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Plebiscites in Europe after the First World War

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Abstract:

The article discusses plebiscites held in years after the First World War, specifically in 1920 and 1921. They were conducted for the purpose of redrawing borders in areas where this was difficult due to their multinational structure, as well as economic, geographical, and historical factors. Thus, the great powers, who were on a winning side in the First World War, in some cases decided for an instrument of popular vote, which was not a novelty in history, but was then used for the first time to a greater extent. In the article, the authors present the similarities and differences between the discussed plebiscites.

Key words:

plebiscite, Paris Peace Conference, diplomacy, Schleswig, Kwidzyn / Marienwerder, Olsztyn / Allenstein, Klagenfurt basin, Upper Silesia, Sopron, plebiscite commission

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Introduction¹

After the end of the First World War, the map of Europe changed significantly. Out of the ashes of crumbling empires with centuries-old traditions, several new states emerged, whose borders were drawn at the Paris Peace Conference. One of the possible ways of determining them was holding plebiscites in territories where the borders could not be clearly delineated as people of more nationalities lived there. Due to aspirations for establishing nation-states, fighting continued in these areas even after the end of the First World War.

Holding plebiscites after the end of the First World War was not a novelty in international diplomacy, but it was used to a greater extent for the first time. Since the southern part of Carinthia was one of the territories in which it was held, this instrument is not unknown to Slovene historiography. However, it should be pointed out that Slovene historiography only researched the Carinthian plebiscite in depth. At the same time, it paid almost no attention to the rest of plebiscites in Europe, not even in a comparative sense. In the text, we want to address this shortcoming to some degree. First, we will present in chronological order the plebiscites held in Europe in the first few years after the end of the war. The popular vote was first held in Schleswig, followed by Kwidzyn and Olsztyn, the Klagenfurt Basin, Upper Silesia, Sopron, and its immediate surroundings. In their presentation, we will first pay attention to the historical development of the areas and their population structure. We will discuss events on the ground and lastly examine negotiations and diplomatic decisions at the Paris Peace Conference, which resulted in peace treaties with the defeated parties of First World War or their successors. Except for the one in Sopron, all the plebiscites (along with how they were held) were decreed at the Paris Peace Conference. We will also describe the events before the plebiscites and their organization, for which the international commissions were in charge. They were called the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commissions except in Sopron. In the final chapter, we will first examine the results and implementation of the people's will and then compare the similarities and differences between the plebiscites. We note that the most complete study on the subject was published in 1933.² In this article, we will not discuss some other (expected) popular votes on territorial issues in Europe. By this, we mean the unsuccessful implementation of the planned plebiscite in Teschen, Spitz, and Orava, in the wider area

¹ This paper was authored within the program group No. P6-0138: *The past of North-eastern Slovenia among Slovenian historical lands and in interaction with the European neighbourhood / Preteklost severovzhodne Slovenije med slovenskimi zgodovinskimi deželami in v interakciji z evropskim sosedstvom*, financed by Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

² Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the world war: with a collection of official documents*, Vol. 1 (Washington, 1933) (hereinafter: Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the world war*).

of Vilnius, the vote in the cities of Eupen and Malmedy and their hinterland, and the votes in some Austrian provinces on their future life within Switzerland (Vorarlberg) and Weimar Germany (Tyrol and the Salzburg area).

Schleswig

After the end of the First World War, the first plebiscite was held in Schleswig, which was caught between the German and Danish territories in its historical development. In the High Middle Ages, it was subordinated to the Kingdom of Denmark. In the 13th century, it began to associate itself with Holstein to the south, which was a part of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1460, the Danish king established his rule over both through a personal union. These units became indivisible after the contract was signed that year in the city of Ribe.³ There were no significant changes until the early 19th century when the Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist. After the defeat of Napoleon I and the reorganization of Europe at the Congress of Vienna, Holstein, which was already a duchy at that time, became a part of the German Confederation, while Schleswig did not. With the growing German nationalism in the first half of the 19th century, the problem of the future affiliation of the two duchies in question arose. Danish national circles defended Schleswig's affiliation with Denmark. Still, because of its status and the majority of the population being German, they did not dispute Holstein's becoming a part of a potential German state. On the contrary, the German nationals pointed out to the Treaty of 1460 and the indivisibility of the two duchies. They demanded the annexation of both to the future German state. In 1848, the idea of separating the two duchies from Denmark led to a three-year war in which the latter retained control of both, but only for 15 years as Prussia annexed the two using military force.⁴ In the armistice phase, Great Britain proposed a plebiscite to decide the fate of Schleswig, but the Danish side initially rejected it, and later Prussia was no longer its supporter either.⁵

Until the end of the First World War, both were an integral part of Prussia and, from 1871, the German Empire. From 1880, Germanization grew weaken-

³ J. Laurence Hare, *Excavating Nations: Archaeology, Museums, and the German-Danish Borderlands* (Toronto, Buffalo in London, 2015), p. 13 (hereinafter: Hare, *Excavating Nations*); Nina Jebsen and Martin Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity during the Schleswig-plebiscite following the First World War", *First World War Studies* 5, No. 2 (2014), pp. 183–184 (hereinafter: Jebsen and Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity").

⁴ Hare, *Excavating Nations*, pp. 14–15; Jebsen and Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity", p. 184; Thobias Haimin Wung Sung, "'We Remain What We Are' 'Wir bleiben was wir sind?' 'North Schleswig German Identities in Children's Education After 1945'", in: *Borderland Studies Meets Child Studies: A European Encounter*, ed. Machteld Venken (Frankfurt am Main, 2017), pp. 142–143.

⁵ Matt Qvortrup, *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict* (Philadelphia, 2014), pp. 22–23.

ing the strong regional movement, as argued by Nina Jebsen and Martin Klatt.⁶ Many Danish national activists abandoned the idea that the whole of Schleswig could join Denmark in the future. There was support only in its northern part, where the majority of the population was Danish-speaking.⁷ Danish leadership circles were aware of a strong neighbor in the South. They did not want to get into a dispute; rather, they grew diplomatically close while maintaining a neutral stance in European diplomacy, evident in the First World War. However, they repeatedly accommodated Germany's wishes.⁸

As argued by the aforementioned Jensen and Klatt, soon after the outbreak of the First World War, thoughts of a possible plebiscite in Schleswig arose among some Danes in the northernmost German state. This is what Hans Peter Hanssen, a member of the Reichstag, thought as early as 1914. Towards the end of the war, he referred to the principle of self-determination as the argument in favor of the plebiscite. On October 23, 1918, he demanded self-determination for the northern part of Schleswig in a speech to the German Parliament. The German ambassador to Denmark at the time, Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, proposed to the German government that the status of Schleswig be arranged by direct agreement with Denmark. The Danish government refused to do so, as the Entente states notified that this would be considered an act of hostility. Thus, the question of Schleswig was resolved at the Peace Conference⁹, which took place in Paris.¹⁰

In his ideas on the plebiscite and the future demarcation of Denmark and its southern neighbor, Hanssen turned to the study of Hans Victor Clausen, who presented the demographic structure of the southern part of Jutland in 1894. The border between the two nations would run a few miles north of the city of Flensburg across the entire peninsula. This line was also the basis for the Danish delegation at the Peace Conference.¹¹ In February 1919, Denmark demanded that the Council of Ten hold a plebiscite. The Council of Ten formed a special territorial commission that unanimously supported the plebiscite proposal by March 19,

⁶ Jebsen and Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity", p. 184.

⁷ Hare, *Excavating Nations*, pp. 98–99.

⁸ Carsten Holbrad, *Danish Reactions to German Occupation: History and Historiography* (London, 2017), pp. 14–20.

⁹ More about the Paris Peace Conference see e.g. Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York, 2003) (hereinafter: MacMillan, *Paris 1919*); Alan Sharp, *The Versailles settlement: peacemaking after the First World War, 1919–1923* (Basingstoke, 2008); Leonard V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Oxford, 2018) (hereinafter: Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference*); Božo Repe, "Evropa in svet ob koncu Velike vojne", *Studia Historica Slovenica* 19, No. 2 (2019), pp. 501–505; Tamara Griesser-Pečar, "Prvo povojno leto v Evropi in svetu", *Studia Historica Slovenica* 20, No. 2 (2020), pp. 335–358.

¹⁰ Jebsen and Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity", pp. 184–185.

¹¹ Hare, *Excavating Nations*, pp. 120–121.

1919, including three plebiscite zones. The third, southernmost zone, was omitted from the final version of the Peace Treaty. This decision was most influenced by Lloyd George, who feared that Weimar Germany would not sign the Peace Treaty, and the Danish side was also aware that it had no chance of winning.¹²

The plebiscite was defined in Articles 109–115 of the Treaty of Versailles. The plebiscite area, which German soldiers and top officials would have to leave in ten days after the Treaty came into force, was precisely defined. The administration would be taken over by an international commission of five members, three from the most important victors of the war and one each from Sweden and Norway. The Commission would ensure a secret, free, and fair vote and would take decisions by majority. The local population could help with the administration of the area. Half of the costs of the Commission and plebiscite would be borne by the Weimar Republic. Everyone who was 20 years old on the date of the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles and was at the same time either born in the plebiscite area or have been domiciled there since a date before January 1, 1900, or did not return home due to being expelled by the German authorities could vote. Voting would take place in the municipalities in which they were born or lived. Those who served in the German army but were born or lived in a plebiscite area also had the right to vote. Voting was initially scheduled for the northern Zone 1. It would belong entirely to the country that would get the majority. If it were Denmark, it would set up its administration in this zone in agreement with the Commission. In Zone 2, the voting would occur no later than five weeks after the plebiscite in Zone 1. Unlike the first zone, the results of individual municipalities would be taken into account in the second.¹³

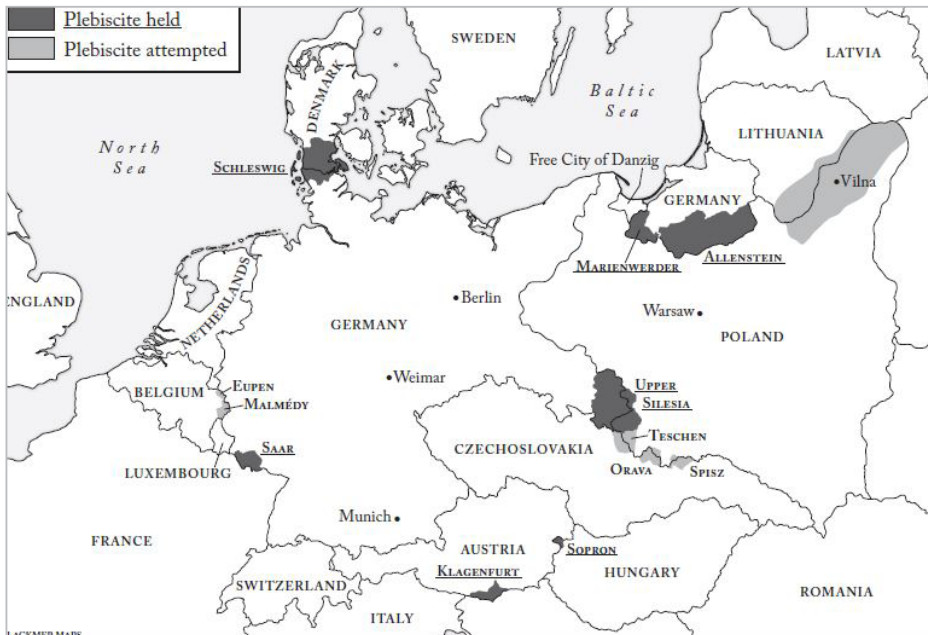
The final border would be determined based on the plebiscite results and the proposal of the plebiscite Commission and could also be influenced by the geographical and economic aspects. In the territories that Denmark would acquire, all residents would gain Danish citizenship and lose their German one. Those who immigrated to the area after October 1, 1918, would be an exception; the Danish government should have granted their citizenship.¹⁴

The plebiscite Commission arrived on January 25, 1920. It was based in Flensburg, which belonged to Zone 2 but was close to Zone 1. A part of the French and British armies came along to help maintain order. Their attitude towards the German population was different: they had a much better relationship with the British soldiers. The Commission chairman was the British Sir

¹² Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 145; Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the world war*, pp. 15–16 and 19–20.

