

# The Evolving Protection of Borders of the Reborn Second Republic of Poland

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**Abstract.** *The Second Republic of Poland, after regaining independence as a new state and creating state structures, faced many serious challenges. Barely formed boundaries required effective protection as soon as possible. An important problem was the process of gradually gaining power over the borders. While its protection system was developing on the western border, regular military operations continued in the east. This task was not facilitated by the incompletely resolved border conflicts and the ethnically patchy population living in the border areas. One of the most serious problems was the lack of experience in protecting the state borders caused by the loss of independence. For the above reasons, the process of developing the border protection system of the Second Polish Republic lasted several years. How difficult that task was is shown by the number of border formations that were brought into existence at that time, subjecting them to various modifications. As a consequence, due to difficult relations between the Republic and neighboring states, the developed system of border protection was not uniform. It also had to face still not fully stabilised situation in Europe.*

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## Introduction

In today's globalised and increasingly universalised world, the concept of a nation acquires particular value. In the simplest of words, one can say that a nation is the culmination of culture and beliefs of a certain number of people. Groups of people with similar characteristics perceive themselves as social unity. It should be noted, however, that cultural identity is as changeable as the culture that defines it. There is no nation that has always been or is defined exclusively in biological terms. The evolving national identity forms communities — nations. The source of the nation's origin is broadly understood culture, such as a common language, ethnic origin or religion. The aforementioned common identity is the basis for the formation of a national identity, i.e. of a pillar which unites the nation. Since a nation as a community inhabits specified territories, those are also a part of its identity — the homeland. It seems that it is only when one refers to the concept of homeland that national identity begins to acquire a more distinct character. What is an inherent feature of most nations is the awareness of the homeland and the relevant spatial reference (geographical location), which determines the sources of the nation's identity historically.

Emerging nations strive to create structures which they can be managed by, and which are the foundations on which the state is based. On the other hand, the state, as a political community, strives to delineate its borders to be separated from others and to consolidate power in the designated territory. Therefore, it is the national identity which is the primary factor creating the prerequisites for the development of the

structure of national borders. Homelands and the borders which they are defined by are not real entities, but they are perceived in the same way as national identity.

The above values are not of a permanent nature. Political geography is subject to alteration, first of all, as a result of conflicts, which often lead to changes in national borders. Borders can be a cause of a conflict or a location where conflicts take place. This is due to the fact that countries which share borders and co-exist in the immediate vicinity are exposed to conflicts, although this is not the only reason, of course. Conflicts, on the other hand, frequently result in border changes. This leads to the assumption that borders are not permanent, but are processes that cannot be finalised. There is no doubt that borders are inextricably linked to social relations, which are political in nature and are constantly changing. Hence, as a socio-spatial creation, the border plays an important role in the formation of human territoriality, and therefore the political maps of the world.

## Main Part

Many a time, history has shown how changeable state borders are, how unstable the existence of the states themselves can be. The state, which is defined, among other things, by borders, is an essential element of international politics, which is very variable and often unpredictable in itself. As Grzegorz Balawajder points out, 'the historical development of the state border proves that it is not a category constant in time and linear in form (...) Along with the development of countries as well as transformations underway within state structures, the border evolves.'<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Republic of Poland is an excellent example of how unstable the borders of the state and its independence are and how much careful attention must be given to those values. In this context, it is worth returning to the eighteenth century, so tragic in its course for the history of the Polish statehood. In the second half of this century, a series of historical events, which to a large extent had been brought about by the negligence of the Polish politics of that time, led to the developments whose consequences were so dramatic for Poland. Not long before, still strong the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth<sup>2</sup>, established by virtue of the Lublin Union, signed in 1569, which the then existing great powers had had to reckon with, was erased from the map of the world for a long time. Within a short time 'three consecutive partitions (1772, 1793, 1795) divided the Polish territories between Prussia, Austria and Russia. The then Duchy of Warsaw (1806–1815) was formed from the Polish lands of the Second and Third Prussian Partition and annexed by an agreement signed in Vienna, ending the war between France and Austria. The Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) divided the Polish lands between Prussia, Austria and Russia. The fall of the January Uprising (1864) resulted in the fall of a certain distinctiveness of the (Congress) Kingdom of Poland, annexed by Russia and proclaimed in 1815'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Balawajder G, *Granica państwa jako kategoria wielowymiarowa. Pogranicze. Polish borderlands studies*, 2013, Vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Agreement concluded on July 1, 1569 at the General Assembly in Lublin between the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

<sup>3</sup> Szreniawski J, *Wybrane zagadnienia tworzenia i roli granic państwowych, Administracja. Teoria — Dydaktyka — Praktyka*, Vol. 3 (32), p. 8.

