

Tarptautinė mokslinė konferencija „Mažosios Lietuvos ir Klaipėdos krašto lietuvių veikėjai nacių ir sovietų represijų aukos“ (2023-10-16)

# Baltic and Polish Politicians in Exile and Their Vision of Post-War Peace Agreements in Eastern Europe, 1940–1945<sup>1</sup>

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The article examines two key topics: what vision the leading Baltic politicians in exile had of the post-war world order, and what vision Polish politicians in exile had of the post-war world order, specifically in terms of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and East Prussia. The main focus is on the Memel/Klaipėda question. The Vilnius question is also addressed to the extent that it is related to the Memel/Klaipėda question. This question is important for understanding the relations between Baltic and Polish émigré politicians during World War II. The article's limited scope did not leave space for negotiations between the Soviet government and the Polish government-in-exile or between the Soviet government and the Lithuanian and Polish communists on the issue of East Prussia and Klaipėda. The article tries to avoid fundamental generalizations, and does not attempt to provide conclusive answers to many of the questions and problems that have arisen.

**Key words:** International relations, the Baltic question, the Memel/Klaipėda question, East Prussia, World War II, relations between Baltic and Polish exiles, visions of the post-war world order.

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## Vision of the Leading Baltic Politicians in Exile on the Conference of the Council on Foreign Relations

An answer to the question of what the leading Baltic politicians in exile thought in the early months of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union about what place the Baltic nations might have in post-war Europe can be found in the shorthand report on the conference of the American Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) that took place on September 15, 1941, as well as in the memoranda submitted to the CFR by three leading Baltic politicians who were in attendance. In terms of archival sources, this article primarily relies on material from the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (Archiwum akt Nowych), the National Archives in London and the Hoover Institution Archives in California. As for Polish historians who have examined the relations between Lithuanian and Polish politicians in exile, Krzysztof Tarka stands out with *Confrontation or Cooperation? Lithuania in the Policy of the Polish Government in Exile, 1939-1945*. Polish historian Wojciech Wrześniński has examined the plans that Polish politicians in exile had for East Prussia.<sup>2</sup>

In his study, Robert D. Schulzinger describes the CFR as a U.S. think tank specializing in foreign policy and international relations. This think tank was founded in 1921 as a bipartisan non-profit organization. Its members have included senior politicians, secretaries of state, directors of special services, bankers, businesspeople, lawyers and professors.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of World War II, Hamilton Fish Armstrong,<sup>4</sup> the editor of the CFR's journal *Foreign Affairs*, and Walter H. Mallory, the CFR's executive director, arranged a meeting with Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles and other State Department officials and offered their services in addressing the question of the post-war world order. During World War II, the CFR and its Peace Aims Group produced a series of government-sponsored studies on the post-war world that contributed to U.S. policy in Europe and Asia.<sup>5</sup>

On September 15, 1941, the CFR Peace Aims Group held its eighth meeting. At the meeting, Armstrong presented three guests: former President of Lithuania Antanas Smetona, Dr. Ālfred Bilmanis of Latvia, and Kaarel Robert Pusta of Estonia. "The group was for-

<sup>2</sup> Tarka, Krzysztof, *Konfrontacja czy Współpraca? Litwa w polityce Rzędu Polskiego na uchodźstwie 1939-1945*, Opole, 1998; Wrześniński, Wojciech, "Prusy Wschodnie a bezpieczeństwo europejskie: stanowisko Francji, USA, Wielkiej Brytanii, ZSRS i Polski wobec przyszłości Prus Wschodnich w latach 1939-1945," in: *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie*, 1996, No. 2, pp. 163-179.

<sup>3</sup> See: Schulzinger, Robert D., *The Wise Men of Foreign Affairs: The History of the Council on Foreign Relations*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton Fish Armstrong was an American diplomat, journalist and editor. He wrote many books, including *Can America Stay Neutral (with Allen W. Dulles) and Hitler's Reich: The First Phase*. For more about Armstrong, see: Linke, Daniel J., "Hamilton Fish Armstrong: The Diplomatic Editor and Anti-Nazism in the 1930s," in: *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Winter 2000), pp. 145-169, online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.25290/prinunivlibrchro.63.3.0438?seq=1>

<sup>5</sup> Schulzinger.

fortunate,” Armstrong noted, “in having with it three of the founders of the Baltic States.”<sup>6</sup> Armstrong’s representation of Pusta and Bīlmanis needs to be clarified. Pusta was an Estonian politician and a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia – he had been head of the Estonian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference and an envoy to France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. Bīlmanis was not the founder of the Latvian State, as Armstrong had claimed, but the former Latvian envoy to Moscow and the current Latvian envoy to the United States. He was an early advocate of a commonwealth system for the three Baltic States, where each would preserve its identity and independence within a federal structure.

Smetona, Bīlmanis and Pusta presented the Peace Aims Group with a broad statement on the peace aims of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.<sup>7</sup> This was followed by questions from the members of the Peace Aims Group. The first question that Smetona was asked by the Peace Aims Group was to expatiate on the origins and character of the Baltic ethnic group, and whether Lithuanians were in fact Slavs, as had been asserted in one edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Smetona informed the group that Lithuanians were of the same origin as Old Prussians and Latvians and spoke an Indo-European language related to Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. This was followed by an overview of Lithuanian history. Smetona went on to explain that Medieval Lithuania had extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and in building up a barrier against the expansionist ambitions of the Teutonic Knights, the Lithuanian State had expanded into what later became Western and Southern Russia. Exhausted by the struggle with the Teutonic Order and Muscovy, Lithuania was forced to enter into a union, and later – to form a common monarch with Poland. Smetona explained to the group that in the 18th century, Poland and Lithuania had been partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria, and that the Lithuanian aristocracy had been absorbed by the Polish, Russian and German aristocracies.<sup>8</sup>

In his memorandum, Smetona discussed a number of issues, including whether there was any possibility of establishing a “United States of Europe”; why Europe needed regional blocs; the idea of an international police force; the need for a directed economy; the need to limit national sovereignty; the responsibilities of the United Kingdom and the United States; the need for reconstruction loans and reparations; the need for internati-

<sup>6</sup> “Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia),” September 15, 1941, agenda prepared by Philip E. Mosely, in: *Hoover Institution Archives* (hereinafter “HIA”), Stanford California, Poland MSZ, 3.

