

ABSTRACTS

4/2008 Koniec Wielkiej Wojny Powstanie Wielkopolskie

Stanisław Żerko

The Versailles System and Attempts at its Modification in the 1920s

The postulate to modify the Versailles system and weaken the terms the peace treaty imposed on Germany was put forward almost immediately after its ratification also in the victorious camp (Great Britain). In the face of a collapse of the policy of an unrelenting execution from Germany of the terms of the Versailles treaty, France launched an attempt to find new solutions, which culminated in the conference at Locarno. The Locarno Treaties significantly strengthened the position of Germany, paving the way to its inevitable return to the role of a power. On the other hand, however, the chances of implementing the German program of revision of its border with Poland turned out to be slim. It seems therefore that fears expressed on this occasion in Warsaw were exaggerated.

Piotr Madajczyk

Memory of the First World War or on the Attempt to Create a European Historical Memory

The article shows the vastly diversified character of collective memory of the Great War in European countries. This diversity pertains also to Germany and Poland, Poland being in this respect a typical representative of the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The tensions that stem from those differences are all the more noteworthy, as since the 1990s there has been a visible acceleration of changes directed toward shaping the Great War as a European locus of memory. This tendency is manifested in the activity of the leading European museums which organize exhibitions arranged according to a different outlook than before.

Maciej Walkowiak

German Literature vis-a-vis the Defeat of the Reich in the First World War. An Analysis of Selected Examples

The issue of the reaction of German literature to the defeat of the Reich in the First World War is based in the first part of the analysis on reflection on the phenomenon of modernization, which had a bearing on the character of the Great War and its consequences. In the historical-literary context it is also vital to point to the essence of German nationalism and the role of the idea of the Reich in the creation of the German national state. It required a new coherent national identity which emerged from the (re-)construction of different themes of the German tradition. Among direct references of German literature to the defeat of 1918, attention is drawn to selected but representative examples. Thus, the following phenomena are briefly analyzed: German expressionism with a variety of connotations to the historical-political sphere, literary dimensions of the rise of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, a broadly understood Conservative Revolutionary movement with special emphasis on the work of Ernst Jünger and Ernst von Salomon related to the defeat or more generally to 1918 as a turning point, and finally typical examples of the so-called anti-war literature (the prose works of Erich Maria Remarque and Ernst Glaeser). Indirect references to the defeat in the Great War can be traced

in the dispute between Thomas and Heinrich Mann (presented here within the framework of a debate concerning the direction of the future development of Germany), contemporary drama (Zeitstück) on the example of Neue Sachlichkeit and Rudolph Borchardt's project of national revival through a specifically conceived "high literature". The article is an attempt at an interdisciplinary analysis, which enables a multifaceted view of the problem of defeat by including a whole spectrum of issues bordering on literature.

Stanisław Sierpowski

International Aspects of the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919

Following the armistice of Compiègne, Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) remained a part of Germany, which meant that the uprising was an internal occurrence and Germans treated it as an organized armed separatist action. The uprising broke out in an atmosphere of enthusiasm for the right of the nations to independence in deciding their fate. The armistice of Treves, signed on February 16, 1919, was a stepping stone in the strife for the rebirth of the Polish state, reuniting the former German, Austrian and Russian sectors of Poland. Due to a lack of an alternative solution, the outcome of this strife was accepted by the Peace Conference. It must be said, however, that France did not consent to such a status quo ante. The other powers also saw a possibility of incorporating Poland into the anti-Bolshevist "sanitary cordon". There was even some competition between Poland and Germany as to which country would be more efficient in fulfilling this role. The Greater Poland uprising (similarly to the Polish issue in general) was treated as part of the policy of the powers toward Germany and Russia. Differences between the powers in their approach to the German issue enabled Berlin to resist the acceptance of the terms of armistice on the German-Greater Poland front negotiated in Poznań. The German demonstration was accompanied by fears that the loss of vital eastern territories could give rise to numerous problems, perhaps even greater than those generated by the loss of Alsace and Lorraine.