Such a state lasted continuously for more than a century. One hundred and twenty-three years of non-existence of the Polish state affected several generations of Polish people, but did not extinguish the aspirations for national liberation. It was known that in order for the state to reappear on the maps of Europe, a considerable reconfiguration of pro-Polish forces, on the international, and in particular on the European political scene, would have to take place. As pointed out by Jerzy Topolski, 'the awareness that Poland's independence can only be brought about by changes in the international balance of power, above all by the political disintegration of the Holy Alliance (i.e. the camp of the partitioning states), had already been very clear even before the January Uprising'.<sup>4</sup> Such a chance appeared with the outbreak of the First World War, when 'finally the camp of the invaders was broken up, as expected. And although it was a positive fact for the Polish question, the idea that the victorious side in the future war (and thus also one or two invaders) would not want to resign from the Polish lands (at least in part), and this contradicted the obvious idea of rebuilding the state within the former borders.'<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, the efforts of the Poles to rebuild the state that had been lost, the source of which, despite the efforts of the invaders, was the sense of national identity, had a significant influence on the decisions made during the design of the new map of Europe. The power of this will is described by Jerzy Topolski: 'the twentieth century fulfilled the hopes of many generations of Poles, providing them with a rebuilt state. However, it did not result from any logic of history or historical justice in which these generations believed, but from a happy coincidence of circumstances, i.e. events in the international arena favourable for Polish plans. Had it not been for them, all the already known actions, as well as will and struggle would be to no avail. But when this coincidence of events became a fact, the will to have a rebuilt state and to prepare for such a possibility turned out to be necessary. Without these preparations and without this state of mind, even these happy series of events for the Polish matter would not have been enough for Polish political freedom to really burst out during the First World War.'<sup>6</sup>

In 1918 Poland was restored after a long period of captivity. Many countries recognised this fact quite quickly by diplomatic means, but 'the recognition of the Polish state by the former occupying states was of particular importance. Diplomatic relations with Austria were already established on the 11th of November 1918 and with Germany on the 21st of November 1918. Soviet Russia proposed an exchange of diplomatic representatives on the 27th of November 1918. The allied and associated States participating in the Versailles Peace Conference have impliedly recognised on 15th January 1919, allowing its representatives to participate in the deliberations. The official recognition by these countries was as follows: by the United States of America on 30th January 1919, by France on 23rd February 1919, by the United Kingdom on 25th February 1919, by Italy on 27th February 1919.'<sup>7</sup>

Although the restoration of Poland was widely recognised by the international community, the issue of its borders was not so obvious anymore. The extremely difficult process of establishing the course of Polish borders lasted nearly five years.

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<sup>4</sup> Topolski J, *Polska dwudziestego wieku 1914–1994*. Poznań, 1994, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Bardach J, Leśnodorski B, Pietrzak M, *Historia ustroju i prawa polskiego*. 4th Ed. Warsaw, 1999, pp. 464–465.

The situation that took shape in post-war Europe did not give a chance to restore the borders from before the annexations. The further shape of Europe's borders was determined by the victorious coalition, in which 'the main allied and associated powers: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Japan formed the Supreme Council, the leading body of the Paris Peace Conference (...). Despite the adoption of the principle of national self-determination as a guiding principle, which required national borders to coincide with the territorial scope of a given nationality, the decisions of the conference were largely determined by the economic interests and geopolitical concepts of the victorious powers.'<sup>8</sup> The western and northern borders were most quickly established by a peace treaty with Germany (1919). However, already in the Olsztyn and Kwidzyna districts (East Prussia) and Upper Silesia, in accordance with the provisions of the treaty, plebiscites were held to give the resident population the opportunity to express their opinion on nationality (joining Poland or Germany). The outcome of both plebiscites was not favourable for the Polish cause.

