

Karol Derwich

Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora
Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8438-8601>

Nations Reborn: Poland and Mexico in the Aftermath of World War I

The aim of the article is to present the situation of Poland and Mexico in the years prior to the establishment of bilateral relations. It is reasonable to have a panorama of very particular conditions that determined the existence of these two countries at the beginning of the 1920s. As Poland reappeared on the political map of Europe it encountered significant difficulties in rebuilding its independent existence. These difficulties were both of an international and domestic dimension. The same can be said about Mexico that was entering the new chapter of its history after a bloody revolution that was aimed to change the domestic situation of the country. In this sense, at the beginning of the 1920s both nations can be described as “Nations reborn”.

Key words: Poland, Mexico, the World War, Mexican Revolution, independence

Introduction

The war that took place between 1914–1918, also known as the Great World War, was exceptional in the history of the world. It would not be an overestimation to call it an unprecedented strife in both the military and the political sense. The global range of the Great War for the first time involved nations from almost all continents in a military struggle. It was the consequence of the imperial dimension of the colonial powers that had their interests in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia. The confrontation between European powers was a consequence of their unlimited competition for influence in a global dimension and the goal was to gain an advantage over the rest of the powers in the political, military and economic sense. It was the first truly global military struggle between the biggest world powers. One can conclude that the conviction of the natural domination of European civilization and, in consequence, of European colonial powers led to the growing competition and rivalry between these states. Accompanied by the demands of nations that were deprived of their right to existence as sovereign states, Europe became a region of extremely intense tensions. The military struggle between European powers that also reached other continents was accompanied by internal revolutions that took place in several countries. Again,

these revolutions touched European powers and smaller countries but also took place in other regions. There is no question that the Bolshevik revolution in Russia had the most severe results, however revolutionary tensions also played an important role in Germany and smaller countries as for example in Hungary. Taking other regions into account, it is hard not to mention the Mexican revolution that erupted in the last weeks of 1910. As revolutionary movements played an extremely important role in Europe, the Mexican revolution is perceived as one of the most important events in the modern history of Mexico and Latin America.

The aftermath of the Great War and the Mexican revolutions for both Polish and Mexican nations is the appearance of the new reality of their functioning. One of the most important effects of the World War in Europe was the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the German empire and the emergence of new states in Central Europe. Poland was among the nations that could enjoy the right to sovereignty. After more than 120 years, it appeared as an independent and sovereign state. In the case of Mexico, the Mexican revolution overthrew the long dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and the collapse of the particular system that he created in Mexico after 1876 called Porfiriato. The revolution brought 10 years of a stubborn domestic struggle between the leaders of different movements and representatives of various social classes to Mexico. For this analysis, the date of the adoption of the new constitution in 1917 is perceived as the turning point for the new order in Mexico. It introduced several important changes in the political and social reality of the Mexican state. It was said that, in effect of the revolution, Mexico appeared as a new state. In its intention, it should be completely different from that what was established by Porfirio Díaz, however in fact, the most important change was put off the old elites and their replacement by the new ones. It is worth mentioning that the Great War had a much smaller impact on Mexico than on European nations. However, in comparison to other Latin American countries, Mexico appeared to be involved in the diplomatic game related to the struggle between the global powers. It is a commonly known fact that the attempts of German diplomacy to involve Mexico into the war on the side of the Central Powers was one of the main causes of US's decision to enter the war. As the end of the Great War in 1918 and the adoption of the Constitution of 1917 in Mexico are the beginning of new periods in the history of both nations, it seems to be fully justified to called them reborn. This article is dedicated to the analysis of the realities of the existence of Polish and Mexican states in these new realities. As the restoration of the independence of Poland marks a turning point in the history of the nation, it is worth remembering that it was the beginning of a new period of independence consolidation. The same can be said about Mexico. The new revolutionary order created the new realities of political, social and economic life. This new order required its consolidation. Both nations found themselves in new circumstances and this article is an attempt at identifying the characteristics and an analysis of these new situations.

In first order, there is one basic difference between the situation of both nations. Poland reappeared on the political map of Europe after decades of inexistence as an independent state. The Polish nation was the subject of foreign dominance for over 100 years divided between three powers: Germany, Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Meanwhile Mexico, although for several years being a place of fervent struggle between different groups in the effect of which the old Porfirian regime was

