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# Belarus on the Pages of the Weekly "Świat" in the Period 1918–1919

*Białoruś na łamach „Świata" w latach 1918–1919*

*Беларусь на старонках штотыднёвіка „Свет" у перыяд 1918–1919*

**Abstract**

The purpose of the article is to trace the presence of Belarusian issues on the pages of the Warsaw weekly "Świat" [The World] in 1918–1919. Content analysis of the publications showed that the editors of the widely read weekly did not decide to clearly determine their stance on the future of Belarus. The periodical developed a strategy of including the Belarusian issue in a Polish-centric discourse, which emphasized Poland's cultural maturity and the importance of Polish arms in the struggle against the Bolsheviks, who were seeking to take over Belarusian lands.

**Keywords**: Belarus, „Świat", Polish-centric discourse, strategy

**Abstrakt**

Celem artykułu jest prześledzenie obecności problematyki białoruskiej na łamach warszawskiego tygodnika w latach 1918–1919. Analiza publikacji wykazała, iż redakcja poczytnego pisma nie zdecydowała się na jednoznaczne określenie własnego stanowiska wobec przyszłości Białorusi. Periodyk wypracował strategię polegającą na włączaniu kwestii białoruskiej w polonocentryczny dyskurs, w którym eksponowano kulturową dojrzałość Polski oraz znaczenie polskiego oręża w walce z dążącymi do przejęcia ziem białoruskich bolszewikami.

**Słowa kluczowe**: Białoruś, "Świat", polonocentryzm, strategia

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**Анатацыя**

Мэтай артыкула з'яўляецца агляд беларускай праблематыкі на старонках варшаўскага штотыднёвіка „Свет" у перыяд 1918–1919 гг. Аналіз артыкулаў выявіў, што рэдакцыя папулярнага часопіса не вырашылася адназначна акрэсліць уласную пазіцыю ў адносінах да будучыні Беларусі. Стратэгіяй перыядычнага выдання стала спроба разглядаць беларускую праблематыку ў межах дыскурса, у якім аўтары праз прызму Польшчы і палякаў разважалі пра суседзяў. Падкрэслівалі ўзровень культурнага развіцця Польшчы і значэнне польскай узброеннай барацьбы супраць бальшавікоў, якія імкнуліся заняць беларускія землі.

**Ключавыя словы:** Беларусь, „Свет", польскацэнтрычны погляд, стратэгія

„Potęga rzeczywistości przelewa się dziś poza płytkie brzegi pucharów naszej duszy. Nikt z nas nie jest w stanie pomieścić w swej świadomości i w swej pamięci tego, co dzień przynosi. Pisma nie mogą objąć kolosalnego materiału, jaki leje się ze źródła telegrafu, niby z rynny, napełnionej wodą burzową. Rzadkim był w roku tym dzień, który by nie przyniósł wielkiej sensacji. Rzadki tydzień, który by nie zaznaczył jakiegoś zwroty w fali wypadków dziejowych"[1] (Wierzynek, 1918, 1). This is how, on the threshold of 1918, the editors of the Warsaw-based periodical "Świat" ("The World") described the times in which their readers lived their lives. The coming months were to be a period of dynamic change as well, change which, although anticipated, surprised with its intensity and multidimensionality.

Press commentary, especially that offered by weeklies, aiming to shape the readers' opinion in accordance with the informational strategy adopted by the editorial staff, helped to contain the chaos of reality. In the case of reports regarding the broadly understood Belarus, in the years 1918–1919 this was not an easy task. Especially so if we take into account the pace at which the situation in the country making its way to independence was changing: in February 1918 the Executive Committee of the First All-Belarusian Congress Council declared itself the supreme public authority and appointed the first government, led by Jazep Varonka, which would operate for only 5 days (Ludowy Sekretariat Białorusi; Szybieka, 2002, p. 212); a month later (on 9th March 1918) the Executive Committee of the First All-Belarusian Congress announced the formation of the Belarusian People's Republic; on 25th March the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic announced Belarus's independence (cf. Mironowicz, 1999, p. 28; Tarasiuk, 2010a, p. 183–186; Tarasiuk, 2010b, p. 152–163);

[1] 'Now the power of reality overflows the shallow walls of the goblet of our soul. None of us is capable of containing what the day brings within their consciousness and their memory. Periodicals cannot accommodate the colossal amount of material that pours from that source that is the telegraph, as if from a water-filled gutter after the storm. Throughout this year, it was a rarity to witness a day which would not bring any sensation. It was a rarity to witness a week which would not mark some turn in the stream of historic events.'

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on 17th November 1918 the Red Army assumed the offensive against Minsk Belarus (on 10th December 1918 Russians took over Minsk); on 1st January 1919 the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed (Głogowska, 1996, p. 35); on 3rd February the Congress of Radas established a federal unit of the country with the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and announced the constitution of the BSSR; in February 1919 the Belarusian lands were captured by the Red Army (Mironowicz, 1999, p. 42–43) and a period of Polish-Soviet fighting began (before September 1919 most of those lands were under Polish control; Mironowicz, 1999, p. 44); and in December 1919 Belarusians were represented by two governments operating in Minsk (Mironowicz, 1999, p. 48)[2].

The political situation also overlapped with the Polish *ressentiments* and expectations related to the issue of to which country did the Kresy belong. In this case, an important role in the process of informing and shaping the readers' opinion was played by the popular trusted periodicals which had been developing their authority already before the outbreak of the Great War. One of such magazines was the weekly "Świat" founded by Stanisław Krzywoszewski in 1906. Targeted mainly at readers from the middle intelligentsia and avoiding unambiguous political declarations, the weekly fit in the category of the so-called illustrated magazines. Competing with "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" ("The Illustrated Weekly"), the periodical offered its readers overviews of the news in the form of news bulletins and illustrations, as well as articles on current subjects, thanks to which it "był pismem […] związanym z różnorodnymi przejawami życia politycznego i społecznego kraju"[3] (Paczkowski, 1980, p. 279).