<sup>7</sup> “Lithuanian Peace Aims. Prepared by Dr. Antanas Smetona, former President of the Republic of Lithuania” (hereinafter “Lithuanian Peace Aims”), in: HIA MSZ, 3; “Latvian Peace Aims. Prepared by Dr. Alfred Bīlmanis, Latvian Minister to the United States, September, 15, 1941” (hereinafter “Latvian Peace Aims”), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 3; Pusta’s memorandum can be found in “Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization, by Kaarel Robert Pusta, former Estonian Foreign Minister, September 15, 1941” (hereinafter “Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization”), in: *The National Archives of the United Kingdom (UK TNA)*, London, FO 371/174/59, N6756/174/59.

<sup>8</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

onal protection of minorities in Lithuania; the need for strategic boundaries; the ancient state of Lithuania; Lithuania's right to Vilnius; Lithuania's right to Klaipėda; the Baltic States and their role in Eastern Europe; possibilities for a Baltic Union; possible cooperation with Finland; Lithuania's relations with Russia and Germany; Baltic relations with the Scandinavian countries and Poland; the need to establish a Baltic government-in-exile; and relations with Britain and the United States.<sup>9</sup>

The United States and Great Britain. In the preface of his memorandum, Smetona emphasized that he and everyone else understood that the bright light of freedom will only shine on Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – and Europe as a whole – when democracies led by the United States and Great Britain will have the upper hand against dictatorial powers. However, he added that this was only the first step toward victory. The second very complicated and difficult step was the formulation of a new order for the individual nations and their mutual relations. In his memorandum, Bilmanis stated that the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States were responsible for the eradication of aggression in Europe, and will have to make sure that a similar attack on civilization, progress, democracy, religion, ethics and international law can never be repeated in Europe in the future. According to Pusta, the United States and the United Kingdom could not possibly become indifferent to the restoration of the freedom of the Baltic States. In Pusta's opinion, the Baltic nations were highly civilized and would be able to restore their economic and political life in a short time if the great democracies, such as the United States, were to give them credit and confidence by helping them with international loans through private individuals and government investments.<sup>10</sup>

Lithuania's right to Memel/Klaipėda. On this matter, Smetona emphasized that during the 16 years that this territory was under Lithuanian rule, Lithuania had increased its prosperity and improved the port, which handled 80 percent of imports and exports, while Germany only needed the port for the economic and political subjection of the adjoining territory and its people. Smetona only spoke of getting Klaipėda back.<sup>11</sup> When a Polish journalist asked him in Buenos Aires in February 1941 whether Poland and Lithuania could split East Prussia, Smetona answered in Polish: "Nie, nie, ja nie sądzę żeby to było możliwe... Prusy Wschodnie są zgermanizowane i te peklóciłoby nas z Niemcami..." ("No, no, I don't think it's possible... East Prussia is Germanized and it would put us in conflict with the Germans...").<sup>12</sup> Unlike Bilmanis, Pusta did not address the issue of Memel/Klaipėda, either at the conference or in his memorandum. After the Klaipėda Revolt in January 1923,

<sup>9</sup> Lithuanian Peace Aims.

<sup>10</sup> Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization.

<sup>11</sup> Lithuanian Peace Aims.

<sup>12</sup> Witold Iphorski-Lenkiewicz – Ministerstwa Informacji, February 8, 1941 (Sprawozdanie j rozmowie z Prezydentem Smetoną w sprawie Unij polski-litewskiej), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 43.

Pusta disagreed with many other Estonian diplomats and claimed that Lithuania already had the right, based on the Treaty of Versailles, to demand the incorporation of Memel/Klaipėda.<sup>13</sup> We should keep in mind that in the late 1930s, Estonian and Latvian leaders primarily considered the Memel/Klaipėda question to be one of Lithuanian and German relations, so they were constantly advising Lithuania to be conciliatory and come to an agreement with Germany if possible. In reply to a question regarding the attitudes of the Baltic States toward the future of East Prussia, Bilmanis pointed out that East Prussia could theoretically be a continuation of the proposed Baltic Union. However, he also pointed out that with the exception of some mixed areas, East Prussia had been completely Germanized, so the separation of East Prussia from Germany would not be a happy solution.<sup>14</sup>

Border issues. Pusta stated that Estonia has no territorial claims against its neighbors, and that Estonia's ethnographic borders with both Russia and Latvia are clearly delineated. Bilmanis said that Latvia did not have any claims regarding borders to either Estonia or Lithuania, and that trustees of the neutral powers should be appointed after the war to resolve European border disputes once and for all.<sup>15</sup> In his memorandum, Bilmanis argued that the United States and the United Kingdom should immediately organize ethnographic plebiscites in Central Europe and the Balkans in order to draw clear ethnographic boundaries between the various groups and minorities emigrating from the enclaves to their home countries, should they so desire.<sup>16</sup> In his comments, Smetona pointed out that Lithuania had strong claims to Vilnius and the Vilnius Region as a part of its national territory, but that Poland had tried to incorporate Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. Smetona believed that after this war, in which Poles had fought and suffered, it would be possible to discuss a new plan for relations between the Poles and the Baltic States, and that a Baltic-Polish arrangement was a possible option.<sup>17</sup> He expressed hope that after the war, Poland would recognize the minimum borders of Lithuania, including Vilnius.

The possibility of democracy. Regarding Lithuania's political democracy, Smetona said that it was doubtful whether parliamentary order would be established anywhere in Europe immediately after the war, since everyday life will have been disrupted in every country, but that the Baltic States would return to it sooner than any of the others. He then added that democracy could not exist in Europe after the war unless the border issues were resolved first.<sup>18</sup> Speaking about democracy, Bilmanis brought up the popular dictatorship that had been established in 1934 by Kārlis Ulmanis in order to revise the Latvian

<sup>13</sup> Pusta to Hellat, January 25, 1923, in: *HIA*, Pusta, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

<sup>15</sup> Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization; Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

<sup>16</sup> Latvian Peace Aims.