Due to determination and commitment of the Polish population (the third Silesian Uprising), the Council of Ambassadors of the great powers decided to divide Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland. The southern border of Poland (Eastern Galicia) was indirectly defined by a peace treaty with Austria (1919). The remaining part of the southern border in Cieszyn Silesia was not without disputes. The dispute over the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia caused a long-lasting conflict between these countries. Despite the settlements, it was not possible to reach a consensus on this issue. Ultimately, the border was delineated as a result of arbitration by the great powers. By virtue of a decision of the Council of Ambassadors (1920), the territory of Cieszyn Silesia was divided between the two countries. The issue of territorial affiliation of Spisz and Orawa was also regulated. Further disputes with Czechoslovakia and offensive actions of the Polish government resulted in the accession to Poland of two thirds of the current territory of Cieszyn Silesia beyond Olza.<sup>9</sup> However, the most complicated issue was the eastern border of the newly revived Poland. The temporary eastern border established by the great powers (1919) did not gain the approval of the Polish government. Running according to the territorial range of Polish nationality, coinciding to a large extent with the territorial range of the former Kingdom of Poland did not correspond to any of the Polish concepts of building a new state (federalive, incorporative). Further developments led to a war with Soviet Russia (1919–1920). The war, 'the culmination of which was the victorious battle of Warsaw for the Polish army, ended with a peace treaty in Riga (1921). A significant number of Ukrainians and Belarusians, who constitute the majority of the total population in part of the eastern areas, were left behind by the eastern border of Poland established by this treaty.'<sup>10</sup> The border issue between Poland and Lithuania was still not resolved. The point of conflict was the national belonging of the Vilnius region. As a result of many political and military actions, these areas were incorporated into the Polish state. In 1923, by a resolution of the Council of Ambassadors of the great powers of 1923, the eastern and northern borders of Poland were recognised in the international arena (Fig. 1).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>9</sup> See more: Topolski J, pp. 55–61.

<sup>10</sup> Bardach J, Leśnodorski B, Pietrzak M, *Historia ustroju...*, p. 467.

**Figure 1. The Republic of Poland. Nationalities, CARTE**



Source: <http://wlczpolske.pl/index.php?etap=10&i=1242&nomenu=1>, accessed: 02.08.2018.

The borders of the Second Polish Republic were formed in an extremely turbulent and intricate manner. Finally, as a result of many processes, ‘the total length of the borders of the Second Polish Republic until 1938 was 5,534 km (the borders stabilised in 1922). In terms of area — 388, 634 km<sup>2</sup> (...) the longest part of the border was between Poland and Germany, with the length of 1, 912 km, including 1, 305 km on the western border and 607 km on the border with East Prussia (...).The section shorter by 500 km was the border with the USSR (the total length of 1, 412 km), thus constituting ¼ of the total length of the Polish state borders (...) 984 km for the border with Czechoslovakia, Lithuania 507, Romania 349, with the Free City of Gdańsk 121 (...) and Latvia only 109 km. The sea border was only 140 km (2.5% of the total length of the border), and not including Hel, the coast covered only 60 km.’<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Solarz M.W, Poland — a few remarks on border development, territorial cohesion and geopolitical changes in the years 1667–2014, *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis Folia Geographica Socio-Oeconomica*, 2014. Vol.17, pp. 170–171.

The borders shaped in this way also caused a number of problems related to their safety. As Marcin Wojciech Solarz notices, 'the outlined change in terms of the nature of borders was only apparently beneficial. Although the borders with friendly countries already amounted to 730 km (13% of the total — Latvia, Romania, Hungary), but with clearly unfriendly ones still 3,919 km (70.6% — Germany, the USSR, Lithuania). In addition, the former were still bordering Poland rather through the appearances of its territory, and at the same time the nature of a significant section of the border line in the south (with the exception of the section at the level of Transcarpathian Russia) changed to a disadvantage, which eventually changed from the border with Poland reluctant to Czechoslovakia into an openly hostile state (...) In connection with the Polish-Soviet border it was already 4, 050 km (73% of the total), even an aggressively hostile border.'<sup>12</sup>