The editorial staff, interested in the present day, endeavoured to give their numerous readers a sense of the current events and issues[4], therefore mentions of the Belarusian problem could not fail to appear in the pages of the periodical either. An analysis of the content of issues published in the years 1918–1919 shows that the magazine worked out a consistently executed strategy of informing its readers about the events playing out in the Belarusian lands.

A look into the contents of the *Most important events of the past week* section alone allows to initially reconstruct the way in which content concerning White Rus'

[2] December 1919 marks the end „nadziei na rozwiązanie problemów białoruskich za pomocą Polski" ('of the hope to solve the Belarusian problems by means of Poland').

[3] 'was a magazine … connected to various manifestations of the political and social life of the country'.

[4] Working with journalists who represented a variety of persuasions, secured "Świat" a large audience (which is indicated by the circulation of around 10 000 issues). As Maria Brykalska writes, "stanowisko pisma w kwestiach politycznych i społecznych było na tyle elastyczne, że stwarzało miejsce zarówno dla orientacji liberalno-inteligenckiej, jak i postaw «młodokonserwatywnego» ziemiaństwa oraz średniej warstwy finansowo-przemysłowej" ('the periodical's position in on political and social questions was flexible enough to give room both to the liberal-intelligentsia persuasion and to the attitudes of the "young-conservative" landed gentry and the middle financial-industrial class' (Brykalska, 1996, p. 1070).

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was presented. The column, introduced at the beginning of 1918, was to give the readers a sense of the most essential facts in regard to the Polish home and foreign policy, the international situation, military action, social, cultural, and economic issues, etc. The Belarusians' pursuit to form their own statehood appears sporadically in this segment[5]. The year 1918 will bring just one such piece of information – in the issue 12 (of 23rd March) appears a note: "Rada białoruska zwróciła się do rządu niemieckiego o pomoc w budowie samodzielnego państwa białoruskiego; otrzymała odmowę"[6] (Najważniejsze*,* 1918, 12, p. 8). The laconic statement was supplemented by a comment published as part of the reports from Poland, informing that professor Hans Delbrück postulated to "return Belarus to Poland" in the name of "good relations between Poland and Germany" (Najważniejsze, 1918, 12, p. 8) and by a piece of information about the significant rise in the number of Poles in Minsk[7]. The comparison of the three notes suggests a way of profiling statements about the Belarus which was preferred by the editors – that is, placing them within the Polish discourse which disregarded the issue of the Belarusian independence and emphasised the connection to Poland. In accordance with this model of presenting issues related to Belarus, in September the editors will also publish a piece of news informing that "Białorusini katoliccy wydali odezwę z piosnką o Kościuszce, kończącą się tak: «Budiet wolność prawdziwoja, Daść nam jeje Polszcz światoja»"[8] (Najważniejsze, 1918, 38, p. 7), and at the beginning of December a note from which it follows that "28 listopada zjawili się w Warszawie przedstawiciele Grodzieńszczyzny z projektem utworzenia stanów polsko-litewsko-białoruskich"[9] (Najważniejsze, 1918, 49, p. 11). Moreover, while writing about the events related to Belarus and the Belarusians, the editorial staff will use the metaphorical formula "the Eastern wall", treating Poland as a significant point of reference, and at the same time avoiding terms pointing to the Belarusian context[10].

A change in this situation will come in 1919, along with the intensification of the military action on the Lithuanian-Belarusian front. The *Most important events of the past week* section will then begin to feature news about the consecutive

[5] Information pertaining to the Ukrainians' pursuit of independence, the process of the autonomising of Lithuania, or the situation of Spiš and Orava will be published significantly more often.

[6] 'The Belarusian Rada sought help from the German government in building an independent Belarusian country; it was denied'

[7] It should be remembered that Warsaw was at that time in the sphere of German influence, hence the reference to Delbrück.

[8] 'the Catholic Belarusians released a proclamation with a song about Kościuszko, which ends thus: "Budiet wolność prawdziwoja, Daść nam jeje Polszcz światoja"'

[9] 'on the 28th of November representatives from Grodzieńszczyzna came to Warsaw with a project of founding Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian states'

[10] Cf. e.g. the note from issue 40 (1918) (p. 7) where the periodical informs that, in fear of the Bolsheviks, "ludność polska, białoruska i inteligencja rosyjska" ('the Polish and Belarusian people as well as the Russian intelligentsia') flee West, and the entry from issue 43 (1918) (p. 6) where it is reported that "w opuszczonych powiatach na wschód od Berezyny bolszewicy mordują Polaków" ('in abandoned powiats to the east of Berezina, the Bolsheviks are murdering the Poles').

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successes of the Polish forces. Initially, those reports take on the form of a short note informing about the state of affairs[11]; later on, however, the strictly informative entries begin to be accompanied by news whose function is persuasive[12] – showing the Polish dominance over the Bolsheviks. The periodical supplements the notes with comments from which it follows that the Bolsheviks "zostali odparci z dużymi stratami w ludziach i amunicji" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 32, p.11), "koncentrują rozbite siły" (Najważniejsze, 1919, p. 11), lost "500 ludzi w jeńcach, 2 działa, kilkanaście kulomiotów" in a skirmish (Najważniejsze, 1919, 36, p. 11), suffered vast losses (Najważniejsze, 1919, 40–48, p. 19), while the Polish forces "ścigają cofającego się nieprzyjaciela i zabierają ogromne łupy" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 33, p. 11), took "kilkuset jeńców i wielkie łupy w materiale wojennym" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 38, p. 15), took "do niewoli 47 oficerów, 3891 żołnierzy, zdobyto 11 armat, 72 kulomioty i ogromną ilość amunicji i materiałów wojennych" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 39, p. 14), are taking "jeńców i łupy" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 50, p. 17; Najważniejsze, 1919, 51, p. 17), are taking "300 jeńców" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 39, p. 14), seized spoils in the shape of "2 pociągów pancernych, 7 lokomotyw, 130 wagonów, 7 dział, 20 karabinów maszynowych, […] 40 oficerów i 900 żołnierzy" (Najważniejsze, 1919, 35, p. 12)[13].

