by the authorities, as well as by social organizations and activists.<sup>39</sup>

The reports of the latter sound authentic. In one of them Józef Długosz of Ujsół in the Żywiec region<sup>40</sup> tells about the repercussions of the call up to the Czechoslovak army in the Orawa area. The local people are "very embittered", "murmuring and revolting", some of them say "they will pass over to the Poles at the first opportunity", still others that "they will go to the Bolsheviks in Madiary" [that is in Hungary—M. K.]; it seems that most of them were fed up with the experiences of the "Great War" and simply were not keen on any service.

The author of the report deploras the moral decay and national indifference. He describes the perfidiousness of political opponents and his own merits: "... there are spies or Czech Bolsheviks dressed up as Orawa people who are circulating among the inhabitants and trying to learn if there are those who speak ill of the Czechs, and when they catch somebody who has come there from us, they rob him of money, give him a beating and send home after having called him terrible names". "When those from Orawa come to us our people want to give them tit for tat. But I do not allow it saying they are just Czechs only dressed up and who want to frighten people". He deploras the behaviour of Polish

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<sup>39</sup> J. Długosz of Ujsół in Żywiec area, *Sprawozdanie z działalności mej na Orawie i Czadeckim od listopada 1918 [...] do Szanownego Towarzystwa Obrony Kresów w Krakowie* [Report on My Activities in Orawa and Czadeckie Areas from November 1918 [...] to the Respectable Society of the Borderlands Defence in Cracow], no date, BJ. Sp. W. S. 9585 IV, k. 10 - 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

soldiers in the Orawa and Beskidy areas which was not always what it should be—"when they entered Pólgóra, they plundered the inhabitants", and "in Zwardoń they had been prowling like Teutonic Knights for ten days". To "save the situation" he explains to the victims that "those were Jews dressed up as Polish legionaries and they were taking revenge on the Orawa people for the expulsion of the Jews" (for their being, among other things, oppressors and "Madiarophiles").<sup>41</sup>

The denominational motive was also made use of in the relentless fight for "national souls". The Polish side would take up John Huss and Luther as the enemies of "the true religion", and the behaviour of the Czech legionaries gave food to the agitation "for Christ and the Virgin Mary". They would suggest that the formula "a Pole—a Catholic" was reversable and in the case of the Slovak Catholics (with the omission of the Slovak intelligentsia, mostly Protestant) simply morally obligatory. "So he who sides with the Czechs will be damned, who follows Christ's words will live for ever"—stated one of the pamphlets.<sup>42</sup> This motive was also used for the sake of an understanding and co-operation with the Slovak autonomists who claimed that "Luther had united with Huss against the Slav catholicism".<sup>43</sup> The propagators of this formula enjoyed also the support of Budapest.<sup>44</sup>

The afore-quoted J. Długosz tells us how at the Good Friday indulgence at Zebrzydowska Calvary in 1919 the pilgrims from Orawa, Spisz and Trenczyńskie areas—who had come less numerous as usual because of "poverty and illnesses", and "the Czechs tried not to let them pass through"—how they were persuaded by the stall-keepers, by the priest father guardian and by the author himself. The faithful from the other side of the border were being told that "their only hope was to reunite with

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Opowiadanie o nowej światowej wojnie. Wojna Chrystusa z Szatanem [Story of a New World War. War of Christ against Satan]*, 1920, BJ 223 071 III Res. T. 1., 8.

<sup>43</sup> F. Jehlička, *Bijeme na zvon!* no date and place of publ. quoted points 2 and 3 of the lecture, BJ Rkp., Przyb. 102/67, before setting in order and cataloguing Sp. W. S.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. the quoted František Jehlička, cf. J. Kramer, *Slovenské autonomistické hnutie v rokoch 1918 - 1929*, Bratislava 1962, p. 69.

the Catholic Poland, a powerful state in Europe". The pilgrims reacted emotionally, women were crying and saying: "Grant us our prayer, o Virgin Mary of this Calvary, that our children live to be free from the Czechs". A folk singer of Bystrzyca prayed aloud at the figure of Christ: "I beg Thee, our Lord, defend us and our faith against the godless Czech invaders". But the Czechs, on their part, did not remain idle. The same pilgrims informed that troops in Orawa had been replaced, and the new soldiers returning from Italy had been instructed to lift their caps before the cross and holy figures and instead of greeting in Czech "na zdar" say "praised be Jesus Christ". "There you can see how the Czechs are ready to go to any length to swallow our countrymen".<sup>45</sup>