¹³ *The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part III*, available at: avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partiii.asp, accessed on: April 8, 2020.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*



Plebiscites after the First World War (Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. xxii)

William Marling and was joined by the French, Norwegian and Swedish representatives.¹⁵

The plebiscite Commission did not encounter any significant problems or incidents during its operations in Zone 1.¹⁶ The plebiscite was held there on February 10, 1920. 74.2% of voters voted in favor of joining Denmark.¹⁷ There were no major riots in Zone 2 either, where the majority of the population was German. However, as written by David G. Williamson, there were individual reports of the prevention of gathering of the Danish population. As an example, he cited an attempt by German officers and sailors to influence the decision of the local population on the island of Sylt. Voting in Zone 2 took place on March 14, 1920. 80% of the voters voted in favor of joining the Weimar Republic.¹⁸ Turnout was around 90% in both zones.¹⁹

¹⁵ David G. Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany: The Reluctant Occupiers, 1918–30* (London, 2017), pp. 59–60 and 71–75 (hereinafter: Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany*).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁷ Jebsen and Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity", pp. 185–186.

¹⁸ Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany*, p. 72.

¹⁹ Jebsen and Klatt, "The negotiation of national and regional identity", p. 186.

Given the clear results of the plebiscite, the demarcation plan between Denmark and the Weimar Republic, which had to be drawn up by the Commission, should be quick and easy. But that wasn't the case. Just the day before the plebiscite in Zone 2, there was the Kapp Putsch coup in Berlin, which did not affect the vote itself, but rather the events after it. In addition to inaccurate reports of the Spartacist uprising in Flensburg, the biggest consequence of the coup was a rise in the movement for Schleswig-Holstein autonomy, supported by the Danish and a lot of the German population living in the plebiscite Zone 2. The return of the mayor of Flensburg to his position (he had to leave it in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles during the preparations for the plebiscite) paralyzed this movement.²⁰

An even bigger problem for the plebiscite commission was the disunity of its members in determining the border between Denmark and the Weimar Republic. Even before the plebiscite, opinions between the British and French commissioners were divided. This could be seen on March 26th, when the Commission met to determine the border proposal, which would then be sent to the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris. The French and Norwegian Commissioners tried to use Article 110 of the Treaty of Versailles, which, in addition to the plebiscite results, considered the geographical and economic aspects as the criteria for determining the border. They suggested that one-fifth of Zone 2 be handed over to Denmark. The British and Swedish Commissioners opposed this and advocated a decision based on the results of the plebiscite. On May 5, 1920, the Conference of Ambassadors discussed both plans and finally supported the British-Swedish one. The agreement's text under which the northern part of Schleswig was handed over to Denmark was confirmed on May 22nd and received by the German and Danish governments on June 15th.²¹ On May 5, 1920, the Commission allowed Denmark to begin its administration in Zone 1. On June 15th of that year, it handed over the administration of Zone 2 to the Weimar Republic, thus completing its work.²² The border remains in force until today, except for the German occupation of Denmark during the Second World War.

Marienwerder / Kwidzyn and Allenstein / Olsztyn

After the First World War, the newly formed Polish state struggled to determine its borders. Two plebiscites helped resolve the question of the border with

²⁰ Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany*, p. 73.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60 and 73–74.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

the Weimar Republic. The one that was more important in terms of geopolitical reasons took place in Upper Silesia – more on this below – but before it, voting took place further north; in historiography, it is named after two cities, Marienwerder / Kwidzyn and Allenstein / Olsztyn.²³ For a long time, the areas belonged to the Kingdom of Poland and later to the Polish-Lithuanian Union. Prussia annexed them during the three divisions of Poland. In the new state, the administrative provinces of West Prussia, which included Kwidzyn and its surroundings, and East Prussia, which included Olsztyn, were formed.

As far as the population structure is concerned, the area around Olsztyn needs to be highlighted. Even though most of the inhabitants in the areas in question spoke either Polish or the Masurian dialect, it did not mean that they would identify more with the Polish nation in the 19th century. As argued by the historian Richard Blanke, the population there identified much more with Prussia and later with the German Empire. In particular, the people of Masuria differed from the Poles when it came to religion, as they were primarily Lutherans, although there was also a significant Catholic population around Allenstein / Olsztyn itself. In addition, the activities of Polish national activists, which developed in the area after 1880, did not attract much of the local population. On the other hand, as Blanke proved, Germanization took place in the area, even though it was not forced and the people did not resist it. Although they remained bilingual, more and more of them made German their first language. It should also be noted that a quarter of Masurians lived permanently or temporarily in central and western Germany, where they did not join Polish associations, despite the similarities in language.²⁴

In the first year of the First World War, the Olsztyn area and the whole of East Prussia were part of the battlefield of the Eastern Front (two battles at the Masurian Lakes are worth mentioning), unlike the rest of the areas where plebiscites were held. This meant that many people fled to the West, and the remaining civilians were often subjected to violence by the Russian military.²⁵

Although the Olsztyn and Kwidzyn areas are relatively close, their path to the plebiscite was different. For both, the idea and realization of the formation of the Polish state after the end of the First World War served as a basis.

²³ The latter is also referred to by some as the Prussian province of East Prussia, or after the regions of Varmia and Masuria.

²⁴ Richard Blanke, "Polish-Speaking Germans? Language and National Identity Among the Masurians", *Nationalities Papers* 27, No. 3 (1999), p. 429, 434–438 (hereinafter: Blanke, "Polish-Speaking Germans?").

²⁵ Alexander Watson, "Unheard-of Brutality: Russian Atrocities against Civilians in East Prussia, 1914–1915", *The Journal of Modern History* 86, No. 4 (2014), pp. 780–825.

Roman Dmowski, head of the Polish National Committee²⁶ who worked in Paris, advocated, among other things, the annexation of East and West Prussia to the newly formed Poland in a memorandum sent to US President Wilson on October 8, 1918.²⁷ Wilson's points envisaged Poland having access to the sea. The way it was provided required a lot of diplomatic effort after the end of the war due to the ethnically mixed population along the shores of the Baltic Sea. The area around Kwidzyn is also partly related to this.

On March 19, 1919, the Commission for Polish Affairs issued a report in which it assumed the annexation of Gdansk and the territories along both banks of the Vistula River to Poland. The latter would be important because of the railway connection between Gdańsk and Warsaw, which also ran through Kwidzyn and would thus run entirely through Polish territory. British Prime Minister Lloyd George opposed this, as a large German population would end up in Poland, which could provoke unrest in the Weimar Republic.²⁸ As Margaret MacMillan wrote, he highlighted the surroundings of Kwidzyn, where a large number of Germans lived in a small area.²⁹ Negotiations were held at short intervals until April 18th, when the Big Four decided to hold a plebiscite in the area of Kwidzyn, giving Poland access to the sea through the territory west of Gdansk, which would become a free city under the control of the League of Nations.³⁰ With the creation of a corridor connecting Poland with the sea, East Prussia was territorially separated from the rest of the Weimar Republic.³¹

On January 29, 1919, at the presentation of Poland's demands before the highest body of the Peace Conference, Dmowski called for the formation of a closed political body called the Republic of Königsberg, which would be associated with Poland. Wilson and Lloyd George opposed it. A month later, the head of the Polish delegation in Paris presented a new proposal. The Repub-

²⁶ The Polish National Committee was established on August 15, 1917 in Lausanne. It was led by Roman Dmowski. A month later, he was recognized by France as a mediator between the French government and the Polish troops fighting on the Western Front as part of the Entente. It was recognized by the United Kingdom, the United States and Italy by the end of the year. In November 1918, France recognized him as the representative of the Poles in the Entente, the Polish army and Polish foreign policy (Robert F. Leslie et al., *The History of Poland since 1863* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 123 and 125 (hereinafter: Leslie et al., *The History of Poland*)).

²⁷ Hagen Schultze, "Der Oststaat-Plan 1919", *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 18, No. 2 (1970), p. 124 (hereinafter: Schultze, "Der Oststaat-Plan").

²⁸ Piotr Stefan Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies, 1919–1925: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno* (Minneapolis, 1962), pp. 37–42 (hereinafter: Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies*); Lutz Oberdörfer, "Konfliktlinien in Ostpreußen am Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs", *Osteuropa* 53, No. 2/3 (2003), pp. 220–222 (hereinafter: Oberdörfer, "Konfliktlinien in Ostpreußen").

²⁹ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 217.

³⁰ Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies*, pp. 37–42; Oberdörfer, "Konfliktlinien in Ostpreußen", p. 222.