[11] Cf. e.g. notes from issue 10 (1919) ("Wojska polskie dn. 26 lutego stanęły na linii Niemna" ['The Polish troops arrived at the shoreline of the Niemen on 26th February'], p. 11), issue 12 ("Wojska polskie na Białorusi dn. 17 b.m. dotarły do linii Dzięcioł-Wysock-Polonka" ['The Polish troops in Belarus on the 17th day of this month reached the line Dzięcioł-Wysock-Polonka'], p. 15), issue 30 (1919) ("Na froncie litewsko-białoruskim walki i potyczki trwają dalej. Szczególnie gwałtownie walczono na zachód i północ od Radoszkowicz" ['On the Lithuanian-Belarusian front the fighting and skirmishes continue. The fighting was especially vehement to the West and North of Radaškoviči'], p. 11).

[12] Informational entries appear for instance in issue 33 (1919) ("Wojska polskie zajęły Mińsk. Także Słuck i Nieśwież są już od paru dni w polskim ręku" ['The Polish troops seized Minsk. Slutsk and Nesvizh have been under Polish control for the past couple of days as well'], p. 11), issue 35 (1919) ("Na froncie litewsko-białoruskim wojska polskie zajęły linie Berezyna-Czernica-Jasienowicze oraz linię Starynki-Jasień-Scimonowicze" ['On the Lithuanian-Belarusian front the Polish troops seized the line Berezina-Czernica-Jasienowicze and Starynki-Jasień-Scimonowicze'], p. 11).

[13] 'were forced back with large human and ammunition losses' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 32, p. 11), 'are gathering the defeated forces' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 34, p. 11), lost '500 people taken prisoners, 2 cannon, more than ten machine guns' in a skirmish (Najważniejsze, 1919, 36, p. 11), suffered vast losses (Najważniejsze, 1919, 40–48, p. 19), while the Polish forces 'are pursuing the retreating enemy and seizing enormous spoils' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 33, p. 11), took 'several hundred prisoners and immense spoils in war matériel' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 38, p. 15), 'captured 47 officers, 3891 soldiers, seized 11 cannon, 72 machine guns, and an enormous amount of ammunition and war matériel' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 39, p. 14), are taking 'prisoners and spoils' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 50, p. 17; Najważniejsze, 1919, 51, p. 17), are taking '300 prisoners' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 39, p. 14), seized spoils in the shape of '2 armoured trains, 7 locomotives, 130 wagons, 7 cannon, 20 machine guns, … 40 officers, and 900 soldiers' (Najważniejsze, 1919, 35, p. 12). It is worth mentioning that the infamous execution by firing squad of 30 Jewish people in Pinsk (on 5th April 1919) was also presented as an act aimed against the Bolsheviks (Najważniejsze, 19, p. 16).

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The editorial staff, being in favour of incorporating the Belarusian lands to Poland, will also feature information confirming the Polish involvement on those territories in the news. The readers will have the opportunity to learn about, among other things, the announcement on 18th February 1919 of the decree appointing Ludwik Kolankowski to the position of the General Civil Commissioner of the Civil Administration of the Eastern Lands whose task was to handle the affairs of the civilian population on the territories of Lithuania and White Rus' that were being seized by the Polish forces (Najważniejsze*,* 1919, 9, p. 7) or the enthusiastic welcome given by the people of Grodzieńszczyzna upon the entry of the Polish troops in April 1919 (Najważniejsze*,* 1919, 19, p. 11)[14]. The editors will also note the presence of the Belarusian question in the debate of the Sejm which flared up as a reaction to Józef Piłsudski's proclamation of 22nd April 1919 directed to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Not going into the details, he remarks that although the representatives of the Right wanted "ziemie te inkorporować drogą militarną"[15] (Najważniejsze*,* 1919, 21, p. 11), eventually the federative proposition of the Chief of State was accepted by the Sejm majority. Importantly, the editors clearly show that it concerned not only the relations with Lithuania but also with Belarus[16].

The tendency apparent in the news bulletin – to situate the Belarusian lands within the framework of the Polish discourse – is confirmed by the feature articles published in the periodical. An example of a statement profiled in this manner is the article by Lesław Juliusz Słoboda (born Lesław Juliusz Chlebek) *Polska kolonizacja po wojnie (Polish Colonisation After the War)* (Słoboda, 1918, 41, p. 2–4) published in October 1918. Using the statistical data taken from the works of Piotr Leliwa (specifically *O ziemię dla chłopów. Głos w sprawie rolnej [For Land for the Peasants. A Voice in the Agricultural Question]*, Warsaw–Kraków (Leliwa, 1918, p. 21) and Paweł Sosnowski (*Geografia polski w dawnych granicach [The Geography of Poland within*

[14] Reporting the retreat of the Germans from Grodzieńszczyzna, the editors name the date 28th April 1919 – on that day, the Polish troops entered Grodno, where they were welcomed with enthusiasm. The editors made a significant generalisation by extending this joy at the Polish presence onto the entire region. This will prove important since in the same issue, there appears an entry about the shape of the Polish Eastern border. Quoting the words of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephen *Pichon* ('Seize that which is your property') (Najważniejsze*,* 1919, 19, p. 12), "Świat" indicated that it was the Polish soldiers who decided about the shape of the disputed border – the joy of the local citizens made the validity of such a solution legitimate.