overthrown, maintained its sovereignty for all that time, even when a military intervention of its northern neighbor took place. Poland reappeared in the autumn of 1918. This was a result of several factors: endless efforts of the Polish nation to break the chains of foreign domination, the Great War which was the first military conflict between powers that had conducted the partition of Polish state in the end of the 18th century and the eruption and victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and revolutionary tensions in some other European countries, principally in Germany. Simultaneously, several other aspects that made the situation in Europe very complex appeared. It is necessary to mention the case of national identity and the growing pressure of nations that were deprived of the right to self-determination and sovereignty. Meanwhile the national states were already consolidated in Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe was dominated by four powers: Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany and the Turkish Empire. The power of the last one had been diminishing during the 19th century and that resulted in the appearance of independent states in the Balkans. Meanwhile, the three other powers successfully preserved their domination in this part of the European continent until the end of the Great War (Landau, and Tomaszewski 12). Poland's return on the political map of Europe was not a planned goal of military or political efforts of great powers during their military struggle. In this sense, the unexpected independence of Poland – but also other national states in this part of Europe – from the very beginning influenced a far reaching decomposition of political efforts of powers. It changed the political configuration in Central and Eastern Europe. The defeated Germany and the new, Bolshevik Russia were unable, for some time, to restore their domination in the region (ed. Koryn 13). It is worth mentioning that the creation of the independent Polish republic resulted in the absence of a common border between Germany and Russia. The Austro-Hungarian empire did not survive the defeat in war and was divided into several national states. In effect, the old order in this region was replaced by the appearance of new national states.

The case of Poland

As Poland returned as an independent state after a long period of partition between external powers, it was confronted with building its existence both in the international and domestic dimensions. For this reason, both types of factors that made the reality of the reborn state need to be analyzed. As it emerged from the ashes of the Great War and the collapse of great powers and its influence in Central and Eastern Europe, one of the absolutely fundamental goals was to establish the territorial configuration of the independent state. However, the international environment was not friendly towards the new Polish state. It is possible to conclude that the geopolitical situation of Poland in the period of the consolidation of its independence – 1918-1921 – was quite difficult. In this period, Poland had a variable shape of its territories and it was a time of forming all the borders. The final form of the borders was the effect of diplomatic negotiations but also a military struggle with the neighboring countries. The new Polish state was not considered by the majority of powers as a potential regional power that could play an important role in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. A clear example of this situation was the action of

German diplomacy that was used to describe Poland as a "temporary state". There were strong diplomatic efforts of German diplomacy to demonstrate that there is no sense in supporting Polish efforts to consolidate their independence and to support Polish claims regarding the borders and territories that should be included in the new country. In effect, it is easy to observe that Polish claims were rarely accepted by British and French diplomats, although Poland was definitely situated among the subjects that maintained a military effort against the Central Powers. As some authors argue, the significant and firm financial, diplomatic and military support of British and French governments toward new Polish state could not be observed (ed. Koryn 13). This lack of firm and stable support was particularly important for Polish diplomacy in the situation in which relations with almost all the neighbors were either bad or at least difficult. Poland now had a direct border with 5 countries: Czechoslovakia, Romania, Russia, Lithuania, and Germany. In fact, the only neighbor with whom Poland had friendly relations was Romania. In all other cases there were territorial disputes that were often solved through a military struggle. In the case of its western and eastern border, Poland had neighbors that were significantly stronger in the military dimension. Also, both were hostile toward the existence of an independent Poland. In this situation, one of the most important factors that stabilized the existence of the independent and sovereign Poland was the Treaty of Versailles. Although, it can be concluded that this basis was very fragile as from the very beginning the Treaty was criticized, mostly by countries defeated in the war. However, the French and British diplomats frequently had different views on particular subjects of negotiations and sometimes presented inconsistent positions (Rożek 24). The fact that it was not ratified by the US Congress also did not strengthen the treaty that was supposed to be the foundation of new post war order in Europe. As the Treaty of Versailles was considered as not perfect but a necessary warranty of the new order, all the signatory countries were bound to respect its statements. At least until circumstances that permitted its more or less obvious violation occurred.

From the very beginning of the "reborn" Poland its relations with western neighbors were very difficult for Polish diplomacy as well as for Polish people living on territories controlled by Germany. There were two kinds of problems to be solved. The first one was the case of the withdrawal of German forces from Eastern Europe to the frontiers of 1914. In effect of Poland's regaining independence, they had to return through its territory. The Armistice Agreement of November 11, 1918 provided for the withdrawal of German forces from the east to the borders of 1914. It did not mention the Polish territories held by Prussia. Although another article of this agreement provided for access to Poland by Allied forces through the port of Danzig and the Vistula valley, however the German diplomacy consistently opposed this solution from the very beginning (Debicki 15). The second problem was establishing the border between both countries. The process of establishing Poland's western border was to a significant degree the result of a military struggle. When Ignacy Paderewski came to Poznań on December 26, 1918, German soldiers made several provocations against Polish flags and representatives of the Polish population. This resulted in the first military struggle that turned into the first uprising in Wielkopolska¹. As a result

¹ As this territories are called in Poland and in those times were under German control.