Such an extremely complicated and difficult territorial situation of Poland brought about a number of challenges for the reborn state, one of the most important of which was border protection. It should be emphasized that 'since its creation, the Polish state has been exposed for the first few years to threats that affected its internal security. This was due to the fact that communist organisations and spying activities on the part of other countries were quite strong. Their subversive, criminal and anti-state actions were quite frequent. It was only after 1926 that a decrease in similar actions was observed. Among the most exposed to similar activities there were areas where national minorities were present. In particular, this applied to Ukrainians, but also Belarusians, Germans, Lithuanians and Russians (...) An important task to be carried out (...) was to prevent people from other neighbouring countries, who acted against the Polish administration, from entering the territory of Poland. A particularly difficult situation occurred on the border with Bolshevik Russia, and later with the Soviet Union.'<sup>13</sup>

The aim of counteracting these threats was to a large extent to create new structures of state administration as soon as possible. As Andrzej Misiuk points out, 'in November 1918, the territorial scope of power of central state administration authorities, including the Ministry of Interior, at that time was limited to the lands of the Kingdom of Poland. Therefore, the creation of local government administration was limited for objective reasons. The shape and character of this administration was primarily influenced by the appointment of authorities in the local administration of the first and second instance. On 2 August 1919, the Sejm passed a temporary act on the organisation of administrative authorities of the second instance in the form of provinces. Several days later, on the basis of an ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 28 August 1919, county administrative authorities were appointed as bodies of first instance — starosts, who replaced the current heads of county administration — government commissioners. The starost was appointed by the Minister of the Interior, but was directly subordinate to the provincial governor. He exercised his authority in the area with the help of the district office — the starost office. Just like a provincial governor in a province, the

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172–173.

<sup>13</sup> Lorek M, Pawlikowicz L, Surowiec K, *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe i wewnętrzne — teoria i praktyka na przykładzie wybranych zagadnień w drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)*. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. XVIII, 20 (3/2013), pp. 95–96.

starost in the county was responsible for the administrative board and the state of security and public order in the county.<sup>14</sup> The competences of both bodies are specified in the executive regulations to the aforementioned Acts. Matters related to the protection of public security, including border protection, were assigned to the starost.

According to Mariusz Kur, 'Poland is not in the best geopolitical configuration. Both from the East and the West we bordered on countries that shared Polish lands more than 120 years ago. Now, after regaining independence, Poland was still a covetous bite, which was appetizingly looked at from the right, from the left. We had to choose the right variant of border protection and set up formations that would be able to implement this undertaking effectively. Basically, we had to develop our own Polish model, based on various border experiences.'<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the complex problem of protecting the Polish borders required that this task should be carried out directly by specialised and prepared for it forces, which was not a simple matter in the circumstances of the time. It should be remembered, however, that due to the several years of the process of shaping Polish borders, the newly formed forces did not immediately protect the entire border of the Polish state. Depending on the period in which they were taking care of them, they were gradually surrounded by established borders. As mentioned above, the western and southern borders were established as the earliest, then the northern and eastern ones at the latest.

A serious problem has become a lack of experience in the field of protection of the state border. Over a hundred years of partitions erased the past, and even the geopolitical situation and the threats were quite different from those before the loss of the Polish independence. Ideas on the establishment of a new border guard service were based on solutions implemented by the partitioning powers. However, they were very diverse in nature. As Henryk Dominiczak notes 'Polish organisers had to choose between three border protection systems.' Opinions regarding the choice were divided. However, supported by Piłsudski, the voice of the military outweighed. The military representatives recognised that in the case of Poland the most suitable model will be one of the Russian border guards. The burning borders should be protected by a thriving service organised in a military way, well-armed, trained and disciplined, able to secure borders not only in terms of economic and customs but above all, military and political issues. This was required by the interest of the young state.<sup>16</sup>

Just determined strips of the western and southern boundary had been originally entrusted for protection to the Military and Economic Guard. However, it did not last long, but only less than two months in the time from October to December 1918. Already in September 1918, the Regency Council began work on creating a service intended to protect borders. The guard was planned to be set up at the

<sup>14</sup> Misiuk A, Rola i miejsce administracji spraw wewnętrznych w systemie władzy państwowej II Rzeczypospolitej. *Zeszyty Prawnicze UKSW*, 2011, Vol. 11/3, pp. 277–278.