<sup>17</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

<sup>18</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

Constitution of 1921 along more conservative and practical lines to replace the previous domination by 27 parties. He said that the constitutional reform was hindered by international events and was not completed because of the Bolshevik aggression, but that Latvia had always wanted to be democratic republic with an elected parliament and president, and that all European states should have democratic forms of government. Pusta did not mention the period of authoritarian rule in Estonia in the late 1930s. He just said that having reached a very high degree of civilization through their indomitable energy, the Baltic nations were the vanguard of liberty and democracy.<sup>19</sup>

The Baltic Union and the European Union. Pusta and Bilmanis felt that the Baltic States had to cooperate closely in political, military and economic matters in the post-war period. The Baltic Union had a special place in their vision for the future. They emphasized that based on the political and economic union agreement that was an integral part of the European Union, the Baltic States would be able to promote security and peace in the region. Pusta began his memorandum by saying that he believed that the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States was a fundamental condition for lasting peace for everyone.<sup>20</sup> He then went on to discuss plans for the foundation of a Baltic Union<sup>21</sup> that had already emerged at the Paris Peace Conference. Pusta also brought up the question of Vilnius, saying that all differences of a purely political nature must be put aside in advance, as this was precisely the first condition for this union. However, Pusta stressed that the Baltic Union would not be a federation or confederation, but an association of independent countries.<sup>22</sup> Smetona declared that there was no basis for a United States of Europe. He said that Europe was constantly at war, so it did not make sense to try to form a United States of Europe from its various nations: "Delving deeper into this question, however, we find that a favorable reply becomes impossible. Over the centuries, Europe has branched out into individual nations that nurture their own individual cultures and vigilantly protect their languages, religions and historical traditions. The smaller nations would fear being stifled and then assimilated by the larger nations if they were to be united with them into one close political organization."<sup>23</sup>

Prospects for a Baltic Union. Smetona said that taking into account their geographical position, their sense of self-protection in the face of their Eastern and Western neighbors, and their similar social structure, it would seem more prudent for these three nations to begin with close political collaboration, but not in the form of a federation.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Latvian Peace Aims; Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization.

<sup>20</sup> See: Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization.

<sup>21</sup> A union that would have included Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* See: Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization.

<sup>23</sup> Lithuanian Peace Aims.

<sup>24</sup> Lithuanian Peace Aims.

Prospects for a Baltic-Scandinavian Union. Pusta mentioned that at the beginning of their independent life, the Baltic States had wanted to cooperate more closely with the Scandinavian countries. In Pusta's opinion, the free Europe of the future would see closer cooperation between the Baltic and Scandinavian countries, including Finland. He felt that it would not be possible to create a closer union right away, but that establishing the Baltic Union would be the first step. Smetona said that he doubted that the Scandinavian countries would form close ties with the Baltic States after the war, but that Poland would like to establish closer relations with the Baltic States, Finland and Scandinavia, as this had been Poland's pre-war political goal.<sup>25</sup> Bilmanis recalled that Finland also participated in the Bulduri conference in 1920,<sup>26</sup> and that both Germany and the Soviet Union<sup>27</sup> had thwarted cooperation between Poland, the Baltic States, and the Nordic countries. He said that it would only be normal and practical to have the pyramid of Central and Northern European nations along the latitude of 25° E between Germany and Soviet Russia united in a bloc.<sup>27</sup>

Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic States. The future of Ukraine also had its place in Smetona's discussions. In this regard, Smetona noted that he hoped that Ukraine would find the strength to become independent, but did not know if this was possible. He said that Professor Mykhailo Hrushevsky,<sup>28</sup> a leading Ukrainian historian, had spoken to him favorably of the idea of restoring the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on the basis of cooperation between the Belarus and Ukraine. Bilmanis's vision was that Belarus and Ukraine would join Poland and Czechoslovakia to form a Western Slavic bloc that would work closely with the future Baltic bloc. He stressed that if left to themselves, the Belarusians and the Ukrainians would both gravitate toward the West rather than toward Great Russia. According to Bilmanis, the only long-term solution to the conflict between Germany and Russia in Europe was to build a pyramid of free nations between them, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea and including the Belarusians and the Ukrainians, who had a long tradition of living in close association with the West rather than with Moscow.<sup>29</sup> Pusta did not address this topic.

<sup>25</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia). Latvian Peace Aims.

<sup>26</sup> A conference held in Bulduri (Latvia) in August-September 1920 brought together representatives from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, and resulted in the signing of a draft agreement on a political union of the Baltic States.

<sup>27</sup> Latvian Peace Aims.

<sup>28</sup> Mykhailo Serhiiiovych Hrushevsky [Михайло Сергійович Грушевський] was a Ukrainian academician, politician, historian and statesman. Hrushevsky was one of the most important figures of the Ukrainian national revival of the early 20th century. He believed that the Germans were enemies of the Ukrainian national cause and hoped for Ukrainian cooperation with Russia, democratized after the February Revolution, [online], in: <https://www.ualberta.ca/canadian-institute-of-ukrainian-studies/centres-and-programs/jacyk-centre/hrushevsky-translation-project/who-was-mykhailo-hrushevsky.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

Postwar Germany and Soviet Union. To the question of whether, if Germany were to be disarmed as a result of the war, the Baltic States would want Russia to be disarmed, Smetona answered that the Baltic States would, of course, want Russia to be disarmed as well. Smetona went on to say that even if Germany was defeated, it would still be strong after the war, and in any case, its nationalism would remain a very dangerous factor for the Baltic nations.<sup>30</sup> Returning to the role of the Baltic States between Russia and Germany and the question of whether the three Baltic nations preferred Russian or German rule if they had to choose between them, Smetona said emphatically: "Should someone offer Lithuanians an opportunity to choose between the lesser of two evils – Russia or Germany – they would reply: 'Neither. We want to be independent...'" Bilmanis emphasized that if gangster politics could be eliminated from European life, the small nations would live happily.<sup>31</sup> The Soviet Union. In terms of the future of the Soviet-Lithuanian relations, Smetona underscored that Lithuania did not want to remain under Russian rule in any case, even if the Soviet Union were to call itself a democracy.<sup>32</sup> When asked by the Council on Foreign Relations who the Baltic nations feared more, the Germans or the Russians, Bilmanis reiterated that both Russia and Germany were evil: The Russians were cruel by instinct, and the Germans – by method. Pusta expressed general support for this approach, but felt that the economic future of the Baltic States would also depend on their relations with the Russian hinterland.<sup>33</sup>

The role of small states. In conclusion, Smetona pointed out that while it was not in their power to determine the shape of things after the war, the three Baltic nations were very eager to be independent. At the same time, they recognized that state sovereignty must be restricted for the benefit of the presumptive international body. He felt strongly, however, that it was a grave mistake to assume that small nations could or should be absorbed by large ones.<sup>34</sup>

It is not known how the CFR reacted to the reports and memoranda of the three Baltic politicians in exile. In one of the reports sent to the Polish Foreign Ministry in exile, we find the following note: "Smetona's activities have been hit by political bankruptcy and the impression he made on the Council on Foreign Relations was negative."<sup>35</sup> Pusta submitted his memorandum to the UK Foreign Office. One official of the Foreign Office's Northern Department commented that: "This is quite an interesting paper, though I am not convinced by Pusta's thesis that the peace of Europe depends on the independence of the Baltic States."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Lithuanian Peace Aims.

<sup>33</sup> Baltic Peace Aims (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

<sup>34</sup> Lithuanian Peace Aims.

<sup>35</sup> Klemens Jędrzejewski – MSZ (Uwagi w sprawie pisma MSZ), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 43.