In those attempts to win the souls some material means would also play a role. They were mostly basic goods, such as sugar, salt, flour, lamp-oil, tobacco. Their distribution was controlled in Slovakia by the Territorial Office of Propaganda for Slovakia (Propagačna Kancelaria Slovenského Územia). Officially a view was expressed that the feeling—"we want to have nothing in common either with the Poles or with the Czechs"—would improve once food and tobacco articles had arrived.<sup>46</sup> We find in the Bratislava Archives a confirmation receipt that such articles did arrive but no data, however, show whether and to what extent these deliveries did "improve the feelings".<sup>47</sup>

The Polish side counted on similar actions. It only seems that Polish food deliveries were more offhanded, being concern of "social bodies" rather than of offices. A social activist, once more J. Długosz of Ujsoły, deploras the fact that the Committee at Żywiec is "appalled" at the necessity of buying out a freight-car of food allotted by the Ministry of Provisions to Orawa; he cheers himself up however: "I know that the situation is not so bad that one could not collect 50 thousand in the company of so many professors, merchants, etc. I should have borrowed it with the peasants". And he insists by asking: "And what about flour and

<sup>45</sup> J. Długosz, *Sprawozdanie...*, cf. note 39.

<sup>46</sup> M. Koźmiński, *O świadomości...*, pp. 77-78; sources quoted in note 81.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.



cereals for Orawa?”. “They’re asking me for 200 kg of clover seeds for Orawa”; “they’re asking for seed-potatoes”; “And what about cloth [...]; what about lamp-oil?; how to get somewhere cheap wraps?”<sup>48</sup>

The Polish activities were closely watched at Koszyce. The Hungarian “Kassai Hirlap” (“Koszyce News”) commented: “The northern part of Spisz has been literally flooded with proclamations and leaflets, with agitators, with money; the Poles do not spare efforts to win Zamagórze district for themselves. In regard of cunning and smartness they are inexhaustible. Lately they have begun putting forward compensational devices [...]. In their proclamations the Poles show a lot of practical sense, because apart from freedom they also promise lamp-oil, and apart from schools an immediate delivery of flour”.<sup>49</sup>

The Germans in the Spisz area investigated their “economic postulates” (among others in the “Karpathenpost” newspaper); Dr W. Goetel wrote: “that is why for the time being we restrict ourselves to stressing only economic advantages of the annexation.”<sup>50</sup> The Jews were closely watched and accused of changing their options as if they were particularly obliged to opt for one or another nation! According to the opinion held in Prague they were also supposed to act in the Spisz district as “Polish agents” and to argue that “the north” would go to Poland and the Hungarians would enter “the south”, they were also said to induce the Highlanders to swear they would declare themselves Poles.<sup>51</sup>

On both sides of the yet provisional boundary the reports were eagerly spread on the “banditry of the Poles in Orawa”<sup>52</sup> as well as on the “Czech outrages in Spisz and Orawa”.<sup>53</sup> Along with the sporadic killings or mutilations (however, more frequent in the disputed area of Cieszyn Silesia than in Orawa and Spisz we do find a long list of small incidents which consisted of the requisitioning

<sup>48</sup> J. Długosz, *Sprawozdanie...*

<sup>49</sup> “Kassai Hirlap”, No. 8, of 11 Jan. 1920, annex to a letter of the Main Spisz-Orawa Plebiscite Committee (L. 858/20), to W. Semkowicz. of 20 Feb. 1920, BJ Rkp. W. S., 9585 IV, k. 42.

<sup>50</sup> W. Goetel to W. Semkowicz, L. 1299/20 of 24 March 1920, *ibidem* k. 43.

<sup>51</sup> M. Koźmiński, *O świadomości...*, p. 73, source: note 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90, note 152.