[15] 'to incorporate those lands by way of military action'

[16] This is emphasised both in the content of the two notes on the discussion of the proclamation and in the title of one of them (Sprawa Litwy i Białej Rusi [The Question of Lithuania and White Rus']), (Najważniejsze*,* 1919, 20, p. 11). An answer to the idea of a federation will appear in issue 36 where the editors will inform the readers: "Delegacja białoruska w Mińsku oświadczyła: „Niepodległa i niepodzielna" Białoruś ma pozostawać w związku federacyjnym lub utworzyć unię z Polską na zasadzie „wolni z wolnymi" ('the Belarusian delegation in Minsk announced: The 'independent and indivisible' Belarus is to remain in a federal unit or form a union with Poland on the basis of the idea "*the free with the free"*') (Najważniejsze*,* 1919, 36, p. 11).

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*the Former Borders]*, Warsaw 1918), the journalist proves that it is precisely the eastern direction that is best in the context of planning a rational distribution of the Polish population. From the cited figures it clearly follows that it is, among others, the Belarusian lands (specifically the Grodno and Vitebsk Governorates) that would be the best territories for future colonisation activities, both due to the low population and the current assets confirmed by the "bardzo wielki procent ludności rzymsko-katolickiej polskiej"[17] (Słoboda, 1918, p. 3). Putting aside the question of making an unequivocal statement on the topic of to what country do those lands belong, the journalist says: "Nie wchodzimy w jakim stopniu będą stały te prowincje do przyszłego państwa polskiego, sądzimy jednak, że gdyby nie należały nawet do kompleksu państwa polskiego, to odpowiednimi konwencjami i traktatami polityczno-gospodarczymi będziemy się mogli nie tylko zwolnić od nadmiaru ludności Kongresówki […], ale i co więcej zachować tę ludność za pomocą szkół i towarzystw kulturalnych dla ducha i idei polskiej"[18] (Słoboda, 1918, p. 3). At the same time, the author designs a programme of maintaining a steady relationship with the mother country by founding schools and cultural societies. Although in the piece the Eastern question is linked to the issue of oversea economic emigration, it is difficult to resist the impression that the journalist meant first of all to appropriately shed the light on the problem of the Kresy lands, and especially the Belarusian lands which are emphasised among those enumerated. For it is not without reason that there appears in the piece a quote reminding about the civilisational and cultural influence of the Polish settlement in the East, or the declaration: "Państwa upadają, ale siły ducha i zdobytych krajów pługiem i cywilizacją nikt nie zniszczy"[19] (Słoboda, 1918, p. 4)[20].

In line with the programme thus delineated, the editorial staff of "Świat" will publish news pertaining to the development of the Polish education in the Belarusian lands. Even before the publication of Sloboda's article in the Warsaw-based weekly, the piece *Szkoła Realna w Mińsku Litewskim [The Realschule in the Lithuanian Minsk]* was printed and introduced the readers to a new educational establishment – the Tadeusz Reytan's *Realschule*, founded in 1917. The establishment, which was

[17] 'very large percent of the Roman-Catholic Polish population'

[18] 'Let us not go into in what degree will those provinces stand in relation to the future Polish state, let us presume, however, that even if they do not belong to the Polish state compound, by way of suitable conventions and political-economic treaties we will be able to not only free ourselves from the surplus of population in Congress Poland … but, moreover, keep that population by means of schools and cultural societies for the Polish spirit and idea'

[19] 'Nations fall, but the power of spirit and the countries conquered with a plough and with civilisation no one will destroy'

[20] In the conclusion the following statement will also appear: "naród polski musi skierować swój wzrok i interes ku krajom ukrainnym Polski i ku koloniom zamorskim i utrzymać je dla kultury i cywilizacji polskiej" ('the Polish nation must turn its gaze towards the Ukrainian Polish countries and the oversea colonies and preserve them for the Polish culture and civilisation') (Słoboda, 1918, p. 4). Considering the fact that the regenerating nation did not have any oversea colonies, their mention should be regarded as a figure of speech.

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created within just a year thanks to the financial support of count Antoni Broel-Plater, appears as an instruction meant to propagate Polishness: "7-klasowa szkoła realna, która będzie nadto posiadała klasę wstępną i podwstępną, a to w celu ujęcia pod polski kierunek możliwie najmłodszych dzieci, dotychczas pozbawionych odpowiedniego kształcenia się w języku ojczystym. Szkoła ta nazwaną została imieniem wielkiego patrioty Tadeusza Rejtana, jako mieszkańca ziemi mińskiej, tu urodzonego i tu (w Lachowiczach) pochowanego. Nazwa ta wskazuje zarazem na kierunek narodowy, jaki nowopowstająca szkoła u siebie zastosuje"[21] (Szkoła realna, 1918, 36, p. 6). The editors do not stop at reporting the founding of the school but also point out that the educational establishment has a skilled teaching staff – the headmaster of the school was the experienced teacher Stanisław Wyrzykowski, and the superintendent – one of the authors of the idea, the geography and cosmography teacher Włodzimierz Dworzaczek who worked with other all-boys schools as well. Emphasising the establishment's potential and the need for a Polish school in Mińszczyzna felt by the society, the editors confirm the legitimacy of placing the Belarusian question within the Polish discourse[22].