³¹ Schultze, "The Oststaat Plan", p. 127.

lic of Königsberg would come under the control of the League of Nations but would be in a customs union with Poland. This proposal did not receive support either.³² In the case of East Prussia, the Committee on Polish Affairs primarily took into account the population's ethnic structure. By March 12th, in a report to the Supreme Council, it had granted most of the territory to the Weimar Republic. A plebiscite would be held only in the southern part, e.g., in the provinces of Warmia (German Ermland) and Mazury or around Olsztyn. The Supreme Council had no comments against this decision.³³

The plebiscite in the area of Olsztyn was determined by Articles 94 and 95 of the Treaty of Versailles. The first determined the area, and the second the method of conducting the popular vote. Within 15 days of the entry into force of the Treaty, the German army and administration would leave the plebiscite area. The latter would be taken over by a five-member Inter-Allied Commission, which would provide the conditions for free, fair, and secret voting. Decisions would be taken based on a majority and could be assisted in its administration by the local population if the Commission decided so. Everyone who was 20 years old on the date of the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles and was at the same time either born in the plebiscite area or had been habitually resident there from a date to be fixed by the Commission could vote. They would vote in the municipalities where they lived and those who emigrated in the municipalities where they were born. As in the case of Zone 2 of the Schleswig plebiscite area, the results by municipality would be taken into account; the final demarcation would also consider the geographical and economic aspects. Within one month of the demarcation of the border, the East Prussian or Polish authorities would take over the administration of the respective territories. The plebiscite area would cover the costs of operating the Commission.³⁴

Article 96 defined the plebiscite area in the area of Kwidzyn. Article 97 defined the method of implementation. The provisions were identical to Article 95. They additionally defined the territory on the right bank of the Vistula, where the German side should not build fortifications if they won the plebiscite. Poland would retain control of the said river regardless of the outcome. Allied countries would also lay down rules according to which the population of East Prussia would use the Vistula for their own needs.³⁵

The Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission arrived in mid-February 1920. It was composed of representatives of Great Britain, France, and Italy. The chair-

³² Oberdörfer, "Konfliktlinien in Ostpreußen", p. 220.

³³ Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies*, pp. 36–37.

³⁴ *The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part III*, available at: avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partiii.asp, accessed on: April 8, 2020.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

man of the Commission in Kwidzyn was an Italian and a Briton in Olsztyn.³⁶ The Commission of the German administrative authorities and police was to operate in Kwidzyn until April and in Olsztyn until June. The German police were then replaced by plebiscite police comprised of the local population. A small Entente army was present on the ground; the British one in the vicinity of Olsztyn, and the Italian and French in the area of Kwidzyn. There were no significant incidents, according to British historian David G. Williamson. He only pointed out the attempt of Polish paramilitary units to enter the vicinity of Kwidzyn, but the Italian army stopped them. The German side supported the Commission's work, as it wanted the plebiscite to be held as soon as possible. On the other hand, Poland fluctuated between allegations of violations of their rights and a boycott of preparations for a public vote. The Polish side also complained about German participation in the administration of the Olsztyn plebiscite area. They tried to get the plebiscite held as late as possible, but the attempts were unsuccessful. The Commission set July 11, 1920, as the date of both plebiscites.³⁷

On July 11, 1920, a vote was held, and the German side won in both plebiscite areas by a large margin. In Kwidzyn, 92% of eligible voters voted to join the Weimar Republic and almost 98% in Olsztyn. As the voting results were determined by municipalities, three municipalities from the Olsztyn plebiscite area and five from the Kwidzyn area joined Poland.³⁸ The plebiscite Commission, which withdrew from the area after the demarcation of the border on August 16th,³⁹ assessed that the result was due to the situation in the Polish-Russian War (Poland was not in good position at the time), the plebiscite campaign's poor organization, and Polish propaganda.⁴⁰

The Carinthian Plebiscite

In the Early Middle Ages, Carinthia became part of the Holy Roman Empire and remained there until its end in 1804. During the brief period of French rule under Napoleon I, Carinthia was divided; its western part was incorporated into the Illyrian Provinces, which were under direct French rule, while

³⁶ T. Hunt Tooley, "German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919–1921", *Central European History* 21, No. 1 (1988), pp. 67–69 (hereinafter: Tooley, "German Political Violence").

³⁷ Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany*, pp. 75–78.

³⁸ Emily Allyn, "Polish-German Relations in Pomerania and East Prussia", *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America* 2, No. 3 (1944), p. 839 (hereinafter: Allyn, "Polish-German Relations").

³⁹ Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany*, pp. 79–80.

⁴⁰ Allyn, "Polish-German Relations", p. 839; Blanke, "Polish-Speaking Germans?", pp. 441–443.

the eastern part remained part of the Austrian Empire.⁴¹ After the French withdrawal and the final fall of Napoleon, the Carinthian territory was reunited and remained so until the end of the First World War. Since the Middle Ages, Germanic and Slavic elements mixed there and were strongly influenced by the process of national awakening.⁴² In the second half of the 19th century, the ethnic structure in the southern part of Carinthia changed through the process of Germanisation. This is evident from the Austrian census conducted by the authorities every ten years between 1880 and 1910. Thus, in the territory of the later plebiscite Zone A, in 1880, 85.3% of the population indicated Slovene as the usually spoken language, while in 1910, this share fell to 69.18%.⁴³

In contrast to the peaceful situation on the ground in the areas discussed so far, where a plebiscite was held, things looked very different after the end of the First World War in the border area between the Republic of German-Austria and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs⁴⁴, which merged with its southern neighbor to form the Kingdom of SHS on December 1, 1918. Fighting between paramilitary units began here as early as November 1918. The first phase of the fighting lasted until January 14, 1919. Initial successes were achieved by the Slovenian side, which by mid-December 1918 had occupied the territory south of the Drava (Drau), while north of the Drava (Drau), it had advanced into the Velikovec (Völkermarkt) area. Successes on the Austrian side followed the Austrian victory at Grabštanj (Grafenstein). On the said date in January, an armistice was signed between the two warring parties, and the demarcation line was established. The following months saw minor unrest, but more severe fighting broke out on April 29, 1919, when the Slovenian side tried to attack again but was defeated after a week of fighting.⁴⁵ The Austrian side had concretely crossed the demarcation line established in January. However, the Austrian War Ministry had urged them not to cross it. Even some of the

⁴¹ Peter Štih, Vasko Simoniti in Peter Vodopivec, *Slovenska zgodovina: družba – politika – kultura* (Ljubljana, 2008), p. 251.

⁴² Janko Pleterski, *Koroški plebiscit 1920: Poskus enciklopedične razlage gesla o koroškem plebiscitu* (Ljubljana, 2003), pp. 7–11.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 11; Janko Pleterski, "Slovenska Koroška pred 1. svetovno vojno", in: *Koroški plebiscit: razprave in članki*, ed. Janko Pleterski, Lojze Ude and Tone Zorn (Ljubljana, 1970), pp. 66–67; Mitja Zorn, "Abstimmungszonen", in: *Enyklopädie der slowenischen Kulturgeschichte in Kärnten/Koroška: von den Anfängen bis zur 1942*, ed. Katja Sturm-Schnabl and Bojan-Ilija Schnabl (Wien–Köln–Weimar, 2016), p. 61.

⁴⁴ More about the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs see e.g. Jurij Perovšek, *Slovenska osamosvojitve v letu 1918: študija o slovenski državnosti v Državi Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov* (Ljubljana, 1998); Jurij Perovšek, "Slovenci in država SHS leta 1918", *Zgodovinski časopis* 53, No. 1 (1999), pp. 71–79; Jurij Perovšek, "Nastanek Države Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov 29. oktobra 1918 in njen narodnozgodovinski pomen", *Studia Historica Slovenica* 19, No. 2 (2019), pp. 369–398.

⁴⁵ Lojze Ude, "Vojaški boji na Koroškem v letu 1918/1919", in: *Koroški plebiscit*, pp. 132–197 (Hereinafter: Ude, "Vojaški boji").

Entente representatives present on the ground at the time were not enthusiastic about such an intervention.⁴⁶ On May 28, 1919, fighting broke out for the third time on a larger scale. This time the Yugoslav army joined in the fighting, which contributed to the rapid capture of the Austrian positions. On the first day of battle, the Austrian army had to withdraw to the left bank of the Drava (Drau). On June 3rd, the Yugoslav army captured Velikovec (Völkermarkt) and three days later Celovec (Klagenfurt). On the same day, an armistice was signed between the two sides.⁴⁷ On June 18th, a new demarcation line was established between the two armies, according to which Celovec (Klagenfurt) was to pass into Austrian hands, which was rejected by the Yugoslav side. Only after repeated pressure from the strongest victors of the war, on July 28, 1919, did the SHS troops withdraw south of the line. On June 13th of the same year, the Italian army intervened directly and occupied Beljak (Villach), Trg (Feldkirchen), and Št. Vid (Sankt Veit an der Glan).⁴⁸

At the Paris Peace Conference, the delimitation between the Kingdom of SHS and Republic of German-Austria was discussed for the first time in the highest decision-making bodies on February 18, 1919. The Territorial Commission for Romanian and Yugoslav claims was entrusted with elaborating the delimitation plan and met for the first time on March 2nd. At this meeting, differences between the views of individual countries on the course of the border became clear. The French side was the most generous towards the Kingdom of SHS and proposed that the entire Klagenfurt Basin should belong to it. The American representatives favored a border course along with the Karavanke mountain range, which the British representatives agreed to, except for the Mežica Valley, which would have gone to the Kingdom of SHS. The Italian side would have drawn the border further south so that the city of Maribor would also have come under Austrian control.⁴⁹ On April 6th, the Territorial Commission presented its first report on the proposed demarcation of the border. The British, French and American members of the Commission drew the border along the Karavanke Mountains. At the same time, they considered the possibility that the population of the Klagenfurt Basin might oppose this decision, thus hinting at the possibility of a referendum. It should be noted that the decisive countries in Paris preferred to see the Klagenfurt Basin area as a geographically and economically integrated area. However, they were aware of its multi-

⁴⁶ Janez Osojnik, Gorazd Bajc in Mateja Matjašič Friš, "Koroška leta 1919 in ozadje sprejetja odločitve o plebiscitu – britanski pogled in reakcije v slovenskem tisku", *Studia Historica Slovenica* 20, No. 2 (2020), pp. 538–539 (hereinafter: Osojnik, Bajc and Matjašič Friš, "Koroška leta 1919").

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 542; Ude, "Vojaški boji", pp. 197–200.

⁴⁸ Osojnik, Bajc and Matjašič Friš, "Koroška leta 1919", pp. 542–543.

⁴⁹ Bogo Grafenauer, "Slovenska Koroška v diplomatski igri leta 1919", in: *Koroški plebiscit*, pp. 328–330 (hereinafter: Grafenauer, "Slovenska Koroška").

ethnic character.⁵⁰ This attitude was significantly influenced by the activities of the American mission named after its leader, Colonel Sherman Miles, which conducted a field study of the geographical, economic and ethnic factors in the Klagenfurt Basin in late January and early February 1919.⁵¹

After a brief freeze, the Carinthian question was discussed more intensively in the highest decision-making bodies from May 12th onwards. On that day, the possibility of a plebiscite on the fate of the disputed territory was mentioned for the first time. The Yugoslav delegation did not agree with the idea of a referendum and tried to get at least part of the Klagenfurt Basin assigned to the Kingdom of SHS but was unsuccessful. At the end of May, the Peace Conference decided to hold a plebiscite in the Klagenfurt Basin. Still, on June 4th, the Allies reversed their decision and divided the disputed area into two zones, mainly due to successful Yugoslav mediation with the American delegation. In the following months, the Carinthian problem was discussed with a view to holding the plebiscite, and the final decisions, which were incorporated into the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, were made on June 25th.⁵²

The Carinthian plebiscite was decreed in Articles 49 and 50 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The plebiscite was to be conducted by an international commission composed of one representative each from the US, Great Britain, France, and Italy, and one representative each from Austria and the Kingdom of SHS, with the Austrian member allowed to participate only in the deliberations on Zone B and the Yugoslav member allowed to participate only in the deliberations on Zone A, which was to be occupied by the Yugoslav army and administered under Yugoslav law (Zone B was to be under Austrian law and occupied by Austrian troops). After the Commission's arrival on the ground, the army would be replaced as far as possible by police units composed of the local population. Also, in the case of the Carinthian plebiscite, which, according to the Treaty, must be held within three months of the entry into force of the Peace Treaty, the Commission must take measures to ensure a free, fair, and secret vote. Voting would first take place in Zone A. Should Austria win a majority there, Zone B would automatically go to Austria. However, should the Kingdom of SHS win a majority, the vote in Zone B would take place within three weeks of announcing the vote results in Zone A. The right

⁵⁰ Osojnik, Bajc and Matjašič Friš, "Koroška leta 1919", pp. 544–545.