<sup>53</sup> Pamphlet under the quoted title, 1919, BJ 223 071 III, Res. T. 1., 2.

tion of a silver watch, of the beating with the rifle butt on the back, a loss of a new coat, of two guilts of a cart, of some cattle feed, etc.).<sup>54</sup>

While registering the "abuses", attention was drawn to the "unheard of" corruption which according to many writers was responsible for the sudden change of feelings. Indeed it was reported in June 1920 that in spite of a hostile attitude towards Poland on the plebiscite question shown by all Slovak parties, "our influence in Trzciana and in the Slovak region became somewhat stronger lately", this being due to the "would-be" embezzlements done by some Czechs.<sup>55</sup>

But the results of Czechoslovak authorities' corruption were probably less significant for the Polish side than the fact that the executive in the plebiscite area was left entirely "in Czech hands".<sup>56</sup> Polish complaints about the obstructing of the plebiscite propaganda were mostly justified, although the conclusions drawn in some pamphlets seem to be rather simple: "Brothers of Orawa and Spisz! You have read what the Czechs have been doing in your land! And so how are you going to vote? For the robbers? No! For Poland!"<sup>57</sup> The prevailing corruption resulted in rather risky ideas: "... to gain over the Orawian member of parliament, called Skiczol we should give him some thousand crowns and he would do more than any newspapers or pamphlets, for he is bribe-taker".<sup>58</sup>

The visual plebiscite propaganda, in which pictures were in harmony with the text ("many Highlanders will not read the text but only look at the pictures"<sup>59</sup>) presented suggestively glaring drawings: a white pyramid bore a caption—"Polish salt" and beneath—"Bohemia has no salt"; colourful, hieratic figures—a

<sup>54</sup> P. Borowy's address to "Świetne Poselstwo w Pradze" [the Illustrious Legation in Prague] of 31 May 1924, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S. 9575 III, k. 102 - 103.

<sup>55</sup> Letter of K. Dobrowolski to W. Semkowicz of 16 June 1920, *ibidem*, k. 206.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>57</sup> Czech abuses in Spisz and Orawa, as in note 55.

<sup>58</sup> J. Długosz, *Letter and Sprawozdanie...*, k. 18.

<sup>59</sup> The Main Spisz-Orawa Plebiscite Committee, L. 220/19; W. Goetel to W. Semkowicz, letter of 25 Nov. 1919, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S. 9529 III, k. 164 - 165 (as in note 40), including a poster project.

Polish soldier ("covered himself with glory, brave and heroic"), a Czech soldier ("he's good at requisition but on the look-out how to surrender to the enemy").<sup>60</sup> The propaganda was directly sustained by the distribution of salt, lamp-oil, candles, soap to the Spisz people.<sup>61</sup> The Czech side, which appreciated no less, if not more, the power of material arguments, was taking into consideration the former economic links by fixing the plebiscite tactics. For example the Czech authorities instructed that the voting should not be started at Nowa Biała village because that part of Spisz Magura district had economic connections with Nowy Targ (on the Polish side).<sup>62</sup> The future of the potential voters appeared in Polish propaganda dimly, occasionally even ambiguously: "The Czechs are going to turn churches into factories as Emperor Joseph II once did".<sup>63</sup>

And yet no matter what the propaganda was saying, no matter what were the real or alleged national preferences of the people in the plebiscite area, the solution came from outside. The decision by the Ambassadors Council on recalling the plebiscite was taken on 28 July 1920 at Spa. It had been preceded by talks of the foreign ministers, W. Grabski and E. Beneš, the very object of the dispute had, however, a minor importance in view of the diplomatic pressure by the Entente and the Red Army's thrust to the west. Although the situation reduced the extent of the dispute to small portions of the plebiscite area, in fact to Jaworzyna Spiska which was claimed by the Polish side,<sup>64</sup> it did become a source of further conflicts, generated emotions and recriminations out of proportion to the physical size of the disputed area.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>61</sup> The goods mentioned here are to be found mostly in the quoted Polish and foreign sources.

<sup>62</sup> Head of Spisz district (č. 1025) to the plenipotentiary Minister for Slovakia, 24 Oct. 1919, SÚA SSR, MPS, carton č. 307, I/VI.

<sup>63</sup> J. Długosz, *Sprawozdanie...*, k. 13-14.

<sup>64</sup> Apart from publications concerned with Jaworzyna entirely or incidentally note should be taken especially of paper entitled *Podstawy prawno-polityczne sporu o Jaworzynę między Polską a Czechosłowacją* [The Legal-Political Background to the Dispute over Jaworzyna between Poland and Czechoslovakia], BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S. 9587 IV, k. 27-38 and others.

<sup>65</sup> An example is the way Slovak public opinion, as well as the "polonophiles" reacted to the alteration of the boundary in November-December 1938; see M. Koźmiński, *Polska i Węgry...*, p. 157-158 ff.

