

Przemówienie Romana Dmowskiego na posiedzeniu Rady Dziesięciu - Tłumaczenie angielskie

1919 January 29, Paris – Secretary's notes from R. Dmowski's speech at a meeting of the Council of Ten

First meeting on 29 January 1919.

Mr Dmowski notes that there were two articles referring to Poland in the armistice system.

According to Article XII, "all German troops present in territories that were part of Russia before the war as of 11 November 1918 should return to within the frontiers of Germany as they were on 1 August 1914, as soon as the Allies consider it fit, taking into account the internal situation in those territories."

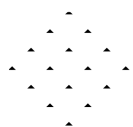
According to Article XVI, "The Allies shall have free access to the territories evacuated by the Germans on their eastern frontier either via Gdańsk or the Vistula River in order to deliver supplies to their population and to maintain order."

These two articles, had they been implemented, would have given some guarantee of security for Poland, especially if the German army occupying part of the Russian front, mainly on the Lithuanian side, had postponed its withdrawal until an order had been issued by the Allies. The Poles would have been shielded from a Bolshevik invasion from Russia.

On the other hand, if access through Gdańsk had been provided, Poland could have received the men, food and ammunition it needs.

Unfortunately, the ill will of the German leaders, and perhaps also the revolution, hindered the implementation of these clauses and the German troops on the eastern front left the occupied territories in violation of the terms of the armistice. As they withdrew, the Germans not only massacred part of the population, but also took away a large quantity of the food and rolling stock found in the country.

On the other hand, it was impossible for Poland to receive the weapons and ammunition it needed because the city of Gdańsk is located in German territory, 150 kilometres away from the Polish border. Only since signing the armistice, Germany has not changed its attitude towards Poland. On the contrary, it has manifested increasing hostility. (...)



According to German statistics, there are four million Poles in the German partition, and according to reliable Polish reports – about five million.

These Poles are scattered across four provinces: Poznań country, East Prussia, West Prussia and Silesia. They constitute the best part of the Polish nation, because the majority of them are educated and there is not a single illiterate person among them; they have a very developed sense of national dignity and civic duty. One can hope that, under favourable conditions, they will organise themselves politically. And indeed, since the conclusion of the armistice at the beginning of the German revolution, they have seized the opportunity to win Polish institutions for themselves and to organise their national life. The purpose of this peaceful self-organisation was to show the world that this part of the country is Polish and, at the same time, that it will come to the aid of other Polish districts and become involved in the national life of the country. (...)

When the Polish representative, Mr Paderewski, went to Poznań accompanied by the English colonel, and when the people wanted to organise a meeting in his honour, the Germans attacked the people using machine guns. Rioting broke out and an interesting detail transpired: both of the military factions had the same German uniforms, but they were Poles on one side, and Germans on the other.

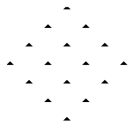
In this fight the Germans suffered defeat, and the Polish troops occupied the city and the Poznań fortress. As a result of the ongoing hunt, the Germans were forced to evacuate the entire province.

After the expulsion of the Germans, the Poles set up a civilian government which reinstated order across the province and ensured freedom for all its inhabitants.

This is proof that the Poles consider the district an inalienable part of their country and want order to prevail there, while the Germans treat the district as a conquered territory or enemy country. (...)

Mr Dmowski requests that the Allies issue orders to the German units to halt any operations against Poles. If the Germans receive such orders, it is likely that they will comply.

The German partition, especially Poznań province, is the only region in the Polish state that is not suffering from a shortage of food. This is probably one of the reasons for the concentration of German troops in Poznań province. It is even reported that the supplies are sufficient to allow this district to provide aid to other parts of Poland.



At this moment, the Germans are Janus-faced: in the West they talk of peace, and in the East they make ready for war. The troops on the Western front recognise their defeat, but those on the Eastern front still dream of conquest; they are well aware of what they have lost in the West, but they want to maintain [their positions] and, if possible, advance further East to secure their penetration of Russia. (...)

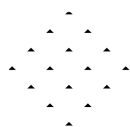
In the next part of his exposé Mr Dmowski describes the situation in the Russian partition. He explains that following the armistice the Russian partition found itself in a difficult bind. It encompassed the core part of the Polish state set up by the Germans and Austrians on 5 November 1916, which was to remain under German rule should the central powers have won. This government remained in power until the end of the war. (...)

The Regency Council handed over power to Gen. Piłsudski, an influential member of the Socialist Party, who enjoyed considerable popularity among all the parties because he had fought against Russia at the beginning of the war and later fell out with the Germans, who put him in prison. (...)

Also contrary to article XVI of the armistice, the Bolsheviks advanced much deeper into Polish territory [than provided for] and are now less than 150 km from Warsaw.

But Warsaw is not their terminus: they openly declare that they want to connect directly with Germany and, above all, the Spartacus League, in order to spread their ideas throughout Europe.

And so Poland is threatened by the Bolsheviks, and at the same time it does not have the means to defend itself. She does not lack men who would enlist to fight, but has no weapons and ammunition. The situation in Warsaw is so critical that the inhabitants of Poznań were recently forced to send two million cartridges – the best gift they could possibly give the city in need. It is inconceivable to send weapons and ammunition through Austria because this road is too long, and if Poland does not receive ammunition through Gdańsk soon, it will face a great danger from this direction.