<sup>36</sup> See: Estonia and the Baltics in the Battle for Civilization.



## Klaus Scheel's Vision

Klaus Scheel's vision of post-war Estonia was also interesting. Scheel was a descendant of a Baltic German family and a famous Estonian banker.<sup>37</sup> There is no doubt of his antipathy toward Nazi Germany. Being an Estonian banker who had been dispossessed of everything he had during the Soviet Union invasion in 1940, there is no doubt that he was an opponent of the Soviet regime as well. In his June 26, 1942 letter to George Kennedy Allen Bell, Bishop of Chichester, Scheel wrote that the problems of post-war Europe were already knocking on the door and required immediate and competent handling.<sup>38</sup> True, Scheel did not touch upon Lithuania's territorial problems in the letter, i.e. the question of Vilnius and Memel/Klaipėda. According to Scheel, it was a self-evident axiom that Estonia should be included as a member of a system of states where its free development could be considered reasonably assured. However, the letter also contained a surprising vision: "If Russia were a country with strongly established Christian liberty like Western Europe, it would seem reasonable enough that Estonia should be confederated in some form or other with Russia, but a necessary condition would be that the internal freedom of Estonia was guaranteed on the basis of extensive autonomy by unilateral means." Scheel then added that with its policy of instigating revolutionary insurrections in other countries, its cynical breaking of its word, and its Asiatic cunning in trampling the freedom and independence of the Baltic States, Bolshevik Russia has created a deep-rooted mistrust and hatred among these Baltic nations, so it would naturally be a very long time before these feelings were allayed by a new and better Russia, if such were to emerge. Considering all the arguments for and against, Scheel's vision for post-war Estonia had three options: a union of Estonia with Finland, or the incorporation of Estonia into a bloc of Northern countries or a larger bloc of countries that might be created where Estonia might find a place. Scheel emphasized that Estonians mainly had anti-German sentiments due to their dislike of Prussianism, the historical development of Estonia, differences in the national character, and economic considerations.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Georg Scheel & Co. was a bank that was established in 1884. In 1919, management of the bank was taken over by Georg Scheel's grandson, the banker Klaus Scheel. In the early years of the Estonian War of Independence, this bank served the Russian White Guard Northwestern Army and the Northwestern Russian government in Estonia. After the Treaty of Tartu was signed in 1920, Soviet Russia sold the gold it had requisitioned from the tsar through Georg Scheel & Co. See: Petrovsky to Stomonjakov February 9, 1928, in: Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation [*Архив внешней политики Российской Федерации*], Moscow, 0154-19-32-1, 14-15; Shevtsov's memorandum to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Estonia (September) 1925, in: Russian State Archive of the Economy [*Российский государственный архив экономики*], Moscow, 413-2-2055, 81-66. For more about Klaus Scheel and his bank, see: Feest, David, "From Imperial Trade to Ethnic Business? The Economic Consequences of the Tartu Peace Treaty and the Bank G. Scheel & Co.," in: *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, 2020, 3/4 (173/174), pp. 225-241.

<sup>38</sup> Mallet to Warner, July 6, 1942; Scheel to Bishop Chichester, June 27, 1942, in: UK TNA FO 371/32730, N4072/4/59.

<sup>39</sup> Scheel to Bishop Chichester.

## Polish Politicians in Exile and the Issue of East Prussia

Polish politicians and experts in exile began to prepare plans for the liquidation of German rule in East Prussia as early as in the autumn of 1939. These plans were developed by people close to General Władysław Sikorski. Sikorski already informed Polish politicians in exile about his vision for post-war Poland during a meeting held in October 1939. The issue was not only the destruction of Germany, but also the creation of a Polish-dominated Central Europe as a counterweight to both Germany and the Soviet Union.

In July 1942, President of Poland-in-exile Władysław Raczkiewicz founded the Ministry of Preparatory Work Concerning the Peace Conference (Ministerstwo Prac Kongresowych) on the basis of the Bureau of Political, Economic and Legal Analysis (Biuro Prac Politycznych, Ekonomicznych i Prawnych) operating within the structure of the Polish government in-exile in London. The main task of the new ministry was to prepare reports and plans for the reconstruction of Poland after the war, commissioned from well-known experts.<sup>40</sup> An important role in the preparation of these reports belonged to Marian Seyda, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>41</sup> After the outbreak of World War II, Seyda joined Sikorski's government, initially as a member of the Committee of Ministers for National Affairs (Komitet Ministrów dla Spraw Kraju), and as of 1940 – as the Minister of Justice. Seyda returned his focus to journalism in 1942, demanding international recognition of Poland's western border. In a memorandum entitled "Poland and Germany and the Post-War Reconstruction of Europe," Seyda wrote: "Unfortunately, in delimiting the Polish-German frontier, the Treaty of Versailles adopted the prejudicial standpoint of a too rigidly conceived ethnographic principle, making Poland no allowances for the violent process of Germanization which had been pursued for centuries, especially in East Prussia and the lands of Pomerania and Silesia."<sup>42</sup>

One part of the memorandum also noted that the annexation of East Prussia was developed by the Ministry of Preparatory Work Concerning the Peace Conference. One could say that this work continued until the end of 1944. These memoranda included overviews of East Prussia's geography, climate, economy, population and transportation.

Memoranda on the incorporation of East Prussia made the following economic arguments: East Prussia was never an integral part of Germany; East Prussia should be viewed as a German colony; Germany must contribute support for the East Prussian economy;

<sup>40</sup> See: Sroka, Marek, "Nations Will Not Survive Without Their Cultural Heritage: Karol Estreicher, Polish Cultural Restitution Plans and the Recovery of Polish Cultural Property from the American Zone of Occupation," in: *The Polish Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (2012), p. 7, online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/polishreview.57.3.0003>.