Thus of the periods under study, when propaganda was influencing national feelings, the last stage was beginning; it was the years 1920 - 1925, a period of stabilizing the state boundaries. Also the time was coming to an end when historical, ethnographical, economic and other arguments were carefully selected and considered. It was important to make some last efforts when possible.

An extensive material prepared by W. Semkowicz, entitled *Historical Arguments* was divided into the "Positive Paper" in which Polish state's historic rights against the claims of "the rapacious Madiar state" were put down, and the "Negative Paper" "in case the Czech-Slovak commission, put forward their historic rights", that is if it quoted precisely the historic title of the Hungarian state of which the Czech-Slovak state regarded itself as the successor.<sup>66</sup> Of course the author was right when he indicated in the "Negative Paper" that the so called "historic rights" had been "unconditionally annulled" by the Versailles Treaty, as well as by the subsequent decisions of the Supreme Council and the Ambassadors' Council.<sup>67</sup> His opinion was confirmed by the latest partition of the Cieszyn Silesia and of the Spisz and Orawa areas.

Local plebiscite activists were just leaving the partitioned territories having been compelled to leave their homeland and settle down on "their" side of the newly-drawn state frontier.<sup>68</sup>

The decision of the Ambassadors' Council was accepted by the Polish military authorities with extreme reluctance; not so long before, in early June, they were expecting instead that the "tense situation" could lead to war or ("even worse") to an arbitrage solution.<sup>69</sup> But the decision was taken at the moment

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<sup>66</sup> Prepared by W. Semkowicz, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9587 IV, k. 37 - 44.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> J. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 253 - 254.

<sup>69</sup> Report of the Polish Military Mission in Paris No. 242 (A) of 7 June, 1920 (copy) to the Command-in-Chief of the Polish Army (Gen. T. Rozwadowski), BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9585, k. 75 - 85. In the enclosed report by the military expert (Lieut. B. Romaniszyn) we can read: "I consider arbitratorship on this matter to be the only reasonable and for us advantageous solution of the situation which has reached now such a degree of tension" (*ibidem*).

when the Polish state was facing a much greater danger from the east. As it was described a year later in "Gazeta Podhalańska" ("Newspaper of the Polish Tatra Highlands") the arbitrary decision of Spa was "on the part of the Czechs [...] a kick given by an ass to the dying bull".<sup>70</sup> On the Slovak side it was felt by the autonomists as being equally unjust, as a sell-out of Slovak interests by E. Beneš.<sup>71</sup>

The territorial dispute, now restricted to a few communes, was going on. The Polish argumentation for incorporating Jaworzyna Spiska seemed the more convincing as a compensational agreement had been concluded on the Orawa side in April 1921 which gave over to Poland a part of the Lipnica Wielka village in exchange for two other—Sucha Góra and Głodówka.<sup>72</sup> Poland won 28160 ares of land and lost 255 people.<sup>73</sup> The Polish side proposed giving away two villages: Kacwin and Niedzica in exchange for a greater part of Jaworzyna.<sup>74</sup> It was done because of the Ambassadors Council's decision which allowed for a modification of the frontier when particular interests of the border communes or special local conditions were involved.

The negotiators multiplied arguments of economic and hydrographical nature, not without giving up the advantage that Jaworzyna had been till 1877 not a separate settlement but a part of Jurgowo,<sup>75</sup> in the same time the inhabitants of the villages concerned directly with the exchange of territories went to protest. Let us note here that according to the pedantic specifications the Polish side claimed 9,583 hectares offering for it 5,425 hectares; at the same time Poland would lose 2,179 citizens.<sup>76</sup> So the territory in question was of 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> and was inhabited by less than 3 thousand people. Representatives of the Kacwin village stated they did not believe that, "as it was rumoured, our

<sup>70</sup> The "Gazeta Podhalańska" of 29 May 1921, quot. after BJ Rkp. Przyb. 191/67 (at present probably, Sp. W. S.).

<sup>71</sup> A. Miškovič, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>72</sup> Presented in compendium entitled *Daty statystyczne* [Statistical Data] W. S., 9587 IV, k. 72-80.

<sup>73</sup> *Podstawy prawno-polityczne sporu...*, cf. note 64.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*; also B. Romaniszyn, *Sprawa Jaworzyny—pro memoria* [The Case of Jaworzyna—pro memoria], BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9587 IV, k. 20-26.