<sup>15</sup> Kur M, Formacje ochrony granic Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej na przykładzie Straży Granicznej i Korpusu ochrony Pogranicza. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo My Book, 2012, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Dominiczak H, Zarys kształtowania systemu ochrony granicy południowo-zachodniej od początku powstania Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej do utworzenia w 1928 roku Straży Granicznej (Geneza SG), [in:] Gosławska-Hrychorczuk A (Ed.), 80 rocznica powstania Straży Granicznej II Rzeczypospolitej, Vol. 1. Warsaw–Kętrzyn: 2008, p. 63.

Ministry of Supply, however, its jurisdiction was to be two-fold. Its activity was to be subjected to the Ministry of Supply, but as regards the organisation to the Ministry of War. The staff was recruited from the First Polish Infantry Brigade. The field of its primary tasks was to secure the areas controlled by the Polish authorities against the mass export of goods. For this purpose, the guard conducted control of the freight traffic on railways and at the checkpoints. It was also responsible for combating speculation, usury and exploitation.<sup>17</sup> However, the guard did not manage to achieve its full readiness.

At the same time when an attempt was made to create the Military and Economic Guard, efforts were made to establish the Fiscal Guard Corps at the Ministry of Treasury. The Corps was supposed to have similar competencies to the Military and Economic Guard, what led to a sharp conflict between ministries.<sup>18</sup>

However, in December the same year, by virtue of a decree signed by Józef Piłsudski and Jędrzej Moraczewski, the Border Guard was created. This service was organised in line with the military model, with the possibility to be used any time in case of regular military operations. The guard comprised soldiers from the Polish military units, seconded by the Ministry of Military Affairs. Simultaneously, next to the Border Guard, the Fiscal Guard was created. As Henryk Dominiczak emphasises: 'Border Guard, although still subjected to the Ministry of Military Affairs, which provided its equipment, was placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Provision that was to manage the service in the operational sphere at the borders. The orders emphasised that the service had to cooperate with the Fiscal Guard, protect borders in military terms, combat illegal import and export of foodstuffs and protect stores and depots of foodstuffs as well as depots of basic necessities. However, the regulations stressed that the Border Guards creates a corps, which in terms of military training, combat readiness and discipline shall be subjected to the Ministry of Military Affairs and in terms of performance of special tasks related to border protection to the Ministry of Provision.'<sup>19</sup>

A dynamically shaping situation of the Polish borders, generating a number of problems related to their safety, caused the subsequent changes in their protection. In 1919, the Border Guard was managed only by the Ministry of Military Affairs, and the service was renamed into the Military Border Guard. The scope of its tasks did not substantially change, but special emphasis was put on the military protection of the border inviolability. Manning and supply of equipment speeded up after granting to Poland the territory referred to in the Treaty of Versailles. Till the first quarter of 1920, the entire Polish-German border was covered with posts of the Military Border Guards. Then this process was continued at the border in the southern part of the country.

As the situation on the borders was still unstable, the need for reorganisation of the existing solutions was raised. On 3 March 1920, the existing Military Border Guard was renamed Border Shooters, as a service subjected to the Ministry of Military Affairs. The tasks related to the security of the state border were entirely

<sup>17</sup> See more: Prochwicz J, Kępa Z, ABC formacji granicznych II Rzeczypospolitej. *Problemy Ochrony Granic*, 2003, Vol. 24, pp. 8–9.

<sup>18</sup> See more: Piekarczyk K, *Polskie formacje graniczne 1918–1924. Mówią Wieki*. Special Edition, No. 2/2017, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Dominiczak H, p. 63.

delegated to the new service. The structure of the Border Shooters did not differ significantly from its predecessor, however, the ongoing processes of manning and equipment supply allowed deploying forces also on other sections of the border. As estimated 'at the beginning of July 1920 (...) the Polish-German border was protected by 7 regiments and one independent squadron, the south border (the Carpathian Mountains and the Cieszyn Silesia region) by a mountain troop division, the sea border by a sea battalion.'<sup>20</sup>