⁵¹ More about the work of the Miles mission in Tom Priestly, "Povezave med poročili Milesove komisije in odločitvijo mirovne konference v Parizu za plebiscit na Koroškem leta 1919: kakšen dokaz so poročila sama?" *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 45, No. 1 (2005), pp. 1–21; Andrej Rahten, "Šampanjec v Gradcu in nemške demivierges – ocena delovanja podpolkovnika Shermana Mileasa na Štajerskem leta 1919", *Studia Historica Slovenica* 19, No. 3 (2019), pp. 781–809.

⁵² Grafenauer, "Slovenska Koroška", pp. 334–357; Osojnik, Bajc and Matjašič Friš, "Koroška leta 1919", pp. 547–550.

to vote was granted to persons who had reached the age of 20 on January 1, 1919; had on 1 January 1919, habitual residence within the zone subjected to the plebiscite; and were born within the said zone, or had his or her habitual residence of rights of citizenship there from a date previous to 1 January 1912. The costs of the Commission's work would be borne equally by the Kingdom of the SHS and Austria.⁵³

After the signing of the Peace Treaty, the Kingdom of SHS and the Republic of Austria established their administrations in their respective zones under the provisions of the Treaty. This remained the case until the arrival of the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission on July 21, 1920. At that time, both the Austrian and Yugoslav sides held experimental plebiscites in Zone A. The first took place in the spring of the same year, and 63% of the respondents voted for Austria. The second held three such polls. The results of the first, held at the end of 1919, are not known, but in the second, held in March 1920, 54.97 % of respondents voted for the Kingdom of the SHS, and in the third, held in May of the same year, 90 % of respondents voted for a Yugoslav state.⁵⁴

The Plebiscite Commission consisted of five members. It was chaired by a British member, Sydney Capel Peck. It included a French, an Italian, an Austrian, and a Yugoslav member, the latter two having no voting rights but only advisory roles. The Plebiscite Commission, which had its headquarters in Klagenfurt, organized its administrative bodies soon after its arrival. At the beginning of August, it made a decision that was quite controversial for the Yugoslav side, namely the opening of the demarcation border between the two zones. The Yugoslav member of the Commission repeatedly protested against this and other decisions, but mostly unsuccessfully. However, his colleagues criticized him for obstructing the work of the Commission, which in September demanded the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from Zone A, which eventually happened. On the day of the plebiscite, 58 Allied troops also entered Zone A. It should also be noted that there were several disagreements between the French and Italian representatives at the Plebiscite Commission meetings, and so Peck cast the deciding vote in the Commission's votes; he usually agreed with the Italian member.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Australian Treaty Series 1920 No 3, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Canberra, Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria; Protocol, Declaration and Special Declaration (St. Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919)*, available at: www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1920/3.html, accessed on: November 4, 2021.

⁵⁴ Tamara Griesser Pečar, *Die Stellung der Slowenischen Landesregierung zum Land Kärnten 1918–1920* (Klagenfurt–Ljubljana–Wien, 2010), pp. 413–416; Tomaž Kladnik, "General Rudolf Maister", *Studia Historica Slovenica* 11, No. 2–3 (2011), pp. 478–479.

⁵⁵ Darko Friš, Janez Osojnik in Gorazd Bajc, "Koroška v odločilnem letu 1920: delovanje plebiscitne komisije", *Acta Histriae* 26, No. 3 (2018), pp. 923–938.

The vote in Zone A took place on October 10, 1920. 59.04 % of the votes went to Austria and 40.96 % to the Kingdom of SHS, which meant that the entire plebiscite area went to the former. Dissatisfied with the results, especially in the Slovenian part of the Kingdom of SHS, the Yugoslav army marched into Zone A on the nights of October 13th - 14th. Nevertheless, it withdrew again by October 23rd under pressure from the Great Powers. The administration of the area was again taken over by the Plebiscite Commission, which completed its work on November 18, 1920, when it handed over the administration of Zone A to Austria.⁵⁶

Upper Silesia

Historically, Upper Silesia was only a part of the Silesian region, which changed several rulers in the course of its historical development. In the first half of the 10th century, it came under the rule of the Duchy of Bohemia but was soon conquered by the Grand Duchy of Poland. Around the year 1000, the territory of Upper Silesia also fell into its hands. Around 1163, Silesia freed itself from Polish rule and became independent.⁵⁷ In 1335, Silesia came under the rule of the Kingdom of Bohemia. From then on, it became one of the historical lands of the Bohemian crown.⁵⁸ In 1742, after the end of the war between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Prussia, Silesia was divided between the two countries. The border was drawn in the area of Upper Silesia, most of which belonged to Prussia. This division remained in place until the end of the First World War.⁵⁹ This historical development of the Upper Silesian territory is not surprising, since, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918 and the establishment of new states on its ruins, as well as the defeat of the German Empire, the territory became one of the main focal points of both post-war violence on the ground and diplomatic efforts by Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Weimar Republic to acquire as much of it as possible.

In addition to the historical connection of all three countries with (Upper) Silesia, the population structure of the area also played an important role. During the High Middle Ages, the majority Slavic population was joined by newcomers from the German area.⁶⁰ The mixed population structure and the posi-

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 938–939.

⁵⁷ Steven Jefferson, *Exodus, Expulsion, Explication: Collective Memories of Silesia as a German-Polish Frontier Zone*: Doctoral dissertation, University of London (London, 2016), p. 282

⁵⁸ Kevin Hannan, "Borders of Identity and Language in Silesia", *The Polish Review* 51, No. 2 (2006), p. 134.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 135.

⁶⁰ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present* (Oxford, 2001), p. 252.

tive historical development contributed to strengthening various nationalisms in Upper Silesia from the 19th century onwards. We can share the opinion of the Polish historian T. Kamusella, that the Bohemian national movement sought the integration of Silesia into the future Czech state, and the Slavic population living in Upper Silesia came under the influence of the Polish National Movement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶¹ The latter had problems establishing itself because there was no Polish nobility and no Polish intelligentsia in the region. As Brendan Karch has written, Polish nationalism in the region must have arisen from the lower classes of the population or through influence from the areas to the east and north of Upper Silesia.⁶² The latter happened when controversy flared up in the rest of Silesia over whether Polish-speaking Upper Silesians could be called Poles. Soon afterward, some politicians of Polish origin began to exploit Polish nationalism for their own purposes.⁶³ The Polish National Movement was most successful in the eastern part of Upper Silesia, where miners, mainly from the Polish-speaking countryside, settled in large numbers from the second half of the 19th century.⁶⁴

Despite the rise of Polish nationalism in Upper Silesia, the most important factor dividing the population was their religion, i.e., Catholic or Protestant, until the end of the First World War. Only after the end of the First World War did it begin to lose its importance in identifying the Upper Silesian population by their nationality.⁶⁵ The language of the Upper Silesians, who spoke a dialect similar to Polish with German vocabulary, is also worth mentioning. Many of the inhabitants spoke both German and Polish.⁶⁶

Poland was involved in six military conflicts with its neighbors over its borders.⁶⁷ One of these was the Weimar Republic. In the West, there was a protracted border conflict in Upper Silesia. At the outbreak of the First World War, the inhabitants there fought as part of the Prussian army. They were loyal to their country. Towards the end of the war, the situation began to change. There were workers' strikes and military rebellions in the country. Upper Silesia was one of these hotspots. The workers' strikes began to mix with the pro-Polish national

⁶¹ Tomasz Kamusella, "Upper Silesia in Modern Europe: On the significance of the non-national/a-national in the ages of nations", in: *Creating Nationality in Central Europe, 1880–1950: Modernity, violence and (be)longing in Upper Silesia*, ed. James Bjork, Tomasz Kamusella, Tim Wilson and Anna Novikov (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 15–16 (hereinafter: Kamusella, "Upper Silesia in Modern Europe").

⁶² Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960* (Washington, D.C.—Cambridge, 2018), p. 5 (hereinafter: Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*).

⁶³ Harry K. Rosenthal, "National Self-Determination: The Example of Upper Silesia", *Journal of Contemporary History* 7, št 3/4 (1972), pp. 232–235.

⁶⁴ Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 61, 67 and 85.

⁶⁵ Kamusella, "Upper Silesia in Modern Europe", p. 18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

idea. This marked the return to the political stage of Wojciech Korfanty, who had already been one of the main proponents of Polish nationalism before the war. A growing number of prominent figures of Polish origin, who had long insisted on a loyal policy towards Prussia, also began to campaign for the annexation of Upper Silesia to Poland.⁶⁸ By 1917, Korfanty had already won the support of the National Democrats, the strongest party in the Polish National Committee, which was based in Paris, for his pro-Polish policy in Upper Silesia.⁶⁹

Immediately after the end of the war, both the Polish and German sides organized their own political organizations.⁷⁰ As the American historian T. Hunt Tooley notes, the national structure (60% of Poles in Upper Silesia at the end of the war) coincided with class stratification, which was supposed to prove to the Germans that the ambitions of the Polish National Movement were behind the workers' revolts.⁷¹ However, the movement for a special status for Upper Silesia should not be overlooked. There were ideas for both autonomy and an independent state. The leading proponent of the former was the Catholic People's Party, which had considerable support in the region because of the backing of influential representatives of the local clergy and industrialists.⁷² In January 1919, the party temporarily withdrew from autonomy efforts following an agreement with the Social Democratic Party, the ruling party in Weimar Germany. In an agreement concluded in Wrocław, the Social Democrats promised, among other things, to consult the representatives there on decisions concerning Upper Silesia, which was to receive its own commissariat in Katowice.⁷³ As the Polish lawyer Tomasz Kruszewski explains, the idea of autonomism did not find favor with any of the major parties in Weimar Germany before the Reichstag elections in January.⁷⁴ The Catholic People's Party, on the other hand, spoke out in favor of the annexation of Upper Silesia to the Weimar Republic in the run-up to the plebiscite on March 20, 1919.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Jochen Böehler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford, 2018), p. 106 (hereinafter: Böehler, *Civil War in Central Europe*); Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, pp. 101–107.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁷¹ Tooley, "German Political Violence", p. 59.