<sup>41</sup> See: Winiewicz, J. M., *The Polish-German Frontier*, William Hodge and Company, Limited, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, 1944, pp. 14–17.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

East Prussia is a natural hinterland of Poland, whose direct trade routes to the Baltic Sea pass through the province; and East Prussia is the poorest area of Germany.<sup>43</sup>

The issue of Poland's security cannot be ignored either. The Polish-German border brochure published in London in 1944 begins as follows: "To understand the essential nature of Polish-German relations, it must be borne in mind that all of Germany's territorial conquests at the expense of Poland were made by Prussia." This was followed by a presentation of the view of several authors that throughout the centuries, East Prussia had always been a place for militant German Junkers to organize looting.<sup>44</sup> To justify the desire to annex East Prussia, Polish experts also used the positions of U.S. politicians on the issue of security. For example, one publication entitled "East Prussia and Danzig" that was issued by the Ministry of Preparatory Work Concerning the Peace Conference in 1944 quoted U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing:<sup>45</sup> "National safety is as dominant in the life of a nation as self-preservation is in the life of an individual. ... With national safety as a primary object to be attained in territorial settlements, the factors of the problems assume generally the following order of importance: the strategic, to which is closely allied the geographic and historic, the economic, affecting the commercial and industrial life of nations."<sup>46</sup> It was also recalled that the question of where East Prussia belonged had also been raised in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference. Here, we should keep in mind that at the Peace Conference, the Polish delegates drew attention to the need for Poland to be strategically secure, so that Germany was not left with a strong base for an attack against Poland. The Polish politicians in exile felt that East Prussia being left as a part of Germany under the Treaty of Versailles created a truly medieval anachronism within the national body of Poland – a German enclave surrounding Poland. Their opinion was that East Prussia played a decisive role not only as a base for an attack on Poland, but also as an offensive bridgehead against the Baltic States and Russia.<sup>47</sup>

On the question of what to do with the approximately 2 million Germans living in East Prussia and Danzig, several memoranda openly stated that the German population of East Prussia must be resettled. At first, the justifications were drawn from the past – the colonization of the territories of Latvia and Estonia had taken place under the guise of the spre-

<sup>43</sup> Kierownik Referatu Dokumentacji Placówek PP. Kierownicy Etatowych Urzędów Zagranicznych (some economic aspects of East Prussia), July 18, 1944, in: Archives of Modern Records [*Archiwum akt Nowych*; AAN], Warsaw, Ambasada R.P. w Waszyngtonie 490/2886.

<sup>44</sup> Winiewicz, J. M., pp. 14–17.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Lansing was United States Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson.

<sup>46</sup> "East Prussia and Danzig," *Information Notes No. 1*, issued by the Polish Ministry of Preparatory Work Concerning the Peace Conference, London, April 1944, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> See: Winiewicz, J. M., p. 13; Niepodpisana notaka z wystąpienia delegata na konferencję pokojową podczas posiedzenia Najwyższej Rady Sojuszniczej, January 29, 1919, in: *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1919 styczeń-maj*, ed. Sławomir Dębski, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2016, pp. 165–174.

ad of Christianity, and the Teutonic Knights had been the pioneers of German imperialism in the East. And secondly, the solution to the problem had been found in this war by the Germans themselves, and they themselves have demonstrated that such a solution is both practical and possible. Examples followed: the first step was the repatriation to Germany of the German population who had long lived in South Tyrol (South Tyrol, Südtirol, Alto Adige), Estonia, Latvia (Umsiedlung der Deutsch-Balten) and other territories recognized as being within the Soviet sphere of influence, with a total of 350,000 people to be repatriated.<sup>48</sup>

The Polish government-in-exile also tried to introduce plans for the annexation of East Prussia, Danzig, Oppeln and Silesia to officials of the foreign ministries of the United Kingdom, the United States and the French government-in-exile.<sup>49</sup> On a visit to the United States in late March 1941, Sikorski presented President Franklin D. Roosevelt with a memorandum that contained an overview of the history of the Polish border issue, as well as the vision for the post-war Polish borders, including Poland's claims to annex East Prussia. The memorandum stated that the Treaty of Versailles had left a detached area along the Baltic coast in the rear of the re-established state of Poland in German hands, while also allowing Upper Silesia to remain as a convenient German military base separating Poland from Czechoslovakia. The memorandum emphasized that Poland was the key to balance in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the natural guarantor of the independence of the nations situated between Russia and Germany, and should be treated as such in the future if the United States wanted to avoid an armed intervention every 25 years in order to keep the peace and save Europe.<sup>50</sup> According to Polish Ambassador Jan Ciechanowki, Sikorski also presented Roosevelt with the idea of an initial Polish-Czechoslovak confederation, where Poland wanted to add the three Baltic States and, in time, possibly Hungary, Romania, Greece and Yugoslavia as well. Ciechanowki said that in terms of the Baltic States, Roosevelt had said: "You may face some difficulties with the Soviet Union, which has already declared these states to be part of the Soviet Union."<sup>51</sup> For example, a memorandum was submitted to the State Department in October 1943 that claimed that the Polish government-in-exile wanted to begin negotiations with the American and British governments regarding Polish participation in the occupation of Germany, and was anticipating Polish occupation and administration of

<sup>48</sup> Kulski to MSZ (The problems of Poland's frontiers), November 4, 1941, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 40; Wrzesiński, Wojciech, p. 167; Tarka, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example: Philip Price to Dembiński, March 15, 1943, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 52; Text of the declaration of Count Raczyński at the second meeting of the Inter-Allied Council on September 24, 1941 to Cordell Hull, November 10, 1941, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 42.

<sup>50</sup> Tekst ostateczny memoriału który General Sikorski ma złożyć Prezydentowi Rooseveltowi, March 20, 1941, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 42; see also: Confidential memorandum to the State Department, October 6, 1943, in: HIA Poland, Ambada (U.S.) records, 45.

<sup>51</sup> Ciechanowski, Jan, *Defeat in Victory*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1947, pp. 19–20.

the eastern territories of Germany.<sup>52</sup> At least initially, the Foreign Office officials were skeptical of these plans, but at the same time, they had several conversations with members of the Polish government-in-exile where they outlined the following arrangement: England would support Polish ambitions concerning East Prussia if Poland was ready to compromise on the issue of its eastern border, and particularly – the Vilnius Region.<sup>53</sup>

### **Baltic and Polish Exile Politicians and the Question of Memel/Klaipėda and Vilnius**

On October 13, 1939, Polish envoy in Kaunas Franciszek Charwat submitted a protest note to the Lithuanian government declaring that Poland would never recognize the incorporation of the city and region of Vilnius into Lithuania, and that it would begin a fight for the restoration of its territory.<sup>54</sup> The Lithuanian government responded by stating that since the crux of the Vilnius question was known to both the Polish and Lithuanian governments, there was no need to rehash the juridical and historical aspects involved. The Polish government-in-exile subsequently sent many notes concerning the incorporation of Vilnius to the Secretary General of the League of Nations, as well as to the Lithuanian government via the League of Nations. Lithuania's response was that Soviet Russia had recognized that the Vilnius Region belonged to Lithuania in the peace treaty it concluded with Lithuania in July 1920 (the effectuation of which was prevented by Polish General Lucjan Żeligowski staging a mutiny), but that by accepting Vilnius from the Soviet Union, Lithuania had acquired it legally. Thus, the Lithuanian side declared that the Polish protest was an unfounded "acte en contradiction avec les devoirs découlant du droit international et portant atteinte à la morale humaine."<sup>55</sup>

The Atlantic Charter, the development of relations between the Polish and Czechoslovak governments in exile and the Soviet Union, the participation of Smetona, Bilmanis and Pusta at the September 15 meeting of the Peace Aims Group of the Council on Foreign Relations, and the U.S. declaration of war on Germany on December 11 all gave hope to the Baltic diplomatic representatives that the United States, the United Kingdom and the Polish government-in-exile would take decisive steps that would change the Soviet Union's approach to the Baltic question. This apparently meant the restoration of diplo-

<sup>52</sup> See: Confidential memorandum to the State Department, October 6, 1943; Romer's memorandum, November 16, in: 1943, HIA Poland, Ambasada (U.S.) records, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Wrzesiński, Wojciech, p. 167.