However, the advancing Soviet invasion in the direction of Warsaw and defeats of the Polish forces in the East caused the total collapse of a hardly developed system of border protection. The forces deployed on the borders were moved as soon possible to strengthen the front. After the repulse of the Soviet troops and signing the peace treaty in Riga, as a result of a reorganization of the Polish Army as well as serious decimation during the war, in March 1921 the Border Shooters had been dissolved. Subsequently, the Guard Battalions were created from available forces. After a short training, the units were deployed on the Polish western, southern and sea border. In April 1921 the responsibility of border protection was assigned to the Ministry of Treasury. The Guard Battalions were renamed into Customs Battalions. Inherently, the unit had a temporary character until the Ministry of Treasury would have created a professional border service, profiled to operate in time of peace.<sup>21</sup>

Work on the establishment of a new border formation came to an end in 1922. It was to cover the Polish-German, Polish-Gdansk, Polish-Czechoslovakian, Polish-Romanian border and Polish coastline. Already at that time it was decided that a completely different system had to be developed for the protection of the eastern border. The new formation, the Customs Guard, was the first civilian and fully professional service established to protect the state borders. It was supposed to be a professional service. This radically changed the concept of border protection. In the face of its predecessor, it significantly changed its character, because 'it intertwined in many directions with the customs and duty system, and the whole system of securing the western and southern borders was similar to the Austrian one, i.e. it had a civil-military character with a predominance of the former. The Customs Guard, without its own command staff, was dependent on central and local customs authorities. Customs guards in the service not only dealt with border protection, but above all they performed many supporting functions in customs offices and beyond, prosecuting fiscal and customs crimes.'<sup>22</sup> This formation functioned until 1928.

Despite several years of operation, the Customs Guard did not manage to achieve a high level of effectiveness. However, it was decided to use the experience gained by it to form a new Border Guard. The new border formation was established in March 1928, by virtue of an ordinance of the President of the Republic of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki. According to Jerzy Prochwicz, 'the establishment of the Border Guard was conditioned by several factors having a decisive influence on its

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> See more: Kozłowski P, Straż Celna zapomnianą formacją graniczną II Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej — dyslokacja jednostek granicznych w 1926 roku. *Problemy ochrony granic*, 2012, Vol. 50, pp. 8–17.

<sup>22</sup> Dominiczak H, p. 69.

organisational shape. The most important ones, underpinning the organisation of the Border Guard, included:

- disqualifying opinion on the organisation and functioning of the Customs Guard, according to which the defects of its organisational and functional structure were so significant that no reorganisation of the Customs Guard would bring about such a significant improvement that it would be possible to state that the Customs Guard is capable of performing tasks in the protection of the state borders consistent with the interests of the Republic of Poland, not only in terms of customs, but also political and military,
- an attempt to unify the system of border protection of border formations, which assumed that the entire protection of the borders of the Second Republic of Poland would be covered by the Border Protection Corps, which so far performed border service on the eastern borders of the Second Republic of Poland.<sup>23</sup>

In April 1928, the Border Guard, subordinated to the Ministry of Treasury, took over the protection of the north-west, western and southern sections of the Polish state border from the Customs Guard. Although one of the main reasons for the reorganisation of the border protection system was the need to unify it, the implementation of the intentions did not take place due to political reasons (objections from the part of Germany and Czechoslovakia). Originally, it was assumed to create a formation organised on the basis of the Customs Guard forces as a military model. As a result of work on the concept, it was assumed that the formation would have a police-military character. In March 1928, the Border Guard Act came into force assigning it tasks in the field of protection of the inviolability of the state border and, additionally, in the area of customs border protection. For this reason, its official subordination was two-track. In the area of border protection, it was an executive body of general administration authorities, while in the area of customs authorities, it was an executive body of tax authorities.<sup>24</sup> A new element in the border protection system was the creation of an intelligence department. Although such actions were attempted on the basis of previous formations, it has been successful only now. It was not the leading activity of the service, because "intelligence work in the Border Guard was basically a supporting element. It was aimed at obtaining information necessary to improve the efficiency of activities covered by the scope of the service."<sup>25</sup> However, apart from increasing the effectiveness of its own tasks, it was at that time an important support for the intelligence and counter-espionage services of the Second Republic of Poland, because the formation "was obliged to provide assistance to the second Branch posts in the border zone. Information officers of the Border Guard maintained constant contact with the Independent Information Departments (IID) at the Regional Command of the Corps (RCC), which coordinated counter-espionage operations in the border area. On the other hand, in the field of offensive intelligence, the Border Guard was obliged to facilitate shallow intelligence activities in the border area to the intelligence authorities

<sup>23</sup> Prochwicz J, *Organizacja Straży Granicznej w 1928 r.*, [in:] Gosławska-Hrychorczuk A (Ed.), p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43–46.