But this is not the only danger Poland has to face. In the south, it is in conflict with Ukrainian bands. As the Austrian army retreated in the direction of Eastern Galicia, it plundered warehouses and distributed the weapons and ammunition to locals, inciting them to massacre foreigners. And indeed, in Podolia and Volhynia over 2000 people were bestially murdered; some of the victims were quartered like in the Middle Ages. Most of these families were of Polish extraction, as large estates in this area were owned by Poles. The Ukrainians even seized control of Lwów, but the city was re-captured by Polish troops.

Hence Poland is in a position in which it has to face its enemies on two fronts, but it has neither an army, nor weapons, nor ammunition. It is true that there is a Polish army in France and the Warsaw government has asked for it to be expedited to Poland, but to this end transport must be ensured and a road to Poland secured. (...)

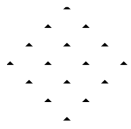
Mr Clemenceau asks Mr Dmowski to provide some information on Poland's territorial claims.

Mr Dmowski replies that the first territorial difficulty Poland faced was with the Czechoslovak state. He deplores the fact that a conflict may arise between Slavic brothers who should be allies in the future.

The conflict is over the Cieszyn region, situated between Galicia and Moravia. Most of the area is Polish, the rest is Czech, but the population is not mixed and the western part is inhabited almost exclusively by Czechs, while the eastern part is inhabited by Poles, as confirmed by recent Austrian statistics. (...)

And a few days ago, the Czechoslovak army penetrated into the territory granted to Poland. This incident is not only a territorial violation, but a very dangerous act, as it represents the first conflict between Allies. The Polish government has only one wish: to live in peace with its neighbours, and above all with the Czechoslovak Republic; and yet through aggression, the Prague government is jeopardising future relations between these two countries. (...)

There are Poles living in Poland, there are Poles from Germany, Poles from Austria, Poles from Russia, and there are Poles who still are not fully aware of their nationality. (...) It is therefore difficult to rely on statistics or maps when delineating Poland's borders. There is only one way to achieve this, i.e. by taking the 1772 Polish borders as a starting point and making certain adjustments, deemed necessary for political or industrial reasons. (...)



Second meeting on 29 January 1919. (...)

The areas severed from Poland do indeed include territories that have been Germanised, but which originally did not belong to Germany. These territories are Silesia and the southern part of East Prussia.

The Germans managed to impose their influence and civilisation there through schools, military barracks, and sometimes even fear. In these areas part of the population is considered German, but is of Polish stock. According to statistics, only 3% of the population of Gdańsk is Polish, but one can be sure that if the city was returned to Poland, new, independent, statistics would indicate that at least 40% of the population is Polish. (...)

He adds that granting Poland access to the sea is necessary for maintaining peace in the future. If the coastline belongs to one nation and the centre of the country to another, it is conducive to permanent conflict between the neighbours. People from the centre will be trying to get to the sea, while the coastal residents will make attempts to extend their influence over the centre. (...)

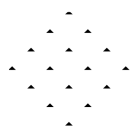
Poland cannot be exposed to this danger in the future. She wants to have borders that defend her and give her access to the Baltic Sea.

As for Poland's borders in the East, the difficulties here are of a different kind.

In 1772, Poland extended all the way to the Dnieper and Daugava rivers in the east as a result of a union with Lithuania, which ruled over the territories of Belarus and Greater Ruthenia.

The people living in the cities are Polish, but a significant part of the rural population is not of Polish stock and its incorporation into Poland would cause serious problems.

The Polish border to the east should come down to leaving the non-Polish population to Russia.



Two national movements have emerged in these territories: the Lithuanian and the Ukrainian, which are only some forty years old and have a specific character. Usually, the national movement is directed against oppressors. The situation is slightly different in Ukraine and Lithuania, as the movement there is directed against Poles, i.e. the oppressed, meanwhile it was the Russians who were the rulers there. (...)

The whole world therefore has an interest in having a well-organised state in the east of Europe, capable of ensuring order and maintaining peace. Under these conditions, it does not seem that Ukraine can be recognised as an independent, autonomous state. As far as Lithuania is concerned, provided its autonomy can at all be recognised – and the Polish government hopes that that will be the case – this country of 3 million people should be connected to Poland, as it is not able to stand alone. Lithuania could therefore be an autonomous state, linked to Poland.

There is concern that anything remaining to the east of Poland will become a spoil of anarchy because at the moment there is no government in these areas capable of maintaining order. For a long time to come, Russia will be the most unhappy country in the world, where black despotism can readily be succeeded by red despotism, as moderate parties are too weak and too few to rise to power, while the human masses are too sluggish to react. (...)

Mr Dmowski continues that even if Poland is ready to relinquish a large part of the territories that once belonged to it, she does not do so without regret, but the government in Warsaw is concerned that these territories might fall prey to long-term anarchy and pose a danger to Poland, while it seeks above all to be able to ensure the maintenance of order and peace in the territories that will be granted to Poland.

(Sprawy polskie na konferencji pokojowej w Paryżu w 1919. Dokumenty i materiały, vol.1, Warszawa 1965)