⁷² Ralph Schattkowski, "Separatism in the Eastern Provinces of the German Reich at the End of the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, No. 2 (1994), p. 306 (hereinafter: Schattkowski, "Separatism in the Eastern Provinces"). In this paper, the author discusses the autonomist and separatist tendencies that arose in Upper Silesia after the end of the First World War.

⁷³ Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, pp. 118–119.

⁷⁴ Tomasz Kruszewski, "Silesian administrative authorities and territorial transformations of Silesia (1918–1945)", in: *Cuius regio? Ideological and Territorial Cobesion of the Historical Region of Silesia (c. 1000–2000), vol. 4: Divided Region. Times of Nation-States (1918–1945)*, ed. Lucyna Harc, Przemysław Wiszewski in Rościszław Żerelek (Wrocław, 2014), pp. 20–21.

⁷⁵ Schattkowski, "Separatism in the Eastern Provinces", p. 319.

The German army managed to secure the Silesian borders by the beginning of 1918 by using the "*Grenzschutz*", paramilitary units made up of volunteers, to control them. These soon outnumbered the Polish paramilitaries in the area. On the Polish side, a special military division for Upper Silesia was set up in the Polish military organization at the beginning of 1919 and quickly grew in numbers. The two sides clashed occasionally, and Polish organizations and activists were subject to surveillance and persecution by the authorities.⁷⁶

The tense situation reached its first peak on August 16, 1919, when the first Polish uprising broke out in Upper Silesia (also known as the First Silesian Uprising). It was triggered by the Germans' attempt to put down a miners' strike in Mysłowice, southeast of Katowice, in which ten strikers were killed. The week-long uprising was also crushed because of its poor organization and a large number of Polish fighters.⁷⁷ According to Tim Wilson's analysis, 355 people died due to the fighting, although Polish historiography repeatedly speaks of up to 2,500 casualties.⁷⁸

German troops maintained control of Upper Silesia until February 1920 without any significant violent unrest.⁷⁹ Allied troops arrived in the area that month; 15,000 French and 5,000 Italian troops.⁸⁰ British troops joined them in 1921. The troops were under the command of the French General Jules Gratier. Still, in April 1920, Le Rond decided they were no longer allowed to de-escalate riots of political nature, as this was the duty of the police, known as *Sicherheitspolizei*.⁸¹ Regardless of the arrival of the Allied troops, the number of German and Polish paramilitary units in the region grew.⁸² Violent unrest increased over the months and reached its peak between August 19th to August 31st, 1920, when the Second Silesian Uprising broke out. The state of the Polish-Soviet War triggered it. The Red Army was outside Warsaw, and the German government had banned the transport of weapons and troops to Poland via its territory. In practice, this meant that France could not send aid to its Eastern European ally via Germany. Demonstrations broke out among the German population in Upper Silesia in support of this policy. These escalated into clashes with the *Sicherheitspolizei* and French troops and were also directed against Polish

⁷⁶ Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe*, pp. 107–108.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.

⁷⁸ Tim Wilson, "Fatal Violence in Upper Silesia, 1918–1922", in: *Creating Nationality in Central Europe*, pp. 57–60 (hereinafter: Wilson, "Fatal Violence in Upper Silesia").

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

⁸⁰ F. Gregory Campbell gives other figures, namely 11,000 French and 2,000 Italian soldiers (F. Gregory Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919–1922", *The Journal of Modern History* 42, No. 3 (1970), p. 364 (hereinafter: Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia")). Brendan Karch also mentions such a large number of soldiers (Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 121).

⁸¹ Tooley, "German Political Violence", pp. 67–69.

⁸² Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe*, p. 108.

sympathizers and their offices, which were responsible for propagandizing the plebiscite. The demonstrations stopped overnight, but Korfanty then called for Polish resistance.⁸³

In this uprising, the Poles had many more troops at their disposal than in the first. The uprising was an immediate success in the industrial part of Upper Silesia and then in the rest of the country. Within a few days, Polish paramilitaries controlled most of the territory. The International Commission lost control of the situation. Korfanty promised the German side an end to the violence in exchange for some concessions, which were accepted. On September 2nd, both sides signed a ceasefire. The most significant change took place in the organization of the police. The *Sicherheitspolizei* was replaced by a special plebiscite police force composed of members of both nationalities.⁸⁴ Tim Wilson estimates that 120 people lost their lives in the uprising. When the plebiscite was held on March 20, 1921, there had been no more major uprisings, but violence was still present.⁸⁵

At the beginning of 1918, the question of creating an independent Poland⁸⁶ after the end of the war found favor with some of the most influential statesmen of the Entente. Thus, British Prime Minister Lloyd George endorsed the idea of an independent Poland in his speech on January 5th. France had done so a month earlier,⁸⁷ and US President Woodrow Wilson presented his famous 14 points three days after George's speech. He advocated an independent Poland with access to the sea, political and economic freedom, and territorial integrity in the penultimate point. Poland would include the territories where "the Polish people live indisputably."⁸⁸ It is not possible to judge on this basis what area Wilson had in mind, especially due to ethnically inhomogeneous areas such as Upper Silesia. The word "indisputably" could either mean that multi-ethnic areas were included or only those in which the Poles formed an indisputable majority.

On February 12, 1919, at the Paris Peace Conference, the Polish Affairs Committee was set up to draw up a proposal for the borders between Germany and Poland.⁸⁹ It tried to stick to the nationality principle in defining the borders, but the British and especially the Americans also took other aspects of

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 73–74; Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe*, p. 109.

⁸⁴ Tooley, "German Political Violence", pp. 74–75; Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe*, p. 109.

⁸⁵ Wilson, "Fatal Violence in Upper Silesia", pp. 64–65.

⁸⁶ On Inquiry's plans for post-war Poland, see Mieczysław B. Biskupski, "Re-creating Central Europe: The United States 'Inquiry' into the Future of Poland in 1918", *The International History Review* 12, No. 2 (1990), pp. 249–279.

⁸⁷ Leslie et al., *The History of Poland*, p. 125.

⁸⁸ *Fourteen Points*, available at: www.britannica.com/event/Fourteen-Points, accessed on: April 7, 2020.

⁸⁹ Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies*, pp. 34–35.

border demarcation into account, namely geographical, economic and strategic.⁹⁰ France strongly supported Polish aspirations, and it was mainly thanks to France that the question of Polish borders was raised very quickly at the conference, namely at the end of January, when Dmowski presented the Polish demands to the Supreme Council. A month later, he submitted a document to the Committee for Polish Affairs with more detailed territorial demands, including Upper Silesia.⁹¹ The Committee initially allocated it to Poland, justifying with the fact that 65 % of the population was Polish-speaking. The German side objected to this decision, citing the mixed population structure, the historical development of the area, the violation of the principle of self-determination, and the economic importance of Upper Silesia to the Weimar Republic, especially its coal mines, other mines, and factories.⁹²

The decision to cede Upper Silesia to Poland was met with opposition from British Prime Minister Lloyd George⁹³. He argued that the absence of an industrially developed area rich in raw materials would complicate Germany's post-war economic reconstruction and thus also the repayment of war reparations. Therefore, at a meeting of the Council of Four on June 2, 1919, he proposed a referendum in Upper Silesia. The possible annexation of this territory by the Weimar Republic would have contradicted the policy of Clemenceau at the Peace Conference, who wanted to weaken France's eastern neighbor as much as possible. The appropriation of mineral resources and the resulting German economic and power boom would have represented competition in continental Europe and a new threat to France. No wonder then that Clemenceau opposed the plebiscite in the first days of June, joined by US President Wilson. They believed that the Poles should not be able to vote freely there. Lloyd George proposed sending allied troops to ensure a free vote while at the same time referring to the peoples' right to self-determination. Wilson and Clemenceau relented, and the decision to hold the plebiscite was decreed in the Treaty of Versailles.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 216.

⁹¹ Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies*, p. 32 and 35.

⁹² MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 219.

⁹³ As American historian Sally Marks explains, Lloyd George was the most opposed to Poland's grand aspirations among the heads of state and government of the major countries in Paris. The memorandum named after Fontainebleau, written by the British Prime Minister and some of his advisers, described the Poles as incapable of governing themselves and demanded that they be given as little German-speaking territory as possible (Sally Marks, "Mistakes and Myths: The Allies, Germany, and the Versailles Treaty, 1918–1921", *The Journal of Modern History* 85, No. 3 (2013), p. 649). On Lloyd George's attitude towards post-war Poland, see Norman Davies, "Lloyd George and Poland, 1919–1920", *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, No. 3 (1971), pp. 132–154.

⁹⁴ MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, pp. 220–221; Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies*, pp. 43–46.

The plebiscite in Upper Silesia was mentioned in Article 88 of the Treaty of Versailles, and more detailed instructions followed in an annex. The German army was ordered to leave the area 15 days after the Peace Treaty came into force. Within the same period, the workers' and soldiers' councils and the (para-)military units were to be disbanded. An international commission of four members, one each from Britain, France, Italy, and the US, would take control of the plebiscite area. The Commission would be assisted in its supervision by military units of the Entente countries. All powers would be in the hands of the Commission, except for legislative and financial policy, which would remain with the German and Prussian governments, but changes to which would only be possible after consultation with the Commission. It would also decide how much real power should be given to the existing authorities. Troops would ensure the maintenance of order from the Entente countries and by a police force composed of the local population. The most important task of the Commission was to ensure a free, fair, and secret vote. It could expel people who prevented this or influenced the outcome through bribery or intimidation. Decisions were made by majority vote.⁹⁵

All persons who were 20 years of age on January 1st of the year the plebiscite was to be held, were born in the plebiscite area, been domiciled there since a date to be determined by the Commission (which had to be before January 1, 1919), or had been expelled by the German authorities and could not yet return were eligible to vote. People who had been charged with political offenses could also vote. Voting took place in the municipalities where the voters lived or were born before emigration. The results were to be taken into account by municipalities. After the results were published, the Commission would propose a boundary line, which geographical and economic aspects would also influence. Once the borders were set, Poland and Weimar Germany would take over the administration of the acquired territories within a month, and the Commission would cease its activities. The plebiscite area would cover the costs of operating the Commission.⁹⁶

The Treaty of Versailles was ratified on January 10, 1920.⁹⁷ The International Commission arrived in Upper Silesia in early February of the same year. The French General Henri Le Rond chaired it, and its members were the British Colonel Harold F.P. Percival and the Italian General Alberto De Marinis. The US did not send a representative, as the Senate had not ratified the Versailles

⁹⁵ *The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part III*, available at: avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partiii.asp, accessed on: April 8, 2020.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Anna M. Cienciala in Titus Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno: Keys to Polish Foreign Policy, 1919–25* (Lawrence, 1984), p. 52 (hereinafter: Cienciala and Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno*).