Marceli Kosman

The Greater Poland Uprising against the Backdrop of Polish National Uprisings (From the Perspective of Its 90th Anniversary)

Among the Polish uprisings the ones most often mentioned include: the Kościuszko uprising, five Greater Poland uprisings, the November uprising, the Cracow uprising of 1846, the January uprising, the three Silesian uprisings and the Warsaw uprising. The question that is asked in connection with each of them is whether it was necessary and whether it broke out at the right moment. For obvious reasons only one of them does not raise such doubts: the Greater Poland uprising of 1918-1919. The citizens of Greater Poland took part in Polish armed insurrections beginning with the Kościuszko uprising, and also played a significant role in the service of the nation in the sphere of culture, saving from destruction invaluable relics of the past and organizing great scientific libraries that exist until today. Their way to the uprising was long and lasted 124 years (1794-1918), from participation in the first Polish national insurrection up to a formal end of the armed struggle after the First World War. During the time of Germanization conducted by increasingly ruthless methods - following a reactivation of the Reich under the aegis of Prussia - the Polish society in the Poznań Province was hardened and prepared to defend itself. Poles had gained a thorough knowledge of the methods of the enemy, tried to avail themselves of the official German legalism and also used propaganda to influence attitudes in Europe. On account of all these factors the cause of regaining independence towards the end of the war did not come as a surprise.

Andrzej Choniawko

Controversies over the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919 in Historical Syntheses

The manner of presentation of the genesis, course and outcome of the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919 on the pages of historical syntheses differs depending on the authors ideological assumptions and degree of knowledge of detailed studies on the subject. Controversies over the Greater Poland Uprising voiced in the historical syntheses of the interwar period stemmed from the ideologies of two rivaling political forces: the national democrats and the Piłsudski camp. The takeover of power by the Marxist left resulted in a radical change of paradigm in the manner of presentation of the genesis, course and outcome of the Greater Poland Uprising. In keeping with Marxist ideology, the causes, developments and results of the uprising were traced to conflict between social classes. The year 1989 which marked the beginning of fundamental changes of the political system in Poland also brought a thorough revision of the mode of presenting the history of modern Poland. As concerns the Greater Poland Uprising those changes consisted in a complete departure from considering the event in the context of any social conflicts. The image of the Greater Poland Uprising in monographic syntheses remains far more varied than can be attributed to the style of narration of particular authors. The syntheses presenting this event are not free from oversimplifications, mental shortcuts that distort historical truth, dubious hypotheses barely supported by historical facts or simply common errors.

Szymon Piotr Kubiak

On the Architecture of Poznań in the Interwar Period

The article discusses selected aspects of the architecture in Poznań in the interwar period. Special emphasis is placed on the issue of the influence of German ideas that pervaded the works of the local architectural milieu which accepted them consciously, subconsciously or sometimes suppressed them from consciousness. On the one hand, this was due to the fact that Poznań designers were educated mostly in Berlin, Munich, Dresden or Karlsruhe. On the other hand, German ideas also proved attractive for architects who arrived from Galicia and knew them at least in theory from their education in Lvov, similarly to Viennese concepts. Among the many tendencies in the 1920s, the one that gained greatest prominence was the so-called "Um 1800" style codified by Paul Mebes in his famous book under the same title, but expressionistic transformations of historical, mostly modern styles, were also frequent. The 1930s were characterized by an overlapping of two discourses: functionalization of life in a great modern city and the conservation of its monuments. A significant contribution on the part of the Warsaw milieu must be noted, but business travels and knowledge of the latest textbooks pointed the attention of the Poznań architects to Poland's closest western neighbour.

Piotr Kubiak

German Liberal Parties vis-a-vis Germany's Implementation of the Terms of the Treaty of Versailles (1919-1923)

The article presents the position of two German liberal parties: the DDP (Deutsche Demokratische Partei) and the DVP (Deutsche Volkspartei) on Germany's foreign policy in the years 1919-1923. Their common starting point is the Treaty of Versailles imposed on Germany, its revision being demanded by all the political parties in Germany. Other issues discussed in the article include the stance of DDP and DVP on the crucial events of 1919-1923 which were the aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles: the London ultimatum, the "policy of fulfillment"

(Erfüllungspolitik), the issue of Upper Silesia, Rapallo, and the occupation of the Ruhr Area by French and Belgian forces. It was then that foundations were laid for the policy implemented later, i.e. in the years 1923-1929 by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Gustav Stresemann (DVP), who strove to obtain a revision of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles by reaching agreement with the western powers.