<sup>25</sup> Kur M, pp. 58–59.

(branches) and to provide necessary information. It was stressed that the Border Guard was a good source of information from the foreground. It cooperated with various links of special services. Moreover, it had natural possibilities to obtain all the data concerning the organisation and activity of German services. Border Guards also dealt with counter-espionage work.<sup>26</sup> Border Guard was a formation which, with some organisational changes, protected the Polish borders, with the exception of the eastern border, until 1939. At that time it additionally protected a section of the border with Lithuania in exchange for the section of the border with Romania handed over to the Border Guard Corps.

The system of protection was different on the eastern section of the border due to the different political situation. At the end of 1920 the warfare in the east of the country came to an end. It should be remembered that 'the area of the state during the warfare divided the national area subordinated to the Government's authority and the war area subordinated to the authority of the Commander-in-Chief. The war area was a part of the operational area and was limited by the back border, which was variable from the progress of military operations, the frontier was defined by the Commander-in-Chief. It was divided into a front area and a staged area.'<sup>27</sup>

At that time the Border Cordon of the Ministry of Military Affairs was established, whose task was to maintain order in the front zone and demarcate the territories of the two warring parties. This allowed for the creation of a second line separating Soviet Russia from Poland. After the end of the warfare and the signing of conciliation agreements, a third line was created, for the protection of which the State Police was made responsible. It should be added that the support in the field of border protection was also the Stage Battalions established in 1919, which were subordinate to the Supreme Command of the Polish Army. They operated in the area of the Border Cordon of the Ministry of Military Affairs. According to Jerzy Prochwicz, 'Stage Battalions established at the back of the fighting army secured it in terms of maintaining security and stability in the country.'<sup>28</sup>

The gradual stabilisation of the situation after the end of the warfare resulted in work on the target concept of securing the eastern border area. The newly established eastern border was entrusted to the Customs Battalions for protection in 1921, and from 1922 to the Border Guard, and in 1923 these tasks were taken over by the State Police. However, according to Wojciech Grobelski, 'the lack of a developed concept and constant reorganization of border services could not ensure effective protection of the country's territory. The police system was too static and not very operative. This not only encouraged an increase in crime, but also made it possible for the Red Army's regular units to cross the border in secret. From April 1921 to April 1924 a total of 259 excursions from the USSR to Poland were recorded.'<sup>29</sup>

More and more frequent problems on the border forced the Polish authorities to take quick and decisive action aimed at creating a fully professional border formation able to face the emerging threats.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> Prochwicz J, *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza 1924–1939. Barwa i broń*. Warsaw, 2003, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Grobelski W, *Formacje graniczne II Rzeczypospolitej. Roczniki Wydziału Nauk Prawnych i Ekonomicznych KUL, 2012–2013, Vol. VIII–IX, Issue 1, p. 267.*

In September 1924, the Border Protection Corps, subordinate to the Ministry of Military Affairs, was established. The formation was organized according to the military model. Subordination of the formation was complex, because 'the Coop, remaining an independent administrative and economic unit, in terms of organization, operation, personnel and training was subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, and in terms of border security and budget — the Ministry of Interior (...)' the new formation was permanently connected with the Ministry of Military Affairs, based on the army's material and personnel resources.<sup>30</sup> Within the Border Guard Corps, apart from the reorganisation of the border protection method (patrol service), work was undertaken on the development of a new model of the intelligence service. This division has been in operation since 1925, and the intelligence activity of the Border Protection Corps was subordinated to the Security Department of the Ministry of the Interior and to the Branch II of the General Staff. The main scope of activity of the intelligence division was profiled to 'conduct intelligence activity within the area of official responsibility of the CBO, reconnaissance of border services of neighbouring countries, conducting counter-intelligence activity within the area of official responsibility of the CBO, combating political activity of the hostile state within the area of official responsibility of the CBO and in units of the CBO.'<sup>31</sup>