Peace Treaty. The Commission had its seat in Opole / Oppeln. In disagreements between their members, the British and Italian members were usually of one mind.⁹⁸ Still, if Tooley, an expert on the situation at the time, is to be believed, they did not openly oppose Le Rond's decisions so as not to cause open discord among the Commission members.⁹⁹

Upper Silesia became a special area after the establishment of the Allied administration, and its inhabitants were given passports that allowed them to travel outside the plebiscite zone. The area also had its own stamps. The Allied soldiers with limited rights of action were not received with enthusiasm by the population in many places. In the city of Opole (Oppeln), where the majority of the population was German, the French soldiers were negatively viewed as they were perceived as pro-Polish.¹⁰⁰

After the Plebiscite Commission failed to prevent a second Polish uprising, the British¹⁰¹ and Italian representatives began to speak out against their French counterparts because of their sympathy for Poland. The uprising led to several changes in the plebiscitary zone, including creating a national mixed police force, and the Allied administration took the judiciary under its wing.¹⁰² On February 21, 1920, the Allies made an important decision regarding the vote. According to the Treaty of Versailles, people born in Upper Silesia but later moved away were allowed to vote. This French idea was initially intended to help Poland win Upper Silesia, but it turned out that the German side could also benefit from it. Therefore, Poles began to oppose this article, which was supported by the French but vehemently opposed by the British.¹⁰³ The Allies finally stipulated that these people could vote in the municipalities where they were born.¹⁰⁴

In February 1921, the Allies decided to hold the plebiscite in mid-March. The popular vote took place on March 20, 1921, under peaceful conditions. Almost 1,200,000 people voted, a turnout of 97.5%; 59.6% voted for the Weimar Republic and 40.3% for Poland.¹⁰⁵ The majority of voters who lived outside Upper Silesia but were born there voted for the Weimar Republic. But as Tooley

⁹⁸ Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", pp. 364–365; Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 121.

⁹⁹ Tooley, "German Political Violence", pp. 65–66.

¹⁰⁰ Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, pp. 121–122.

¹⁰¹ In September 1920, British Foreign Secretary George Nathaniel Curzon called for the first time for Le Rond to be dismissed as President of the Plebiscite Commission. He tried this several more times, but always without success (Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", p. 366).

¹⁰² Tooley, "German Political Violence", p. 76 and 87.

¹⁰³ Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", pp. 366–367.

¹⁰⁴ Cienciala and Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ As Brendan Karch wrote, there are different figures regarding the number of voters and the results, but they do not differ too much (Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 137).

noted, these voters did not tip the balance decisively in favor of the Weimar Republic.¹⁰⁶

After the plebiscite, it became clear that the territory would have to be divided between the two countries. The rural area in the north and west of the territory plebiscite was unproblematic and voted for the Weimar Republic. In contrast, the extreme Southeast (around Rybnik and Pszczyna) voted for Poland. The economically most important part of Upper Silesia (the Bytom / Beuthen O.S.–Gliwice / Gleiwitz–Katowice / Kattowitz triangle) voted for the Weimar Republic, but not with a clear majority. The urban population voted for the latter, the rural population for Poland.¹⁰⁷ Thus, it was impossible to comply with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles fully, under which the municipality was to belong to the country that received the majority in the plebiscite. The plebiscite commission dealt with this problem and submitted two proposals to the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris on April 30th. The British and Italian representatives proposed annexing the triangle mentioned above to the Weimar Republic and le Rond to Poland.¹⁰⁸

One day later, Korfanty announced in one of the newspapers that Upper Silesia would be divided according to the plan of the British and Italian representatives. It is clear that the Conference of Ambassadors had not yet had time to consider the two proposals of the plebiscite commissioners. Still, the announcement led to a third Silesian uprising.¹⁰⁹ This began in early May when Polish insurgents took up positions along the border of Upper Silesia with Poland, from which reinforcements had arrived. If Brendan Karch's figures are to be believed, about 50,000 pro-Polish fighters and 35,000 pro-German fighters were involved in the fighting, and about 4,000 people died.¹¹⁰ The pro-Polish side was on the offensive in the first days. Thus, by May 6th, it had advanced to the west of the border proposed by Le Rond. The indecisiveness of the Allied troops played into its hands; only Italian troops attempted to put down the uprising, suffering 20 casualties (British troops were no longer in Upper Silesia at this point, having returned in mid-May, and French troops did not intervene). The plebiscite police also disbanded. The German side reacted more forcefully in the second half of May when the German Chancellor authorized the intervention of the paramilitary forces. On May 21st, a skirmish broke out near Annaberg, after which the pro-Polish troops began to withdraw. The Entente troops managed to calm the situation by July 7th. After that, the Polish side controlled one-third of Upper Sile-

¹⁰⁶Tooley, "German Political Violence", p. 88.

¹⁰⁷Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", pp. 372–373; Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁸Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", pp. 375–376.

¹⁰⁹Tooley, "German Political Violence", pp. 94–95.

¹¹⁰Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 142.



The Partition of Upper Silesia after the plebiscite (Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, p. 145)

sia (the eastern and southeastern parts, which were mainly industrial), while the German side controlled the remaining part.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Tooley, "German Political Violence", pp. 95–96.

The League of Nations finally drew the border in Upper Silesia. The differing views of French Prime Minister Aristide Briand and British Prime Minister Lloyd George (the latter also had the support of Italy) had to be overcome, which became visible in Paris¹¹² between August 8th and 12th, 1921. Both were aware of the need to divide Upper Silesia but disagreed on dividing the industrial triangle. After negotiations broke down, the two main actors at the meeting agreed to leave the question of border settlement to the League of Nations.¹¹³

The League of Nations instructed the non-permanent members of the Council of the League of Nations, which at that time included Brazil, China, Belgium, and Spain, to draw up a plan for the demarcation of Upper Silesia and commissioned Swiss and Czechoslovak experts to study the problem. On October 12th, the border proposal was adopted and forwarded to the Supreme Council. The proposal was to divide the industrial triangle between the two countries and to set up a special commission composed of equal numbers of Poles and Germans to deal with minority and economic issues (mechanisms were to be created to enable Upper Silesia to function, at least temporarily, as a single economic area). The Weimar Republic was to receive 70% of Upper Silesian territory. The more prosperous part in terms of industry and mining would belong to Poland.¹¹⁴ This proposal was approved by the Conference of Ambassadors three days later. At the end of October 1921, it was also accepted by the Weimar Republic and Poland. They signed an agreement on the partition of Upper Silesia on May 15, 1922, which the parliaments of both countries ratified at the end of the same month. In June of the same year, the troops of the Entente countries left Upper Silesia.¹¹⁵

Sopron

The historical development of Sopron is directly linked to the territory of the present Austrian province of Burgenland. Since the arrival of the Hungarians in the Pannonian Plain at the end of the 9th century, it was a border area between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Holy Roman Empire or the Duchy of Austria.

¹¹²The British Ambassador to France, Charles Hardinge, played an important role in bringing about the meeting in the first half of August 1921. More on his role in J. Douglas Goold, "Lord Hardinge as Ambassador to France, and the Anglo-French Dilemma over Germany and the Near East, 1920–1922", *The Historical Journal* 21, No. 4 (1978), pp. 917–920.

¹¹³Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", pp. 380–382.

¹¹⁴Peter Polak-Springer, "Landscapes of Revanchism: Building and the Contestation of Space in an Industrial Polish-German Borderlands, 1922–1945", *Central European History* 45, No. 3 (2012), pp. 488–489.

¹¹⁵Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia", pp. 382–386; Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, pp. 142–143.

In the course of the Middle Ages, Hungary gained control over the area. After the Hungarian defeat by the Ottomans at the Battle of Mohacs and the death of the last Jagiellonian king in 1526, the border areas were placed under the same ruler, the Habsburg Ferdinand I. From then until 1918, they were united under the same ruler.¹¹⁶

As far as the population structure is concerned, at the beginning of the 19th century, most of what is now Burgenland was German-speaking, but most of the land was owned by Hungarian nobles. A significant Slavic element was also present. After 1867 and the founding of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the area became increasingly Magyarised, but this was not reflected in the 1910 census. The historian Joseph Imre notes that three-quarters of the population were German-speaking, of which one-third spoke Hungarian. 15.2% were Croats, and only 8.4% were Hungarian speakers, but they were the majority in the towns.¹¹⁷ This was not the case in Sopron, where 51% of the population was German-speaking and 44.3% Hungarian-speaking, according to the Austrian historian Arnold Suppan who is referring to the same census. Of the eight villages included in the plebiscite, six were predominantly German-speaking, one Croatian and one Hungarian.¹¹⁸

After the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a demarcation problem arose between the newly founded Republic of German-Austria and the Republic of Hungary. Most of the planned border ran through the territory of today's Burgenland. On November 18, 1918, the Austrian government declared that it would demand the annexation of those parts of the former Hungarian counties where the German population was concentrated at the Peace Conference. These were the counties of Bratislava, Mosonmagyaróvár, Sopron and Vas. The declaration of the Austrian Parliament confirmed this on November 22nd. The decision was based on the national structure of these territories and their geographical and economic ties with Austria. The requested area would be of considerable importance from a nutritional point of view, as it would help to ensure a better food supply. The Austrian government also invoked the principle of self-determination in its request by having a delegation of the population of the counties mentioned above convey their wish for annexation to Austria. On the other hand, Hungary considered autonomy for

¹¹⁶ Joseph Imre, "Burgenland and the Austria-Hungary Border Dispute in International Perspective, 1918–1922", *Region* 4, No. 2 (2015), pp. 222–223 (hereinafter: Imre, "Burgenland and the Austria-Hungary Border Dispute"). For more on the history of Burgenland, see Fritz Zimmermann, "The Role of Burgenland in the History of the Habsburg Monarchy", *Austrian History Yearbook* 8 (1972), pp. 7–38.

¹¹⁷ Imre, "Burgenland and the Austria-Hungary Border Dispute", pp. 223–226.