Zofia Sujkowska, Artur Życki
Soviet Press on Polish-German Relations during the Weimar Republic

In the interwar period Polish-German relations were consistently bad except for a few years when mutual antagonisms were abated after the signing of the non-aggression pact of 1934. The Soviet press presented this objective state of matters in a manner unique for itself. The coverage did not bring any analysis of the situation on the Warsaw-Berlin line, but was an implementation of the political plan drawn up at the Kremlin. For the purpose of presenting the relations between the Republic of Poland and the Weimar Republic a thesis was generally accepted in the Soviet Union that those relations were strained on account of Warsaw's policy: the ongoing territorial dispute caused by inclusion of Germany's eastern territories into the Polish state and repression of the German minority. The authors of the Moscow propaganda claimed the situation to be analogous to what they termed as the Polish occupation of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine, and oppression of the Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities by Poles. Playing the Polish card enabled Moscow to maintain close relations with Germany until Hitler's rise to power. The activity of the German diplomacy, hostile towards Warsaw, as exemplified by the case of the revision of state borders, met with full understanding of the Soviet press during the period of the Weimar Republic.

Beata Lakeberg
Press of the German Minority in Poland on the Coup d'État of May 1926

In the literature on the May 1926 Coup d'État which assesses the attitude of the German minority to those events, special prominence is given to the fact that this community supported the actions of Józef Piłsudski. The reason of such feelings is seen in the hope of the German minority that the new government would alleviate its policy towards Germans in Poland, and thereby improve their situation. The German minority is perceived in such studies as a homogeneous group and no attention is paid to its political, territorial or denominational diversity which translated into different expectations connected with the coup and the person of Piłsudski. The article analyzes the content of the politically diversified press of the German minority in Poland in the years 1926-1927, not merely showing how particular groups of Germans in Poland related to the coup itself, but also when and as a result of what events this attitude underwent changes.

Anna Sobczak
Heimatschutz and Grenzschutz versus the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919 in the Coverage of "Kurier Poznański" and "Dziennik Poznański"

During the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919 the newspapers "Kurier Poznański" and "Dziennik Poznański" provided considerable coverage of the activity of the German troops: Heimatschutz and Grenzschutz. Those were formations recruited by the government in Berlin in mid-November and beginning of December 1918 respectively, to defend Germany's eastern territories and dispatched to combat Poles, among other reasons out of fear of losing the Grand

Duchy of Posen. Regrettably, both daily papers did not pay adequate attention to a detailed presentation of facts. As a result, many reports either lack such basic information as the date and place of the described event or the data pertaining to its precise location are extremely laconic. Such an approach to reported events might suggest that some of the accounts, especially those concerning brutal murders of the civilian population and Polish soldiers, could have been manipulated for propaganda purposes. It must be remembered that newspaper columns were an arena of struggle for the awareness of the reader, who was persuaded to support views represented by a particular newspaper and the groups that shared its options. Despite the above mentioned shortcomings, analysis of the press of those times enables to view the Greater Poland Uprising from a different, hitherto marginalized, perspective.

Aleksandra Paradowska
Villas for New Poznań Elites

The development of interwar villa architecture in Poznań was inseparably connected with the process of emergence of new elites. One of the most important architects who designed houses for this group of customers was Marian Pospieszalski. Villas designed by him were built in the residential districts of the city such as Grunwald, Dębiec and Sołacz as well as in the vicinity of Poznań in Strzeszyn and Puszczykówko. Three of the houses are especially characteristic architectonically and were designed for the archeologist Józef Kostrzewski (1930), the painter Stanisław Smogulecki (1932) and the attorney Roman Sioda (1938), respectively. In those realizations M. Pospieszalski skillfully combined modern solutions with references to the past, thereby meeting the expectations of his customers. The designs were on the one hand a manifestation of the architect's esthetic views which he expounded in his surviving notes of 1951, while on the other hand showed affinity to the German architecture of the first decades of the 20th century. The villas designed by M. Pospieszalski are still in good condition today, but have undergone major reconstruction.