<sup>54</sup> Protest posła w Kownie przeciw traktatowi radziecko-litewskiemu, October 13, 1939, in: *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1939 wrzesień–grudzień*, ed. Wojciech Rojek, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 193–194. See also: Tarka, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Pro memoria, October 13, 1939; Urbšys to Charwat, October 14, 1939, in: *Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio politika. Dokumentai 1939*, Vol. 1 (8/23/1939 – 5/25/1940), comp./ed. Tomas Remeikis, Vilnius University Press, 2009, pp. 247–250.

matic relations and the recognition of the Free Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania movement akin to Charles de Gaulle's Free France. On December 18, Lithuanian envoy Povilas Žadeikis presented U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull with a memorandum that also mentioned the forced cession of Klaipėda to Germany, and requested that the U.S. government take measures to help restore normal relations between Lithuania and the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> The Baltic politicians in exile also began to make contacts with Soviet diplomats. Estonian envoy in London August Torma informed the Foreign Office in early October that he had contacted Andrew Rothstein, the press officer to the Soviet mission in Britain, for this purpose.<sup>57</sup> However, all the Soviet diplomats agreed to do was to listen to their statements.

It should not be forgotten that two persons played a significant role in the interaction between the Polish government-in-exile and the Lithuanian politicians in exile in the United States: Prof. Kazys Pakštas and Prof. Klemens Jędrzewski.<sup>58</sup> Pakštas was a professor of geography and an advocate of the idea of Baltoscandia<sup>59</sup> in Lithuania. In 1941, he founded the Lithuanian Culture Institute in Chicago and served as its head until mid-1943. Born in the Governorate of Estonia, Jędrzewski was a journalist and publicist who became the unofficial representative of the Polish government-in-exile in talks with the Lithuanian politicians in exile, who opposed Smetona. Jędrzewski and Pakštas had a meeting on August 13, 1941. In the notes on the meeting that were sent to Ambassador Jan Ciechanowski, Jędrzewski described Pakštas as an individual who deals in Lithuania's interest in a scholarly manner in terms of the future borders of Europe – Pakštas saw Lithuania as belonging either to Baltoscandia without Poland, or to Central Europe, which would be, on federated bases, tied with Poland. The conversation included considerable discussion on the question of East Prussia. According to Jędrzejewski, "[Pakštas] proposed that the northern part of Prussia should remain in Lithuania, but the rest, however, in Poland. Problems arise if this is followed by population transfer."<sup>60</sup> In December 1941, Jędrzejewski met in New York with Pusta, Pakštas and former diplomat and Warsaw University professor Oskar Halecki. During the meeting, they discussed the establishment of a publishing house to address Baltic issues. It was agreed that the treatment of political questions would be approached from the situation that existed before the re-incorporation of Klaipėda

<sup>56</sup> See: Klemens Jędrzejewski (Spraw litewskie), New York, August 20, 1941, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41; Warner's memorandum (conversation with Balutis), July 18, 1941, in: UK TNA FO 371/29272, N3364/1525/59.

<sup>57</sup> Warner (conversation with Torma), October 1, 1941 and January 7, 1942 in: UK TNA FO 371/29261, N 5742/44/59; UK TNA FO 371/42731, N130/130/59.

<sup>58</sup> See: Dorobek, Franciszek, "Profesor Klemens Jędrzejewski - piękny przykład przywiązania i tęsknoty do Płocka," in: Notatki\_Plockie-r1972-t17-n1\_(65)-s40-42.pdf

<sup>59</sup> Baltoscandia is a geopolitical concept of a Baltic-Scandinavian union comprising Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden. The idea was proposed in 1928 by a Swedish professor named Sten de Geer in the journal *Geografiska Annaler*, and was further developed by a Lithuanian professor named Kazys Pakštas.

<sup>60</sup> Chechanowski – MSZ, September 10, 1941 (Rozmowy polsko-litewskie), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41.

into the Reich, and that, to avoid disputes, a positive emphasis would be placed on the political and cultural elements shared by all of the Baltic States, and thus also between Lithuania and Poland.<sup>61</sup> Before that, in August 1941, Lithuanian politicians in exile in Bern had proposed that the Polish government-in-exile begin negotiations on a cooperation agreement based on the premise that the sovereign state of Lithuania would be in a regional federation with Poland in the future. Officials of the Polish government-in-exile analyzed the proposal and composed a memorandum in response. In the opinion of the authors of the memorandum, the slogan of the future federation should be “Lithuania is with Poland” rather than “Lithuania belongs to Poland.” They suggested that Lithuania, as member of the federation, would retain control of its economy, education and science, but that the Lithuanian armed forces would report to a joint armed forces staff and foreign policy would be conducted by a joint foreign ministry. The authors of the memorandum left Lithuania with a parliament that would manage its internal affairs, but legislative power would rest with a joint parliament elected by the citizens of Poland and Lithuania. The issue of Vilnius and Klaipėda was also discussed in the memorandum. The authors felt that there was a simple answer to the Vilnius question – the borders should be based on the agreement signed between the Soviet Union and Poland on July 30, 1941,<sup>62</sup> which did not recognize the treaty signed between the Soviet Union and Lithuania on October 10, 1939 concerning mutual assistance and the transfer of Vilnius Region and the city of Vilnius to Lithuania.<sup>63</sup>

The Foreign Ministry of the Polish government-in-exile then drew up instructions to be sent to the legation in Bern. These contained eight starting points to be used for discussions with the Lithuanian politicians in exile. It should be mentioned that the instructions were first presented to the Council of Ministers of the government-in-exile for approval.<sup>64</sup> The first point was the requirement that the Lithuanians answer the question of whether they only planned to federate with Poland, or if they would also agree to participate in a Polish-Czechoslovakian federation. The response was that they preferred to only discuss Lithuania’s federation with Poland. The second point stipulated that the Lithuanians must be informed about the Polish-Czechoslovakian negotiations, and possibly also about the intentions of the Polish government to take advantage of the future political situation in order to start negotiations with the Hungarians and perhaps the Romanians as well. The

<sup>61</sup> Streszczenie rozmowy z Prof Pakstasem w sprawie akcji propagandowej Litewskiego Instytutu Kultury w Chicago, December 22, 1941, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41.