of the firm struggle, the territory in question came under the control of the Polish forces and the warfare was stopped in mid-February 1919. Part of the German diplomats understood at this time that it would be difficult to preserve this territory in the frames of a German state (Hauser 67). However, the unclear situation that followed the end of the Great War resulted in the majority of territorial disputes in Central and Eastern Europe being postponed to the moment of negotiations of a peace treaty between the Entente powers and Germany. The situation in Wielkopolska was quite different what was happening in Upper Silesia and Mazury. In the treaty it was decided that there would be a plebiscite on these territories and in its result, the powers would establish the final form of the border. As the controversies over these territories between Poland and Germany were firm, as well as in the case of Upper Silesia, the final decisions were the effect of the military uprisings of the Polish population. These military struggles had to be considered by the western powers while making the final decisions about the border line between Poland and Germany. The complex and extremely difficult situation of Poland in its first months and years after regaining independence is well illustrated by the process of the construction of its borders. When the fighting was already taking place in Wielkopolska, a military conflict with the "reborn" state of Czechoslovakia also appeared. It was related to the border territories in the Teschen Silesia region. At the end of January 1919, Czechoslovakian troops crossed the demarcation line established earlier by the representatives of both young states. In spite of the quick mobilization among Polish units, Czechoslovakian troops also entered Orawy and Spish (Albert 63-64). The turn of 1918 and 1919 was also the time of an intense struggle between Polish and Ukrainian troops near Lviv. The majority of the population in Lviv was Polish. Ukrainians dominated the rural areas of eastern Galicia. During World War I both nations were seeking the possibility to construct their own independent states. Meanwhile the Austrian diplomats, conscious of the existence of hostile sentiments between both nations, adopted the strategy of "divide et impera" that worsened the relations between both nations. In effect, also in its south eastern outskirts, Poland had to undertake military efforts to control territories that were under its control before the partition and to define the borders of the reborn state. The situation in the eastern frontier is also a good example of indecision among allied powers in the case of Poland's eastern border and its attitude toward the already Bolshevik Russia. In mid-1919, fearful of revolutionary Russia, the powers authorized the Polish government to establish its authority over the entire province. However, the final recognition of that fact was maintained in March 1923 (Debicki 14).

There is no doubt that the greatest danger for the reborn Polish Republic was located in the east and it was Bolshevik Russia. Although, the new authorities in Russia recognized Poland's independence, they did not make a mystery from the fact that the principal goal of their policy was the export of the revolution to the west. In these circumstances, Poland was an obvious obstacle to this goal. The situation of the Polish government in this case was not supported by the clear support of Allied powers that did not formulate its policy toward revolutionary Russia. In effect, a tendency among the powers to postpone the final decisions can be observed. Also, it seems that in the first months after concluding military efforts, the priority was the peace treaty with Germany. One cannot forget about the hope among the Entente powers that the troops of the Whites Army in Russia that were still struggling with

the Bolsheviks troops will be able to regain power. However, it is worth noting that there were different views also among Polish leaders as to what form the Polish policy should adopt in its eastern frontier. The National Democracy party with Roman Dmowski as its leader promoted the idea of incorporation of quite limited territories in the east. They claimed to incorporate territories where the Polish population was a majority. Meanwhile, Józef Piłsudski, supported by leftist parties, were promoting the federalist idea. It was based on the creation of an independent Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine that would be linked with Poland by the set of alliances (Albert 68).² This lack of clear vision of how the eastern border of Poland should be created was a significant factor that made the process of its formation very difficult. In this condition, it was the Polish government and the Prime Minister, Ignacy Paderewski, who in September 1919 demanded their clear intentions toward Bolshevik Russia from the representatives of Entente. As these efforts also failed, Piłsudski initiated his own talks with the Russians, both with Bolsheviks and the leaders of White Russia. As the last ones absolutely did not accept the appearance of independent Poland and claimed the return of Russia in its borders in the form from 1914, Polish representatives abandoned this initiative. Talks with Julian Marchlewski who represented the authorities of the Bolshevik government began simultaneously. It soon became obvious that the Bolsheviks treated talks with Poland as a chance to get time for winning their battle against the Whites. In this situation, Polish leaders began to understand that there is no other way of establishing the eastern border other than a military confrontation.