In accordance with the postulate for a civilisational and cultural colonisation of the Eastern lands marked in Sloboda's piece, in 1919 "Świat" will publish an article attesting to the Polish achievements in this area. Considering the Kresy territories as a complex issue, the editors will not dedicate a separate piece to the Belarusian lands. While avoiding writing about Belarus as such, the editorial staff will, however, specify what territories are in question and remind about the Polish achievements in Mohylewszczyźna and Grodzieńszczyźna when informing about the situation in the Kresy. Thus, among the articles published in the periodical will be, for instance, a study reminding that it was Polish owners from the Mogilev Governorate who in 1859 planned to "dobrowolnie zrzec się praw swych nad poddanym"[23] (Obst, 1919, 12, p. 7). The review study *Kultura polska na Kresach [Polish Culture in the Kresy]* will feature a list of cultural institutions founded in the Belarusian lands towards the end of

[21] 'the *Realschule* comprising of 7 grades, which will moreover feature an introductory and a sub-introductory grade, this in order to take under the wing of the Polish direction the youngest children possible who were hitherto deprived of proper education in the mother tongue. The school was named after the great patriot Tadeusz Rejtan, a resident of the Minsk land, born here and here (in Liachaviči) also buried. The name at the same time points to the national direction which the emerging school will adopt'

[22] The legitimacy of such a solution will be also indirectly confirmed by A. Pawłowski's article which points out that Belarus – just like the Ukraine, Georgia, Crimea, Courland, Livonia, and Finland – split from Russia that was plunged in chaos. The journalist omits Belarus while listing countries that attempted to constitute themselves following the dissolution of the empire; he moreover indicates that "z odłączonych i odłączających się ludów jedyna tylko Ukraina tej [i.e. in Russia – M.G.-S.'s note] wspólnoty pragnie" ('out of the separated and separating peoples, it is only Ukraine that wants this union [i.e. with Russia – M.G.-S's note]') (Pawłowski, 1918, 45, p. 1).

[23] 'willingly renounce their rights over the subject'

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the 16th century (e.g. the Jesuit colleges in Daugavpils, Mogilev, Mstislavl, Orsha)[24], as well as a declaration that from the times of the 1905–1906 revolution, "życie polskie cudownie rozkwita, powstają szkoły, zrzeszenia kulturalne i ekonomiczne"[25] (J. O., 1919, 12, p. 8), which is possible also thanks to the involvement of the Belarusians: "Element polski na kresach posiada silnego sprzymierzeńca w katolickim odłamie Białorusinów, którzy ciążąc ku nam wiara, obyczajem językiem, przy wyższym rozwoju kulturalnym, zlewają się w jedno z polskością"[26] (J. O., 1919, 12, p. 8).

There will also be no shortage of the most current examples of the attractiveness and strength of the Polish culture in the Belarusian lands. This perspective is offered by Helena Romer-Ochenkowska's article *Szkoły polskie pod frontem [Polish Schools Under the Front]* (Romer-Ochenkowska, 1919, p. 5), in which the educational activist, building the opposition Polish creation-Bolshevik destruction, presents, on the one hand, the Belarusian boys' attachment to the Polish culture, on the other, the creative potential of the Poles connected to the Belarusian lands – during the German occupation – despite the difficulties and the obstacles, the Polish community managed to found 5 schools[27]. Ochenkowska's piece clearly suggests that those establishments constituted

[24] "Wiek szesnasty, zwłaszcza schyłek jego, stać się miał dobą najpiękniejszego szkolnictwa naszego i kultury na kresach wschodnich. Jednocześnie z akademią wileńską powstaje w Połocku kolegium jezuickie z czasem również na akademie przekształcone. […] W związku z uczelnią potocką były kolegia w Dynaburgu, Mohylowie, Mścisławiu, Orszy, Witebsku. […] Liczne klasztory, połączone stale ze średnimi i niższymi zakładami naukowymi krzewiły oświatę. Dość wspomnieć o fundacjach wielkiego kanclerza Lwa Sapiehy, jezuitów w Orszy, bernardynów w Mohylewie, karmelitów w Białyniczach, bazylianów w Czerci. Chodkiewiczowie osadzają dominikanów w Szkłowie, kanoników reg. W Bychowie, Hlebowicze bernardynów w Dubrownie, Sanguszkowie dominikanów w Smolanach, w Witebsku Gosiewski funduje kolegium jezuickie, Kisiel klasztor bazyliański, Chrapowicki bernardynów". ('The sixteenth century, its end especially, was to become the period of our most beautiful education and culture in the Eastern Kresy. Simultaneously with the Vilnius Academy, in Płock the Jesuit college was being founded, with time also transformed into academies. … Connected with the Połock university were the colleges in Daugavpils, Mogilev, Mstislavl, Orsha, Vitebsk. … Numerous monasteries, linked permanently with middle and lower schools, propagated education. It is enough to mention the foundations of the Grand Chancellor Lew Sapieha, the Jesuits in Orsha, the Bernardines in Mogilev, the Carmelites in Byalynichy, the Basilians in Czerć. The Chodkiewicz family places the Dominicans in Shklow, Canons Regular in Bykhaw, the Hlebowicz family places the Bernardines in Dubrowna, the Sanguszko family places the Dominicans in Smolany, Gosiewski funds a Jesuit college in Vitebsk, Kisiel a Basilian monastery, Chrapowicki a Bernardine monastery') (J. O., 1919, 12, p. 9).

[25] 'Polish life blossoms wonderfully, founded are schools, cultural and economic associations'

[26] 'The Polish element in the Kresy has a powerful ally in the Catholic faction of Belarusians, who, gravitating towards us with faith, custom, language, at a higher cultural development, fuse with Polishness'

[27] Apart from Polish schools (which were the most numerous), there were also Lithuanian and Belarusian ones operating on the territories occupied by Germany. (Cf. Michaluk, 2010, p. 137; Głogowska, 1996, p. 37).