<sup>62</sup> See: Układ między rządem Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej a rządem Związku Socjalistycznych Republik Rad, July 30, 1941, in: Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1941, ed. Jacek Tebinka, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2013, p. 455.

<sup>63</sup> Niepodpisana notaka sprawie stosunków polsko-litewskich, September 13, 1941, in: Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1941 xxx, pp. 501–506.

<sup>64</sup> Wniosek Kierownika Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych na Radę Ministrów (not dated); Wstępna instrukcja Kierownika Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych, w sprawie rokowań z Litwinami. (not dated), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41.

third point stipulated that the Lithuanians must be informed that Poland intended to demand possession of East Prussia, except for the part allocated to Lithuania, as well as of the need for active political cooperation in this matter. The fourth point stated that the Lithuanians should be informed that in the current political situation, Poland could not consider expansion of the Polish-Lithuanian Federation to the north, despite the Poles' sympathies toward the Baltic countries and their readiness to defend their interests in the international arena, should the situation be favorable for this. The fifth point stated that despite the fact that the Atlantic Charter clearly expressed the position of non-recognition of the territorial changes that occurred during the war, thus essentially recognizing the right of self-determination of the Lithuanian state, and despite the fact that the Soviet side did not make any official statements regarding this document, it is possible that the Soviets would disapprove of the very fact and subject of the Polish-Lithuanian negotiations. This is why complete discretion in these negotiations with regard to Russia was so necessary. The sixth point concerned Czechoslovakia – that negotiations with Lithuania would be consistent with the common Polish intentions known to the Czechoslovak government and the need to organize a federation between Germany and Russia, and also that this plan would not meet any objections from the Czechoslovakians. The seventh point stated that Poland's position in relation to the federation is that the Polish-Lithuanian border is inviolable. However, this position does not preclude discussions on this issue in order to make the issue of as little importance as possible in the future, as well as to allow Lithuanians to use Vilnius in their national life under special conditions. How the authors of the memorandum envisioned the implementation of this last point is not indicated. It was stressed that the aim of the federation was to secure a unified policy regarding the borders and questions of foreign policy and war, as well as in the field of communications, and, to a certain extent, regarding the economy. The eighth point asserted that in connection with the discussions in Bern, it was necessary to ascertain the scope of the mandate that former president Smetona had in the United States and the Lithuanian National Council for negotiations with Poland, as well as what the next steps were to enable Smetona and Ambassador Ciechanowski to discuss these questions.<sup>65</sup> However, the Polish politicians in exile were critical of Smetona. They were aware of his hostility toward the Poles and his firm position on the Vilnius question.<sup>66</sup> It was also known that Smetona had tried to influence Latvian diplomats in exile to coordinate their position on the Vilnius question.<sup>67</sup>

On November 11, 1940, the Polish and Czechoslovak governments-in-exile issued a declaration stating that both governments believed that a confederation between the

<sup>65</sup> Punktacja merytoryczna co do rokowań z Litwinami. (not dated), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41.

<sup>66</sup> See: Drohojowski to MSZ Londyn, July 7, 1941, (odpis pisma Józefa Jarzębowskiiego dotyczącego Litwy i b. prezydentą Smetony), in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41.

<sup>67</sup> Czef Oddziału II SZT-MSZ, December 16, 1941, in: HIA Poland MSZ, 41.



countries was possible.<sup>68</sup> This declaration attracted great interest among the Baltic émigré population as well. In Sikorski's opinion, the proposed federation would eliminate the shortcomings of the Treaty of Versailles, which in turn would lead to mutual understanding between the nations, both economically and politically. However, many issues between the two governments were not resolved. The issue of the border between Cieszyn and Těšín continued to be an obstacle. President of Czechoslovakia Edvard Beneš's reflections on the post-war Central European order were even more far reaching: Hungary, Austria and Romania, and perhaps also the smaller Central European nations, should be taken into account here, and the Polish-Czechoslovakian Union, which would be the basis for the further Central European Federation, should be created as soon as possible.<sup>69</sup> What did Smetona think about Poland's territorial ambitions and the creation of a Central European Federation? This quote from Soviet intelligence documents alludes to Smetona's position before his death in January 1944: "When the question of a federation arises, a federation with Russia should be discussed, not a federation with Poland."<sup>70</sup>

Sikorski visited the United States in December 1942. One of the goals of the visit was to secure U.S. support for the post-war Polish borders – especially the eastern border. The Central European Federation and the Intermarium plan were also in play. During the visit, there were discussions with the leaders of the Lithuanian community in Chicago, in which Sikorski presented a number of alternative visions. First, Poland would obtain East Prussia together with Königsberg, while Lithuania could claim a small part of East Prussia – Memel/Klaipėda, Tilsit and Insterburg. Understandably, this arrangement presupposed that the Vilnius question would be set aside. Second, if the Soviet Union demanded borders based on the Curzon Line, Poland would agree to the creation of a Baltic Federation composed of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Third, if Poland managed to avoid giving up its territory to Russia, there would be no objections to the reincorporation of Estonia and Latvia into the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> When asked by a Chicago Sun correspondent at a press conference about how Poland would settle Lithuania's claims to Vilnius, Sikorski replied: "I represent Poland territorially as it was when it entered the war, and it is not for me to suggest, at this moment, any concessions."

During the visit, rumors spread that Sikorski, who was soon scheduled to travel to Moscow for discussions, would propose compromises there regarding Poland's eastern border, including incorporating Lithuania, and in return would support the Soviet Union's

<sup>68</sup> See: Declaration of the Polish and Czechoslovak governments, in: AAN Poselstwo R. P. w Bernie 495/5.

<sup>69</sup> See: "Central Europe, East-Central Europe and the Historians, 1940–1948," in: *University, Historiography, Society, Politics: Selected Studies of Jan Havránek*, ed. Jiří Pešek, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2009, p. 173.

<sup>70</sup> *Секреты польской политики 1935–1945. Рассекреченные документы службы внешней разведки Российской Федерации*, comp. Лев Соцков [Lev Sotskov], Ripol Classic Publishing House, Moscow, 2010, p. 493.