¹¹⁸ Arnold Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order in Central Europe: Saint-Germain and Trianon, 1919–1920* (Wien, 2019), p. 149 (hereinafter: Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*).

the areas in its western part where the German population was in the majority.¹¹⁹ As mentioned by Suppan, the Austrian Foreign Minister Otto Bauer did not include the demand for the annexation of these territories in the memorandum he presented to the representatives of the Entente countries (and the US) in Vienna on December 25, 1918. Still, Austria later demanded it at the Peace Conference.¹²⁰

Similar to the border demarcation issue between the Kingdom of SHS and Austria, the Americans were the first of the Great Powers to intervene in Burgenland. Much like the Miles Commission of the Coolidge Study Mission in Carinthia and Styria, the latter brought a geographer, Major Lawrence Martin, to the Hungarian-Austrian border to examine the border primarily from a geographical point of view. Based on his findings, Martin argued for the annexation of the German border areas to Austria for economic reasons. He explained that this would help secure Austria's food supply and that many workers from this area came to Austria to work. As for the ethnic composition, Martin found it difficult to determine. He did not advocate a plebiscite but rather the convening of a neutral international commission to investigate the situation on the ground and propose a border on that basis. Coolidge was reluctant to accept Martin's proposal. He agreed that it would be difficult to determine the national structure and therefore toyed with the possibility of a plebiscite. But as March progressed, he leaned more and more towards Martin's border proposal, especially given the establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.¹²¹

At the Paris Peace Conference, the question of the border between Austria and Hungary was raised for the first time in connection with the idea of a "Slavic" corridor between Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of the SHS in February 1919. This idea was not supported by the Committee dealing with the territory of Czechoslovakia, and the debate on it ceased in March of the same year. From May 8th, the foreign ministers began to discuss it more concretely. British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour was the first to remind his counterparts that it would be wise to consider changing the historic border that dated back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the time, he did not receive the support of the other ministers, who decided that the issue should not be separately discussed until Hungary or Austria raised it.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Mari Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland, 1918–1923: A Territorial Question in the Context of National and International Pressure*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä, 2008), pp. 95–96 (hereinafter: Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*).

¹²⁰ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 137.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98–105.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 115–117.

In the following days, Austrian Chancellor Karl Renner considered asking the Entente for permission to occupy the border areas. He justified this based on their ethnic structure and the possibility of Bolshevism in Hungary spreading to Austria and the rest of Europe. The Council of Four decided not to change the border but to intervene on the ground in case of unrest.¹²³ The *Status quo* was reflected in the first draft of the Peace Treaty with Austria, which was presented to Austria on June 2, 1919.¹²⁴

In response to this proposal, on June 10th, the Austrian delegation demanded the territory of the German border areas for Austria based on economic, ethnic, geographical, and historical considerations.¹²⁵ It repeated this demand in a memorandum of June 16th, in which it also referred to the Bolshevik threat in Hungary.¹²⁶ According to the Finnish historian Mari Vares, the reference to the "red" danger from the East became a powerful trump card for the Austrian delegation.¹²⁷

In the first two days of July, the question of the Austro-Hungarian border was discussed at length in the Supreme Council of the Conference, with Britain and the US supporting the Austrian claim to the territories in question and the Italian representative warning of Hungary's heavy losses. On July 20th, a second version of the Peace Treaty with Austria was adopted. In it, Czechoslovakia had pointed out to the Slavic population in the disputed area and was strongly supported in its demands by France, receiving a large part of the territory in the former Bratislava County. Austria received about half of the claimed 5,000 km² border area.¹²⁸ In the last month before signing the Peace Treaty, the Austrian delegation tried to get the entire former Hungarian county of Mosonmagyaróvár for itself. It proposed a referendum on the border areas. Both proposals were rejected at the Peace Conference. In the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, signed on September 10, 1919, the border demarcation remained the same as in the second draft of the Treaty.¹²⁹

If one of the objectives of the Peace Conference was to ensure order in post-war Europe, it achieved the opposite with the demarcation between Hungary and Austria established in the Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Hungary, where a republic (and a kingdom after March 1920) had been re-established after the defeat of the Bolshevik formation, refused to withdraw its army from the territory that had been assigned to Austria. There were numerous Hungarian attacks on the local German-speaking population. Austria then repeatedly requested

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 117–120.

¹²⁴ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 138.

¹²⁵ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, p. 126.

¹²⁶ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 138.

¹²⁷ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 126–129.

¹²⁸ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, pp. 139–140.

¹²⁹ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 145–151.

the arrival of an Entente army to bring order, but to no avail. On October 2, 1919, it was decided in Paris that an inter-allied commission should come to the area, but this did not happen until the end of the year.¹³⁰

On January 31, 1920, Renner and the Hungarian Ambassador Gustav Gratz met in Vienna and the Hungarian side proposed a plebiscite. Should the population decide in favor of annexation to Hungary, they would receive several benefits, including autonomous status. Renner rejected the proposal on the grounds that the plebiscite could not be held because of Hungarian violence. As Vares notes, Austria would only have favored holding a plebiscite if it had guaranteed its administration in the disputed area. On February 19th, the Austrian Parliament also rejected the Hungarian proposal for a plebiscite.¹³¹

At the time of the talks between Gratz and Renner, a peace treaty with Hungary had not yet been concluded. The victorious countries discussed it in the first half of 1920. The most important decision regarding the further development of the border between Austria and Hungary was not to change the border established in the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, as this could have jeopardized the Treaty with Austria and, on the other hand, the stabilization of the same.¹³²

On February 2, 1920, the Conference of Ambassadors sent an inter-allied military commission to Sopron. Austria and Hungary were also represented. The Austrian side, which wanted to gain effective control over the territory assigned to it as quickly as possible, made several attempts to take advantage of the Commission's activities. Especially between July and September 1920, it repeatedly reported Hungarian violence against the Austrian population to the Entente countries.¹³³ The Conference of Ambassadors did not react particularly strongly until December 22, 1920, when it transferred the administration of the disputed territory to the Inter-Allied Commission in Sopron.¹³⁴

This decision hurt Hungary, but it did not wholly give up the struggle for the disputed territory. It entered into negotiations with Austria. The bilateral agreement was supported by the Conference of Ambassadors, which warned the negotiators on February 24, 1921, not to jeopardize the foundations of the peace treaties. At three meetings between the end of February and May 25, 1921, Hungary offered its western neighbor economic benefits and autonomy for the entire German population, but Austria rejected the proposals. The latter was not supported by some important local politicians and grandees of German origin but who took a pro-Hungarian stance.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, pp. 141–142.

¹³¹ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 175–176.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 179 and 192–193.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–205.

¹³⁴ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 143.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 143–144.

At the end of July 1921, the Conference of Ambassadors announced that it would allow only minor changes in the borders compared to the provisions of the peace treaties. On July 26th, the two sides exchanged ratifications of the Treaty of Trianon.¹³⁶ The disputed territory was divided into three zones (A, B, and C). While Hungary vacated Zones A and C, it refused to do so in Zone B, where Sopron was located. There it began to reinforce its paramilitary forces. After repeated unsuccessful calls for Hungarian troops to withdraw, the Conference of Ambassadors issued an ultimatum on September 22nd, demanding that Hungary vacate the zone within ten days or face action. It did not specify what those measures would be.¹³⁷

Hungary benefited from its policy of disregarding the Paris decisions. After repeated Austrian protests, diplomatic representatives of Italy, France, and the United Kingdom called on the leaders of the Austrian state to seek, as Suppan writes, reasonable and cautious solutions with its eastern neighbor.¹³⁸ This response made it clear that the superpowers had no intention of making any significant effort to resolve the conflict. However, Czechoslovakia and Italy wanted to intervene and strengthen their power in Central Europe by mediating between the two countries in the conflict. Italy was more successful in this. The result of its interference was the Venice Protocol of October 13, 1921. In it, the Hungarian side agreed to withdraw its paramilitary troops from the disputed area and place the territory under the Austrian administration. The latter agreed to hold a referendum in Sopron and the surrounding villages. The popular vote was to take place eight days after the Allied Generals' Commission, which had already been in Sopron, confirmed that Austria had successfully established the administration of the occupied territory. The Conference of Ambassadors confirmed the provisions of the Venice Protocol on October 27th, thus giving the green light for the holding of the plebiscite.¹³⁹

The Commission was concerned about the lack of Entente troops to maintain order in the plebiscite area. The Conference of Ambassadors partially complied and decided to send 50 Entente troops from Upper Silesia, and Austrian and Hungarian troops were allowed on the ground until December 12th. The Hungarian paramilitaries left the area on November 16th. The dates for the plebiscite were set by the Conference of Ambassadors and confirmed by the Generals' Commission. On December 14th, the vote took place in Sopron, the following day in one of the surrounding villages, and on December 16th in the remaining villages.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 145.

¹³⁷ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 228–234.

¹³⁸ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 146.

¹³⁹ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 235–250.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 256–265; Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 147.

On November 5th, the Generals' Commission drew up instructions for preparing the electoral lists. These were based on the provisions of the Treaty of Saint-Germain on the conduct of the Carinthian plebiscite. All inhabitants of the plebiscite area who were born there and had reached the age of 20 by January 1, 1921, and had not lost their national or political rights were eligible to vote. Anyone who had moved to the area before January 1, 1918, was also entitled to vote.¹⁴¹

The Austrian side pointed out that the voting had been held too quickly. Too little time had passed before the Hungarian troops had left the area and Austria could effectively begin exercising its administration. The preparation of the electoral lists that the Hungarian institutions had submitted to the Generals' Commission was also objected to. On December 13th, the Austrian Chancellor Johannes Schober informed the Generals' Commission that the Austrian side would not participate in the vote, the Austrian representative would leave the Commission, and Austria would not recognize the plebiscite results. The Austrian Parliament confirmed this the next day.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, a plebiscite was held between December 14th and 16th, in which Hungary won a majority (72.8%) in the city of Sopron and Austria a narrow lead in the surrounding villages. Overall, 65.1% voted for Hungary and 34.9% for Austria. According to Suppan and Vares, this result was due to the pro-Hungarian attitude of the city's inhabitants and its historical ties with Hungary, and not so much due to the nationality or language of the voters.¹⁴³ The Austrian side did not oppose the results for too long, and Hungary took over the administration of the acquired territory on January 1, 1922.¹⁴⁴

Similarities and Differences of Individual Characteristics of the Plebiscite Areas in Question

As can be seen, the population structure of all the territories where the plebiscites in question were held was multinational, which was an important reason for the decision of the victorious powers of the First World War to hold them. In Schleswig, Danes had a clear majority in Zone 1, and Germans had a clear majority in Zone 2, which was ultimately reflected in the outcome. The same was true in Kwidzyn, where the German population was in the majority, but not in Olsztyn, where the Polish-speaking population was in the majority. Howe-

¹⁴¹ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 265–266.

¹⁴² Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, pp. 147–148.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 149; Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary / Burgenland*, pp. 266–267.

¹⁴⁴ Suppan, *The Imperialist Peace Order*, p. 150.

ver, they did not identify themselves with the Polish national movement but rather with their historical attachment to the German state, with the Lutheran religion also playing an important role. This meant that the voters overwhelmingly voted for Weimar Germany. In the case of the Klagenfurt Basin, national affiliation also did not play a decisive role in the plebiscite outcome. In Zone A, the Slovene-speaking population was in the majority. Still, it was firmly rooted in a regional identity and emphasized an economic attachment to the local centers, especially Klagenfurt. In the case of Upper Silesia, a clear ethnic division was even more challenging to draw despite the weak Polish majority, as the German population was strongly represented in towns that were only of local importance. In the plebiscite area of Sopron, there was a weak German majority, but the local leaders were pro-Hungarian, which had a significant impact on the outcome of the vote. The mixed population structure was not the only factor in the plebiscites. In the case of Schleswig, the plebiscite was about a historically disputed area between Denmark and its southern neighbor. Economic considerations significantly influenced the votes in the Klagenfurt Basin and Upper Silesia; the votes in Kwidzyn were influenced by the decision of the Great Powers that the Polish state should have access to the sea.