<sup>75</sup> B. Romaniszyn, *ibidem*.

hereditary Polish piece of land in the Polish Spisz would be detached from Poland and given away to the rapacious Czechs [...] we demand in the name of divine justice and of human laws that our souls and those of our children should not be delivered into the hands of enemies. From time immemorial [...] we are Polish speaking people and we shall not agree to being repulsed from Poland.”<sup>77</sup> The inhabitants of Łapsze Niżne, too, protested vehemently at the news that two communities had been given up: “Shame on him who is selling us [...] we won’t allow them to detach us, and we will defend ourselves [...] even by means dictated by despair.”<sup>78</sup>

Also those to whom the protests were addressed did not fail to protest themselves. The Society of the Southern Borderland protested to the Prime Minister<sup>79</sup> and to the Polish Foreign Ministry, The Commission for the Protection of Nature—to all who are concerned. Among the issues raised were the economic advantages for the “borderland people”, “holiday values” for the people from all over the country, “an invaluable terrain for scientific study”, both the tourist and mountaineering qualities of the mountains to be given away and of those to be won were stressed.<sup>80</sup> The arguments were advanced emphatically, both emotional and rational attitudes came to the fore.

In October 1920 the communities incorporated into Poland a provisional Spisz-Orawa district with the head in Nowy Targ with its branches at Łapsze Niżne (for 13 Spisz villages) and at Jabłonka (for 14 Orawa villages). A Provisional Instruction by the Polish General Government Delegate for the former Galicia stated that in the respective area “The Hungarian administration laws remain for the time being in force”. Along with detailed regulations the Instruction was introducing Polish as the official

<sup>70</sup> Presented in *Daty statystyczne...*

<sup>77</sup> J. Soja and others to the Society for Southern Borderland, 18 IV 1921, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9587 IV, k. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Representatives of the Łapsze Niżne village to W. Semkowicz, *ibidem*, k. 6.

<sup>79</sup> Cable of 19 April 1921, *ibidem*, k. 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Memoriał Państwowej Komisji Ochrony Przyrody [Memorial of the State Commission for Nature Preservation]*, L. 690/22, Cracow, 11 Jan. 1922 (signature: Prof. W. Szafer); Publication: *Jaworzyna ze stanowiska turystyki [Jaworzyna as a Tourist Area]*, no date.

language, with the qualification however: "should an immediate use of Polish in offices prove not easy, the village councils may provisionally use the Slovak language".<sup>81</sup>

As the general situation in the borderland became more stable, the daily problems of existence dampened the emotions of the months preceding the awaited plebiscite. Many things called for a daily adaptation, such as new legal regulations, break-up of local communities, severing of links between neighbours, cutting of country roads with border barriers, detachment of pastures from the farms, etc.

As late as four-five years after the alteration of the boundaries some peculiar *cahiers de doléances* would still be submitted to the authorities and public opinion. As matters still unresolved were listed economies placed in the banks of Spisz Stara Wieś now inaccessible and the unregistered Hungarian obligations ("The Czech government did register them whereas the Polish if it did it was only the Austrian ones").<sup>82</sup> Shortcomings were pointed out: absence of a district physician (who "would make rounds in Spisz as it was used to be in the Hungarian and Czechoslovak times [...] who would fight infectious illnesses such as typhoid fever which is now and again getting rampant").<sup>83</sup> There was a complaint: "The Spisz Circle is obliged to state that while the Hungarian Government would always come to the help of poor people in Spisz by bringing in agricultural implements, seed corn, cattle feed at reduced prices to promote the breeding of improved cattle, paid large sums for schools, roads, bridges, etc, the Polish government by contrast pays no attention to Spisz [...] it even tries to exploit the Spisz population by imposing excessive and unjust taxes [...]. And when one takes into account the abuses of the customs officials which are identified with the general treatment of Spisz by Polish Government, no wonder there are those who

<sup>81</sup> *Instrukcja Tymczasowa dla Starostwa Spisko-Orawskiego w Nowym Targu* [Provisional Instruction for the Spisz-Orawa District Office at Nowy Targ], signed by the Government's General Delegate for former Galicia, Dr Gałęcki, 15 Oct. 1920, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9585 IV, k. 190-196.

<sup>82</sup> The Spisz Circle to the Main Board of the Society for Southern Borderland, L. 7/25 of 4 Feb. 1925, *ibidem*, k. 63.