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the heart of the community, united and taught patriotic engagement[28]. Importantly, this was not an isolated initiative; in February the periodical informed: "przeszło 40 szkół elementarnych polskich. Powołało je do życia nowe ziemstwo lepelskie – wyłącznie z ziemian polskich założone, […]. W Bućkowszczynie Suszyńskich powstało w maju 1918-go seminarium dla nauczycieli ludowych, Polaków, wzorowo i niestrudzenie prowadzone przez młodocianą p. Anielę Suszyńską. W Leplu powołano do życia gimnazjum polskie, które przepełnione jęło się rozwijać znakomicie"[29] (Kresowiec, 1919, 5, p. 2); in December the readers learnt about the opening of 60 schools in the Pružany powiat, "od 1-ej do 5-ych klas" ("from the 1st to the 5th grades")[30], for which an appropriate pedagogical staff was managed to be obtained. The successful development of the Polish education in the Belarusian lands confirmed the vitality of the Polish culture[31] but also attested to the close Polish-Belarusian relations[32]. Moreover, it was in line with the programme of the development of White Rus' delineated in the pages of "Świat", which should be based – as the editors indicated in January 1919 – on education and the intensive introduction of culture (Fiedorowicz, 1919, 3, p. 3). Thereby, the Belarusian question was once again written about taking into account the Polish expectations and interests.

Of course, reports related directly to the current political situation could not be missing from the pages of the periodical. It must be noted right away that, contrary to,

[28] As if to confirm those words, the piece featured a picture of a serried group of children standing in front of a school building.

[29] 'more than 40 Polish elementary schools. They were called into being by the new Lyepyel zemstvo – founded exclusively from Polish landed gentry, …. In the Suszyński family's Bućkowszczyna, a seminary for folk school teachers, Poles, was founded in May 1918, exemplarily and tirelessly run by the young Ms. Aniela Suszyńska. In Lyepyel, a Polish *gimnazjum* was called into being, was filled up, and began to develop in an excellent manner'

[30] *Zakończenie 3 miesięcznych kursów nauczycielskich w Prużanie (Ziemi Grodzieńskiej) [Conclusion of 3-onth Teacher Courses in Pružany {Grodno Lands}]*, (Świat, 1919, 49, p. 9).

[31] This conviction was so strong that under *Mapa narodowościowa ziem polskich [The National Map of the Polish Lands]* (19, p. 5), in reference to Pińszczyzna, the following comment appeared: "Pińszczyzna, doprawdy mało zaludniona. Pełna nieosuszonych błot i nie mogąca rozwinąć się dotychczas wskutek bierności żywiołu białoruskiego i wskutek fatalnej gospodarki urzędników rosyjskich, oczekuje obecnie na energię i pracę inżynierów, rolników i pionierów kultury, aby ten bagnisty kraj osuszyć, zaludnić i urodzajną glebę należytą opieka otoczyć" ('Pińszczyzna is sparsely populated indeed. Full of never desiccated marshlands and so far unable to develop, as a result of the passivity of the Belarusian element and the disastrous management of the Russian officials, it is now awaiting the energy and work of engineers, farmers, and pioneers of culture, in order for this marshy land to be dried, populated, and for the fertile soil to be duly cared for') (S. D., 1919, 19, p. 5).

[32] The author of the article *Wrota Polski [Poland's Gate]* will write about this point-blank: "W ludowych pieśniach białoruskich miejscowych mnóstwo jest wzmianek o przyjaźni białorusko-polskiej, zadzierzgniętej osobliwie podczas wypraw „na Moskwę" ('In Belarusian folk songs, there are plenty of mentions of the Belarusian-Polish friendship, which began, strangely enough, during the expedition "to Moscow"') (Kresowiec, 1919, 5, p. 2).

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for example, "Tygodnik Ilustrowany", "Świat" did not decide to treat the the question of the Belarusian landsas a separate topic requiring separate discussion. This issue usually appeared as the context in statements concerning Vilnius and the Vilnius question. For instance, in May 1919 in an article presenting the Lithuanian claims to Vilnius and the Vilnius Region, one finds remarks about the national aspirations of the Belarusians who – deprived of support in a particular cultural centre – may lay claim to Vilnius (Dąbrowski 1919, 18, p. 2). A lack of faith in the survival of the independent Belarusian nation will come up in Jan Dąbrowski's article *Problem granic wschodnich [The Problem of the Eastern Borders]* published in June (Dąbrowski, 1919, 24, p. 2). Comparing the Lithuanians and the Belarusians, as well as pointing out that the Lithuanian aspirations have the chance to be fulfilled, the journalist negates the possibility of a national agreement within the Belarusian community on the basis of contrast: "znajdujemy tu brak uświadomienia narodowego wyrażonego chociażby w poczuciu swej odrębności, […] Białoruś jako taka istnieje jedynie w pojęciach etnografów, lecz nie w pojęciach ludu. Białorusin z Grodzieńszczyzny z Białorusinem z Mohilewszczyzny, nie są połączeni żadnym węzłem poczucia wspólnoty, zaś rozdzieleni – i bardzo poważnie – różnicą wyznawanej religii"[33] (J. D., 1919, 24, p. 2). According to the writer, an internal division rules out the possibility of creating an independent country. Belarus will also appear in the two-part study *Nad Wilją [On the Viliya]* published in August 1919. In the first part of the extensive study devoted to the Lithuanian question, there appeared remarks regarding the – impossible to fulfil – Belarusian aspirations for creating "wielkiej niepodzielnej Białorusi"[34], in a situation where "wciąż jeszcze jest [she – M.G.-S.] w rosyjskim ręku"[35] (W. B., 1919, 31, p. 2) and an ironic statement that the Belarusian applied art is so backward that – protected by its own primordiality – it managed to avoid tackiness (W. B., 1919, 31, p. 4). The second part, being a voice in the discussion on the propositions for Lithuania and Belarus formulated in Piłsudski's proclamation of 22nd April, provides commentary on the Belarusian position. Referring to a conversation with Klaudiusz Duż-Duszewski (representative of the Belarusian People's Republic), the journalist first points to the Belarusians' aversion to the idea of an agreement with Poland. Then, he cites the Belarusian delegation's position, formulated several weeks later, which in a conversation with Piłsudski declared the commonality of interests with Poland (W. B., 1919, 34, p. 3). The instability of views of the Belarusian side leads to the conclusion that reaching an agreement with the Belarusians is impossible and it is necessary to treat the Belarusian question as an issue waiting for its resolution to