The Border Protection Corps carried out its tasks until the outbreak of World War II. At that time it protected the difficult eastern border, and from 1939 it strengthened the protection of other sections of the border, including Hel, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

## Conclusions

The above rather superficial presentation of the extremely complex process of Polish borders development, after the return of the Republic of Poland after one hundred twenty three years of its non-existence on the world map, is a tangible proof that both state security and state independence are not static. They are values of special and vital significance for both a state as a political organisation and, what is shown in history, for nations. The experience of the newly reborn Second Republic of Poland shows how difficult, full of great effort, failures and human victims it is to create a new state, its structure, and particularly an effective system of border protection. For more than a hundred years of the Polish state's non-existence, security in Europe at the time underwent radical changes, therefore it required other than before the partitions system of borders protection. It should be emphasised that more than a hundred years of slavery had a significant impact on the lack of experience in that matter, therefore, solutions worked out by the invaders were initially adopted. The impact of many factors significantly rendered developing effective solutions for border protection complicated. Undoubtedly, the level of difficulty was also increased by a completely different specificity

<sup>30</sup> Jabłonowski M, *Polityczne i wojskowe przesłanki powołania KOP w 1924 r.*, [in:] Prochwicz J (Ed.), *Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza. Materiały z konferencji naukowej*. Kętrzyn: Wydawnictwo Centrum Szkolenia Straży Granicznej, 2005, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Prochwicz J, *Powstanie i przemiany organizacyjne wywiadu Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza*, [in:] Prochwicz J (Ed.), p. 38.

of threats occurring at different sections of the Polish border at the time. In this period, in 1918–1928, there were a total of 13 border agencies in Poland. It seems, however, that after years of difficult and arduous work, the Polish state has successfully created an effective system of border protection that is able to counteract the threats which arise with great intensity.

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**Streszczenie.** II Rzeczpospolita Polska po odzyskaniu niepodległości jako nowe i w zakresie formowania struktur państwowości młode państwo stanęła przed wieloma poważnymi wyzwaniami. Z trudem ukształtowane granice wymagały jak najszybszego skutecznego ich zabezpieczenia. Istotnym problemem był proces stopniowego pozyskiwania władzy nad granicami. W czasie, kiedy na zachodniej granicy kształtował się system jej ochrony, na wschodniej trwały jeszcze regularne działania wojenne. Zadania tego nie ułatwiały również niezagaszone całkowicie konflikty graniczne oraz niejednorodną etnicznie ludność zamieszkująca tereny przygraniczne. Jednym z poważniejszych problemów okazał się także brak doświadczeń w ochronie granicy państwa spowodowany ponad wiekową utratą niepodległości. Z powyższych względów proces kształtowania się systemu ochrony granicy II Rzeczpospolitej trwał kilka lat. Jak trudne było to zadanie niech świadczy ilość formacji granicznych jakie powoływano do życia w tym czasie, poddając je różnym modyfikacjom. W konsekwencji z racji niełatwych w owym czasie relacji Rzeczpospolitej z państwami ościennymi wypracowany system ochrony granicy nie był jednorodny. Musiał on także stawić czoła wciąż nie do końca ustabilizowanej sytuacji w Europie.

**Резюме.** Вторая Речь Посполитая, после обретения независимости, являясь новым и молодым государством, столкнулась с многими серьезными вызовами в области формирования государственных структур. С трудом сформированные границы потребовали их скорейшей эффективной защиты. Существенной проблемой стал процесс постепенного управления границами. В то время, когда система охраны развивалась на западной границе, на востоке продолжались систематические боевые действия. Этой задаче не способствовали вполне незатронутые пограничные конфликты и этнически неоднородное население, проживающее в приграничных районах. Одним из самых серьезных вопросов было отсутствие опыта в сфере охраны государственной границы, вызванное вековой утратой независимости. Из-за выше указанных причин процесс формирования системы охраны границ Второй Речи Посполитой продолжался несколько лет. Насколько сложной была эта задача, свидетельствует число создаваемых пограничных формирований, которые подвергались различным изменениям. В последствии, из-за сложных отношений Речи Посполитой с соседними государствами, разработанная в то время система охраны границы, не являлась однородной. Система столкнулась также с все еще нестабильной ситуацией в Европе.

(mug)