<sup>83</sup> The Spisz Circle to the Main Board of the Society for Southern Borderland, L. 6/25 of 24 Jan. 1925, *ibidem*, k. 62.

complain and say it was better here in the Hungarian, even Czech time, than now in the Polish time".<sup>84</sup>

There is surely in those words much exaggeration and frustrated hope. But they must have been expressing general feeling since they found confirmation in a joint proclamation issued by the Polish Tatra Society, Polish Touring Society, Southern Borderland Society and Podhale Association: "There is reaching us a voice of despair from the Polish villages deprived of their livelihood [...] a spectre of economic disaster is hanging over them once they have been cut off Jaworzyna, the only terrain of pastures for them, the only source of income and life [...]".<sup>85</sup> The motives which made the authors push their exaggeration even further were obvious: the case of Jaworzyna was alarming. The alarm finds a confirmation in an internal document *Pro memoria* by Capt. B. Romaniszyn where we can read: "The despairing population, seeing no hope for help, is turning along the whole line against Poland and is clamouring to be attached to Czechoslovakia, that is to Jaworzyna. We are obliged to keep in each of those villages 300 soldiers to preserve calm among the revolting people".<sup>86</sup>

The dispute over Jaworzyna was in the end lost by Poland at the League of Nations. The delimitation was conducted in accordance with the Annex A of the so called Cracow Protocols (drawn by the Polish-Czechoslovak delegates of a mixed commission) of 6 May 1924 and it was completed before 1 January 1926.<sup>87</sup> So once more a decision came from outside. It remained

<sup>84</sup> The Spisz Circle to the Main Board of the Society for Southern Borderland, L. 5/25 of 5 Feb. 1925, *ibidem*, k. 64-65. However when, in 1925, the otherwise so much criticized Spisz-Orawa District came to be liquidated, it did find its advocates, a request was put forward to the "High Ministry to hold back the liquidation of that particular District to which Spisz owes a protection and defence of its interests" (The Spisz Circle of the Society for Southern Borderland to the Interior Ministry, L. 17/25 of 1 March 1925), *ibidem*, k. 59.

<sup>85</sup> B. D. (1924), BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9587 IV, k. 17 vr.

<sup>86</sup> B. Romaniszyn, *Sprawa Jaworzyny...*, k. 22.

<sup>87</sup> Comprehensive legal-political and administrative documentation in *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* [Gazette of Bills of the Polish Republic], No. 133, 1925, of 31 December, art. 952, p. 1862, Annex, pp. 1-16.



fixed in the collective memory of the Poles and Slovaks not simply as a local case, although it was written "on the skins" of no more than a few thousand inhabitants of a small bit of territory, but as an international problem which would in the future twice stir up public opinion.<sup>58</sup>

As regards the territorial matters only the very insignificant ones remained, although they were eloquent in the context of what has been said in this article. It was the head of the Lipnica Wielka village, Jan Bjalou who, in June 1925, welcomed members of the mixed delimitation Border Commission: "Dear Sirs, you have come here to check up finally the boundary between the two neighbouring, friendly states. The community [...] while welcoming you here is asking you a favour [...] would you please introduce small corrections which for the commune's interests are of great importance". Referring to the long-established customs—such as making use of meadows taken on a long-standing lease from the "Orawa State" in exchange for "all sorts of facilities, such as a regular permission to transport timber from Babia Góra along the Lipnice roads", the head asked for "a shifting of boundary stones and incorporation into the Polish territory of an area of 22,000 acres of meadows, property of the Orawa State so that the Lipnica Wielka community could use it as it had done since long ago".<sup>59</sup> And this is how in most cases a *modus vivendi* was found and the livelihood requirements could be met at a time when the boundary stones of new, revived "national states" were placed.

So it appears that by putting together local and global historic processes, local and national awareness, interference of livelihood problems and national emotions, spontaneous gestures and activities from outside, incidental, declarations and the everyday reality in that borderland—we arrive at a verification of numerous

<sup>58</sup> In the periods of revindications and boundary changes in 1938 - 1939 and 1945 - 1947, so that on 13 June, 1958 the boundary could assume its present line which, as regards Jaworzyna, is the same as on 31 December 1925.

<sup>59</sup> A report of the meeting made by an unknown person, bearing the signatures of the communities' head and its 15 members dated 18 June, 1925, BJ Rkp. Sp. W. S., 9587 IV, k. 117.

common views, national stereotypes and aprioristic statements. And this may in turn recreate the historic reality and correct a simplified picture of political conflicts and transformations of national awareness the historiography used to present.

*(Translated by Ludwik Wiewiórkowski)*