As far as the events leading up to the plebiscites are concerned, the areas can be divided into two categories. In Schleswig, Kwidzyn, and Olsztyn, there were no significant tensions between members of different nationalities. The situation was different in the Klagenfurt Basin and Upper Silesia, where there were substantial clashes. Clashes also occurred in Burgenland, but only after signing the Treaty of Saint-Germain, which can be seen as paradoxical. Peace treaties are supposed to reduce tensions, but in this case, it was the trigger for them. On the other hand, in all cases except the Sopron case, the peace treaties specified the plebiscites and their organization within certain limits (in the Sopron case, the plebiscite resulted from bilateral agreements between Austria and Hungary and mediation by Italy). In all cases, the plebiscite was organized by an international commission whose main objective was to ensure fair, free, and secret voting. This meant, especially in the case of the Carinthian plebiscite, that it could take some of the measures otherwise provided for in the Peace Treaty. Under the peace treaties, the administration of plebiscite areas was taken into their own hands, with the local population supporting them. At the same time, order was maintained mainly by police units composed of locals and, in some cases, by Allied troops, which did their job rather bad in Upper Silesia. All the plebiscite commissions were composed of an Italian, a French, and a British representative, except for Schleswig, where there was also a Norwegian and a Swedish member in addition to the French and British representatives. Although an American representative was also appointed in some places, this was not realized, as the US had not yet ratified the peace

treaties at that time. The type of vote also varied. In the case of the Klagenfurt Basin, Sopron, and Schleswig Zone 1, the results of the entire voting area were taken into account. In contrast, in the other cases, the results of the individual municipalities were used. This proved problematic in Upper Silesia, where no clear line could be drawn, as the urban population voted overwhelmingly for Weimar Germany and the rural population for Poland. This led to violence after the vote. Entente troops calmed the situation down, and the League of Nations decided the final border demarcation. In the other plebiscite areas, implementation was unproblematic.¹⁴⁵ It should be added that in the case of the Carinthian plebiscite, the Yugoslav army did enter the lost Zone A but left it again in less than ten days.

From this, we can conclude that the plebiscites successfully fixed the problematic borders in Europe for at least 20 years. The outbreak and the end of the Second World War changed the political map of Europe once again. Nevertheless, the borders resulting from the plebiscites in Schleswig, the Klagenfurt Basin, and Sopron are still in force today. At the same time, the territories of Upper Silesia, Kwidzyn, and Olsztyn were ceded to Poland after the Second World War. Thus, the popular will expressed in 1920 and 1921 became an irrelevant factor in the diplomatic game of the Great Powers.

Janez Osojnik in Aleš Maver

PLEBISCITI V EVROPI PO PRVI SVETOVNI VOJNI

POVZETEK

V članku so obravnavani plebisciti, ki so bili v Evropi izvedeni v letih po prvi svetovni vojni, natančneje v letih 1920 in 1921. Potekali so na območju Schleswiga, mest Kwidzyn / Marienwerder in Olsztyn / Allenstein s širšo okolico,

¹⁴⁵ In the case of the Carinthian plebiscite, there was a minimal change in 1922, when the municipality of Libeliče successfully protested against the annexation to Austria and was assigned to the Kingdom of SHS (Marjan Linasi and Marjan Kos, *Carinthian Plebiscite: Southeastern Carinthia in the Revolution of 1918–1920* (Slovenj Gradec, 2020), pp. 58–62).

Celovške kotline, Zgornje Šlezije in v mestu Šopron. Kronološko so bili izvedeni v naštetem vrstnem redu, se pravi, najprej v Schleswigu in nazadnje v Šopronu. Vsi so bili izvedeni kot sredstvo novega zarisovanja meja na območjih, kjer je bilo to težavno zaradi njihove večnacionalne strukture, pa tudi gospodarskih, geografskih in zgodovinskih dejavnikov. Tako so se velesile zmagovalke prve svetovne vojne v nekaterih primerih odločile za instrument ljudskega glasovanja, ki v zgodovini ni bil novost, a je bil takrat prvič uporabljen v večji meri. Na vseh območjih, kjer so bili plebisciti izvedeni, je šlo za ozemlja z multitehtično strukturo, a so bili poleg nje pri določanju meje pomembni še gospodarski, geografski in zgodovinski vidiki. V Schleswigu je imela v con 1 izrazito večino Danska, v con 2 pa Weimarska Nemčija, kar se je na koncu izražalo tudi v rezultatu. Podobno velja za območje Kwidzyna, kjer je bilo nemško prebivalstvo v večini, ne pa tudi za Olsztyn, kjer je (sicer s skromno večino) prevladovalo poljsko govoreče prebivalstvo, a se to ni identificiralo s poljskim nacionalnim gibanjem, temveč je bolj stavilo na zgodovinsko navezanost na nemško državo, pomembno vlogo pri tem je imela tudi luteranska veroizpoved dela poljsko govorečega prebivalstva. To je pomenilo, da so glasovalci v veliki večini glasovali za Weimarsko Nemčijo, k čemur je nazadnje prispeval še trenutno slab položaj Poljske v sovjetsko-poljski vojni. Tudi v primeru Celovške kotline nacionalna pripadnost ni bila edini motiv za glasovanje, kar je slovenska oziroma južnoslovanska agitacija v veliki meri prezrla. V con A je bilo slovensko govoreče prebivalstvo v večini, a je bila pri njem močno zakoreninjena deželna zavest, pa tudi gospodarska navezanost na tamkajšnje centre, zlasti Celovec. V primeru Zgornje Šlezije je bilo jasno narodnostno ločnico še najtežje povleči kljub šibki poljski večini zaradi močne prisotnosti nemškega življa v mestih, ki so bila le lokalnega pomena. V plebiscitnem območju Šoprona je obstajala šibka nemška večina, a so bili tamkajšnji veljaki promadžarsko usmerjeni, kar je pomembno vplivalo na rezultat glasovanj. Mešana prebivalstvena struktura pa ni bila edini faktor za izvedbo plebiscitov. V primeru Schleswiga je šlo za zgodovinsko sporno ozemlje med Dansko in njeno južno sosedo, na glasovanje v Celovski kotlini in Zgornji Šleziji so pomembno vplivali gospodarski razlogi, na referendum v Kwidzynu pa odločitev velesil, da mora imeti poljska država omogočen dostop do morja. Državam zmagovalkam prve svetovne vojne so v primeru Celovške kotline, Zgornje Šlezije in Šoprona težave povzročali spopadi na terenu med pretendentoma za navedeno območje. V Zgornji Šleziji jih nekajkrat niso zmogle preprečiti niti zavezniške enote, prisotne na terenu. V primeru Šoprona je delovanje madžarskih paravojaških enot posredno privedlo do ljudskega glasovanja, saj ta ni bil predviden v senžermenski in trianonski mirovni pogodbi, ampak je do odločitve za njegovo izvedbo prišlo kasneje, pri tem pa je imela pomembno vlogo Italija kot mediatorica. V bistvu je do nasilja prišlo šele po podpisu senžermenske pogodbe, kar lahko razumemo kot para-

doksalno. Mirovne pogodbe naj bi skrbele za umiritev napetosti, v tem primeru pa je bila taka pogodba njihov sprožilec. Preostala glasovanja so bila predvidena v mirovnih pogodbah, kjer sta bili okvirno opredeljena tudi njihova izvedba in uprava plebiscitnega ozemlja, ki jo je v svoje roke prevzela mednarodna plebiscitna komisija. V njej so bili v vseh primerih razen Schleswiga po en predstavnik Francije, Velike Britanije in Italije (v primeru določanja dansko-nemške meje sta bila v komisiji švedski in norveški predstavnik, ni pa bilo italijanskega, v primeru Celovške kotline pa sta bila v njej še avstrijski in jugoslovanski predstavnik, ki sta imela le posvetovalno funkcijo). Glavna naloga plebiscitnih komisij je bila zagotovitev svobodnega, poštenega in tajnega glasovanja, pri tem pa je morala sprejemati ukrepe, ki so to zagotavljali, kar je v nekaterih primerih poželo kritike ene izmed strani. To je zelo razvidno v primeru koroškega plebiscita v Celovški kotlini, ko je jugoslovanski predstavnik večkrat izražal nesoglasje z odločitvami, s čimer se je postal tarča kritik drugih kolegov, češ da ovira delo komisije. V primeru Celovške kotline, Šoprona in schleswiške cone 1 so se pri dodelitvi ozemlja upoštevali rezultate celotnega glasovalnega območja, medtem ko v preostalih primerih rezultati po občinah. To se je kot problematično izkazalo v Zgornji Šleziji, kjer ni bilo moč potegniti jasne meje v industrijskem trikotniku med mesti Gliwice / Gleiwitz, Bytom / Beuthen O.S. in Katowice / Kattowitz, saj je mestno prebivalstvo večinsko glasovalo za Weimarsko Nemčijo, podeželsko pa za Poljsko. To je privedlo do nasilja po koncu glasovanja, ki so ga pomirile antantne vojaške enote, dokončno razmejitev pa so določili organi Lige narodov. Na preostalih plebiscitnih območjih je bila uveljavitev izidov neproblematična. Pri tem je treba dodati, da je v primeru koroškega plebiscita jugoslovanska vojska sicer vdrla v izgubljeno cono A, a jo je zapustila v manj ko desetih dneh. V članku obravnavani plebisciti so uspešno zakoličili problematične meje v Evropi vsaj za slabih 20 let. Izbruh druge svetovne vojne in njen zaključek sta znova spremenila politični zemljevid Evrope. Ne glede na to meje, ki so nastale kot posledica plebiscitov v Schleswigu, Celovški kotlini in Šopronu, veljajo še danes, medtem ko je območja Zgornje Šlezije, Kwidzyna in Olsztyna po drugi svetovni vojni dobila Poljska.

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Izvleček: V članku so obravnavani plebisciti, ki so bili v Evropi izvedeni v letih po prvi svetovni vojni, natančneje v letih 1920 in 1921. Vsi so bili izvedeni za potrebe novega zarisovanja meja na območjih, kjer je bilo to težavno zaradi njihove večnacionalne strukture, pa tudi gospodarskih, geografskih in zgodovinskih dejavnikov. Tako so se velesile zmagovalke prve svetovne vojne v nekaterih primerih odločile za instrument ljudskega glasovanja, ki v zgodovini ni bil novost, a je bil takrat prvič uporabljen bolj številčno. Avtorja v članku predstavitva podobnosti in razlike med obravnavanimi plebisciti.