[33] 'here we find a lack of national awareness expressed, for instance, in a sense of one's separateness, … Belarus as such exists only in the concepts of ethnographers, but not in the concepts of the people. A Belarusian from Grodzieńszczyzna and a Belarusian from Mohilewszczyzna are not united by any ties of a sense of community, whereas they are divided – and very seriously at that – by the difference in their professed religion'

[34] 'a great indivisible Belarus'

[35] '[it – M.G.-S.'s note] is still in the hands of the Russians'

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come from Poland, since – as the journalist claims – it resembles "wosk, który można kształtować rozmaicie"[36] (W. B., 1919, 34, p. 3).

Considering the content profiled in this manner, it is no wonder that the new Belarusian authorities, treated by the editors as transitory and as such not included in calculations and plans, were not given attention in the periodical. It can be said that the editorial staff successfully avoids reporting any forms of Belarusian representation – an excerpt from this rule will be the account of the seizure of Maladzyechna by the Polish forces on 4th July 1919. The readers will then learn that, in the face of the defeat sustained by the Bolsheviks who lost Vilnius, Lida (on 17th April), and Baranavichy to Poland, a defence committee of the Lithuanian–Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in Minsk and would begin mobilisation to the Red Army. However, the piece will not include any information as to the members of the Bolshevik body, the leaders of the adverse party, nor the numerical strength of the enemy. It is also on the iconographic level that the editors will exhibit a moderation that is worth noting, by deciding against publishing photographs of Belarusian politicians[37].

Instead, the periodical will offer its readers photographs and accounts concerning the successes of the Polish army in the Belarusian lands. Including iconography in the implemented strategy of writing about Belarus within the Polonocentric narrative whose foundation was the emphasis of the cultural and civilisational patronage over Belarus, in April "Świat" will publish a series of photographs entitled *Na Białej Rusi [In the White Rus']*. The four photographs taken after the seizure of Slonim and Baranavichy by the Polish forces commanded by colonel Bolesław Frej display – apart from the figures of the depicted officers and soldiers – the significance of the Polish presence for the Belarusian lands which were being liberated from the Bolshevik terror. What becomes this added value, the interpretation suggested by the captions prepared by the editors, is the restitution of law and order. For the readers not only get to know the military ranks and first and last names of the persons immortalised in the photographs but also learn that the commander of the Polish forces "wyrzucił bandy bolszewickie"[38], carried out an inspection of the city like a good host, and met up with the Belarusian people's delegation (Na Białej Rusi, 1919, 15, p. 7). The series of photographs composed in this way presents the civilisational maturity of the Polish side. This impression will be reinforced by a photoreport published two weeks later, in which photographs from the expedition to Pinsk appear under the telling heading *Nasi kresowi rycerze [Our Borderland Knights]*.

[36] 'wax which can be shaped whichever way'

[37] Only towards the end of 1919 will the editorial staff decide to publish photographs from the time of the Bolsheviks' occupation of the Lithuanian Minsk. The photographs, printed under the headline *Z życia bolszewików na froncie wschodnim (From The Life of Bolsheviks on the Eastern Front)*, create the image of civilian authority marked with iniquity. This overall picture is comprised of photographs of commissaries surrounded by lovers, married couples sharing power, women zealously working for the secret police (Cheka), Bolshevik executioners murdering Polish people for a suitable payment (Z życia bolszewików, 1919, 49, p. 5).

[38] 'ousted the Bolshevik hordes'

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References to the knightly ethos solidified in the Polish culture leave no doubt about not only the military but first of all the cultural advantage of the Poles on the grounds that were being liberated[39], and consequently, the justice of including the Belarusian question within the Polish discourse. The succeeding photographs, illustrating the presence of Polish soldiers and commanders in the Belarusian lands, will confirm the vision thus outlined, supplying it with further elements[40].

A peculiar completion, and at the same time the crowning of the process of building the image of the Polish borderland knight who brings culture and liberation to the Belarusian lands, was to be found in issues 35 and 38 in which the editorial staff included texts and photographs concerning the seizure of Minsk by the Polish troops on 8th August 1919. The material published towards the end of August 1919 (issue 35) is especially interesting – it was then that "Świat" printed four photographs accompanied by the heading *Generał Szeptycki w zdobytym Mińsku [General Szeptycki in the Conquered Minsk]* on a single page together with a short note expressing the moods of the moment. The news bulletin published on the occasion has a significant power of persuasion – the photographs, accompanied by captions that are explanatory and commentative, depict the Polish troops, impressive in their numerical force and discipline, being enthusiastically welcomed by the "tłum publiczności"[41] thanking them for the deliverance (Generał Szeptycki, 1919, 35, p. 6). Additionally, each photograph is accompanied by a note indicating the religious context – the first depicts the square in front of a cathedral, the temporal profile of the second is established by indicating that it was taken on "dzień mszy dziękczynnej w katedrze dn. 10 b.m."[42] (Generał Szeptycki, 1919, 35, p. 6), in the case of the other two, we learn that they were taken after the mass of thanksgiving. Emphasising the religious circumstances suggests that seizing Minsk was a part of a bigger plan, a restoration of not only the social but also, one may say, the natural order. The comment was written in a similar vein. For the readers

[39] This way of presenting the Polish troops in the Kresy will also reverberate in the note *Kozacy dońscy w polskich szeregach [Don Cossacks in the Polish Ranks]*. In it, the editors will quote the words of the regiment that was moving to the Polish side, and which declared: "potrafimy bronić honoru, wolności swojego i polskiego narodu" ('we can defend the honour, the freedom of our and of the Polish nation'). Recalling the motto of serving the honour and the motherland brings the image of the Borderland knights up to date.