<sup>71</sup> Secret report No. 66 OSS, General Sikorski's visit to the United States, February 22, 1943; Halifax to Eden, February 26, 1943, in: UK TNA FO 371/34564, C2296/258/G55; C2148/258/55.

claims to Latvia and Estonia. These rumors, together with the positions expressed by Sikorski in the United States, became known to the Baltic politicians in exile and, understandably, created distrust and ill will toward the Polish government-in-exile. Upon hearing this, Bilmanis declared that Latvia and Estonia were only pawns that Poland intended to offer to the Soviet Union if they could get Lithuania in return. One person whom Bilmanis spoke to said that he was so incensed that his usual enmity toward the Soviet Union had, as a result of Sikorski's statements, softened. Apparently, he had also said that unlike the Poles, the Russians would allow the Latvians to retain their language and culture.<sup>72</sup>

In Yalta, the main topics became the question of the post-war world order and the future borders of Poland. The decisions made at the conference caused great discontent among the Baltic and Polish exiles, and of course – in the countries that were directly affected by the Yalta decisions.<sup>73</sup> The vision of the Baltic politicians in exile of the post-war world order never materialized. Before the Yalta Conference, former Estonian diplomat and writer Karl Ast emotionally wrote: “The Atlantic Charter is nothing more than propaganda.”<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusions

The report on the conference of the American Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) that took place on September 15, 1941 along with the memoranda submitted to the CFR by the three leading Baltic politicians in exile who were in attendance (President Antanas Smetona of Lithuania, Dr. Ālfred Bilmanis of Latvia and Kaarel Robert Pusta of Estonia), reflect a vision of what the role of the Baltic States might be in post-war Europe. Bilmanis and Pusta believed that the United States could be the power that could guarantee Europe's security and economic prosperity. However, the memoranda also contain ideas that could be described as belonging to the world of fantasy. One example is Bilmanis's notion of a union of nations between the Baltic and the Black Sea, including Finland, the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland, encompassing a population of 80 million. Pusta believed that it was possible to create a union of the Baltic States, and he also did not rule out the possibility of creating a union of the Baltic and Scandinavian nations. The memoranda also reflect the position of Smetona and Bilmanis on the Memel/Klaipėda question. Pusta, however, did not touch upon the Memel/Klaipėda question and only referred to Vilnius in passing. He just emphasized that the Polish-Lithuanian conflict had led to the collapse of Baltic cooperation in the 1920s and 1930s. In Smetona's opinion, Klaipėda should be returned to independent Lithuania, considering the importance of the port of Klaipėda to the Lithu-

<sup>72</sup> Halifax to Eden, February 26, 1943, in: UK TNA FO 371/34564, C2148/258/55.

<sup>73</sup> Ciechanowski's memorandum, May 12, 1945, in: HIA Poland Ambasada U.S., 45.

<sup>74</sup> Ast to Rei, December 22, 1944, in: Sveriges Riksbank, Baltiska arkivet, Stockholm, *Rei*, 2.

anian economy; he felt that Vilnius should remain in Lithuania as well. At the same time, Smetona realized that post-war Germany could still pose a threat to Lithuania. Bilmanis did not rule out the possibility that East Prussia could join a regional union that also included the Baltic States. However, he also believed that ethnic plebiscites had to be organized in Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Balkans in order to draw clear ethnographic boundaries.

Polish politicians in exile started talking about the annexation of East Prussia as early as autumn 1939. This was followed by the development of corresponding plans, which lasted until the end of 1944. There were three main arguments used in the memoranda and propaganda brochures to justify the need to annex East Prussia: the territory has historically belonged to Poland; the territory was used for centuries to attack Poland; and the territory being incorporated into Germany was economically detrimental both to Germany and to the East Prussian populace. The German repatriation from Estonia and Latvia in late 1939/early 1940 as well as from South Tyrol beginning in 1939 was used as justification for the expulsion of the population from the territory to be annexed.

The Baltic question already began to resonate in the policy of the Polish government-in-exile in the autumn of 1939. Initially, this came to the fore because of the Vilnius question – the Soviet Union ceding the occupied Vilnius Region and the city of Vilnius to Lithuania and Poland submitting a protest note to the Lithuanian government as a result. Beginning in 1941, the Baltics also became an issue in the planning of a federation by the Polish and Czechoslovak governments-in-exile. The Polish politicians in exile presented various plans tied to this, which essentially meant reviving the inter-war era Intermarium (Międzymorze) plans, but this time together with Czechoslovakia. The federation plans also included space for the question of which country the Vilnius Region belonged to; unlike the Latvian and Estonian politicians, the Lithuanians were adamant that Vilnius had historically been the capital of Lithuania and must belong to Lithuania. The Poles proposed a deal: Lithuania would get Memel/Klaipėda and a part of East Prussia (Tilsit and Inszenburg) if Poland got Vilnius.

The Red Army's successful offensive in 1943-1944, the Allies invading Normandy and opening a second front in Europe, and the outcome of the Yalta Conference in February 1945 created a situation where the Polish and Baltic politicians in exile lost their previous – albeit limited – influence on big politics. Nevertheless, one might say that the plans of the Polish politicians in exile to annex East Prussia did in fact play a part in the decision made at the Potsdam Conference to incorporate two thirds of East Prussia into Poland.

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**Baltijos šalių ir Lenkijos politikai išeivijoje ir jų vizija apie pokarinę taiką Rytų Europoje. 1940–1945 m.**

*Santrauka*

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kokia buvo pagrindinių Baltijos šalių išeivijos politikų Vakaruose vizija, susijusi su pokario pasaulio tvarka; kokia buvo Lenkijos išeivijos politikų pokario vizija ir kiek tai siejasi su Lietuva, Latvija, Estija ir Rytų Prūsija. Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama Mėmelio (Klaipėdos) klausimui. Vilniaus klausimas taip pat nagrinėjamas sąsajoje su Mėmeliu (Klaipėda). Tokia analizė svarbi, siekiant suprasti Baltijos šalių ir Lenkijos išeivijos politikų santykius Antrojo pasaulinio karo metais. Dėl ribotos straipsnio apimties nėra galimybės nagrinėti sovietų valdžios ir Lenkijos vyriausybės emigracijoje bei sovietų valdžios, Lietuvos bei Lenkijos komunistų derybų, vizijų Rytų Prūsijos bei Klaipėdos klausimu. Straipsnyje stengiasi išvengti esminių apibendrinimų ir susilaikyti nuo galutinių atsakymų į daugelį klausimų ar problemų.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** tarptautiniai santykiai, Baltijos šalių klausimas, Mėmelio (Klaipėdos) klausimas, Rytų Prūsija, Antrasis pasaulinis karas, Baltijos šalių ir Lenkijos politikų santykiai išeivijoje, pokario pasaulio tvarkos vizijos.