[40] The editorial staff will eagerly publish photographs depicting Polish soldiers participating in masses held in the open air (e.g. 19, p. 4; 25, p. 6), participating in parades, marches, and displays that were indicative of strength, discipline, and skills (e.g. 20, p. 5–6; 25, p. 6; 33, p. 8), being enthusiastically welcomed by their fellow countrymen (22, p. 6), celebrating important anniversaries (e.g. 33, p. 9), being represented by admired and esteemed commanders (e.g. 26, p. 9; 38, p. 9). The editors will carefully avoid naturalistic shots of the fighting – once the periodical decides to run a photoreport from the Eastern front, it will present the readers with photographs of the commanders, the feasting soldiers, the supply of provisions by way of the river, as well as with picturesque vistas of Brest-Litovsk, Pinsk, and the surrounding areas. (C.f. 26, p. 4–5).

[41] 'huge audience'

[42] 'the day of the mass of thanksgiving on the 10th day of this month'

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learn that: "Ludność polska, białoruska i żydowska powitała nasze wojska owacyjnie. Gen Szeptycki […] obwieścił ludności, że od chwili wstąpienia wojsk polskich do tego miasta nastać muszą czasy poszanowania prawa i sprawiedliwości. […] Obecnie w Mińsku płynie życie łożyskiem prawie normalnym"[43] (Generał Szeptycki, 1919, 35, p. 6). The Bolshevik savagery was replaced by culture and civilisation restored along with the arrival of the Polish troops[44]. Once again, a story about Belaruswas pushed aside, and its place was taken by an account of the Polish power and cultural maturity.

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In issue 40, of 5th October 1918, "Świat" reported: "Dwa ostre prądy zarysowały się w ideowej polityce polskiej w stosunku do ziem wschodnich: aktywiści pragnął ekspansji polskiej na Białoruś, pasywiści to odradzają. Za wyrzeczeniem się przemówiły pisma: krakowski «Głos Narodu», «Dziennik Poznański» i «Kurier Warszawski»"[45] (Najważniejsze, 1918, 40, p. 7). While reporting the ideological dispute pertaining to Belarusian lands, the editorial staff of the weekly decided not to define their own

[43] 'The Polish, Belarusian, and Jewish people welcomed our troops enthusiastically. General Szeptycki … proclaimed to the people that the moment of the entry of the Polish troops into the city must mark the beginning of a period of respect for the law and for justice. … Currently, life in Minsk runs in a channel that is nearly normal'.

[44] Three weeks later, in issue 38, the editorial staff will revisit the topic of the seizure of Minsk. This time, the periodical will provide more details pertaining to the operation itself and the subsequent activities of the Polish forces. Although the aim of the article was not only to remind the readers about the victory that had taken place in August but also to outline the perspective of further successes, the presented material was not lacking in information on the mass of thanksgiving said on 17th August 1919 (a photograph with the caption "Tłumy ludności polskiej przysłuchują się mszy świętej dziękczynnej, odprawionej przez biskupa mińskiego, Zygmunta, na placu katedralnym w Mińsku" ['Crowds of Polish people listen to the mass of thanksgiving said by the bishop of Minsk, Zygmunt, in the square in front of the cathedral in Minsk'] and the description within the piece), on the Bolshevik violence now replaced by the Polish order ("ludność dawniej rozmyślnie przez bolszewików straszona dziś przekonana do naszego polskiego żołnierza" ['the people once purposely intimidated by the Bolsheviks, now have taken to our Polish soldier']), on the joy of the people who "ze łzami w oczach, z serca płynącymi okrzykami i kwiatami witała i oddawała cześć polskim bojownikom" ('with tears in their eyes, among cries that came from the very heart, and carrying flowers, welcomed and honoured the Polish combatants') (W zdobytym Mińsku, 1919, 38, p. 11). The editorial staff, while emphasising "bezmiernie długie i tak bolesne wyczekiwanie na tę radosną chwilę wyzwolenia, które właśnie armia polska […] przyniosła" ('the immeasurably long and very painful anticipation of this joyful moment of liberation which was just brought by the Polish army') (W zdobytym Mińsku, 1919, 38, p. 11), once more ignores the Belarusian question and chooses the Polonocentric perspective.

[45] 'Two sharp currents appeared in the Polish ideological politics in regard to the Eastern lands: the *activists* want the Polish expansion to Belarus, the *passivists* advise against it. The following periodicals expressed themselves in favour of the renouncement: the Kraków-based «Głos Narodu» ("Voice of the Nation"), «Dziennik Poznański» ("The Poznan Daily"), and «Kurier Warszawski» ("The Warsaw Courier").'

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position *expressis verbis***.** However, the analysis of the materials published in the periodical indicates that the Warsaw-based weekly was closer to the solutions of the activists. While not making an explicit declaration, the Warsaw-based weekly decided to work out a strategy based on placing the Belarusian question within the Polish discourse – to emphasise the Poles' cultural maturity, whose confirmation was, on the one hand, the development of the Polish education and culture in the Belarusian lands, and, on the other, the activity of the Polish soldiers bringing to a stop to the wave of Bolshevik destruction, allowed the editors to push the fate of the Belarusian lands into the background without the need to provide it with unambiguous commentary.

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