Meanwhile, already at the end of 1918, the Bolsheviks started to realize their idea of exporting their revolution to the west beginning with the territories of Lithuania and Belarus. They proclaimed the establishment of socialist republics on these territories. This was accompanied by brutal repressions of Polish activists that acted for establishing the Polish authority on these territories. Also, revolutionary leaders adopted anti-Polish rhetoric according to which Poland would be an obstacle toward the Bolshevik revolution that would expand toward western Europe and benefit people of many nations. As bilateral talks between both sides failed it was obvious that there is no other way than military confrontation. The history of the war between Poland and Bolshevik Russia is broadly described and it is not the aim of the article to analyze its course. What is important is to underline the fact that in quite short time after regaining its independence Poland was forced to mobilize its entire forces to confront the Red Army. In the summer of 1920, the further existence of a sovereign and independent Republic of Poland was at stake. The war demonstrates how extremely difficult the international circumstances of building a Polish state were in the years that followed the end of World War I. Not only could the Polish government not count on firm diplomatic support in its confrontation with Bolshevik Russia, the military and financial assistance was rather symbolic. As France was much more dedicated to helping Poland in its military struggle, the British government, specially its Prime Minister David Lloyd George, was very reluctant in supporting Poland as there were already plans to establish proper relations with Russia. Finally, the critical situation of Poland in the summer of 1920 demonstrated

² See: Janusz Faryś, *Koncepcje polskiej polityki zagranicznej, 1918-1939*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1981.

its loneliness in the international system. It could not count on any of its neighbors. Even more so, almost all the neighbors demonstrated their hostile attitude toward the Polish Republic and tried to take advantage of its critical situation. As it could be expected that Germany will try to use the Polish – Russian war to realize its plan to weaken Poland and maybe make successful efforts to change its eastern border, the war period bared the hostile positions of Czechoslovakia and Lithuania. The first not only blocked foreign supplies for the Polish army but also tried to gain some territorial benefits. Meanwhile, the second one was eager to enter into political cooperation with the Bolsheviks against Poland that was motivated by territorial claims regarding Vilnius and its area (Wojna 44). The only neighbors that could be perceived by the Polish government as allies were Romania and Latvia. In the case of the first one, the Polish and Romanian governments signed political and military treaties in March of 1921. However, already in the previous years, the Romanian government was showing signs of sympathy for independent Poland. There was one significant factor that made it easier – both countries were in conflict with Bolshevik Russia. However, there were also tensions in bilateral relations between Poland and Romania. The most important issue in the first years after World War I was the case of Ukraine, where both governments had different interests (Bulhak 106-121). Meanwhile in the case of Latvia, the historical factors and the shared danger of Bolshevik Russia turned out to be elements that helped establish friendly relations.

As one can observe, the geopolitical situation of Poland was quite difficult. Its relations with the great majority of the neighbors were bad or at least firm tensions existed. Also, the support that Poland received from the Allied powers was limited and it was sometimes questionable, as for example, the case of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George during the Polish war with Bolshevik Russia. He did not want a strong Poland as he was afraid that it would enter into an alliance with France. Meanwhile, the French domination on the continent was not a good scenario according to Lloyd George (Biezanek 87). France, however much more friendly than Great Britain, was also quite unclear about its support for Poland. As it was determined to see the Polish Republic as decisive protection before the Russian expansion of the Bolshevik revolution, French diplomacy was not interested in turning Poland into a regional power in Central and Eastern Europe. In effect, as it was supporting Poland during the military struggle with Russia, it at the same time was not eager to support Poland in its conflict with Czechoslovakia. The process of establishing the territorial frames of reborn Poland was concluded in these unfavorable circumstances. Generally in 1921 but in fact it lasted a little bit longer when it took real administrative control over its part of Upper Silesia. Its final shape was as follows: border line with Germany – 1912 km, with Russia 1412 km, with Czechoslovakia – 984 km, Lithuania – 507 km, Romania – 349, with the Free City of Danzig – 121 km and with Latvia 109 km. The sea line was 140 km. From the geopolitical point of view, not only relations with particular neighboring countries played important role. Also the nature of the borders was the factor that should be taken into account. Meanwhile, the Polish borders were mostly open. There were very few natural borders. In effect the task of defending these kinds of borders was very difficult. It was important that the Polish Republic had the longest border with two definitely hostile neighbors – Germany and Russia. As one takes into account the fact that Poland established diplomatic relations with Lithuania in 1938, it can be concluded that between

the two world wars Poland had 3831 km of borders with the states that were the source of potential military confrontation (Wiśniewska, and Wyszczelski 31-32). The demographic factor also did not situate Poland in a positive situation in the case of a potential war with Germany or Russia. 29.5 million people lived in Poland at the beginning of 1926, slightly more in comparison to the direct post-war period (Wiśniewska, and Wyszczelski 39).

As the international situation of reborn Poland was unfavorable and was constituting a significant number of dangers, internal factors also made the process of rebuilding and consolidating the Polish state very difficult. The diplomatic and military struggle for a final formulation of the Polish borders were accompanied by efforts to build foundations of political institutions. As there were no stable foundations of the political system that would be adopted in Poland, the first decisions were adopted by Piłsudski and the temporary institutions that already emerged. After his return to Poland Józef Piłsudski was named the Head of the State and was given the highest power. Until the creation of Parliament, it was the Head of the State, Józef Piłsudski who was given the right to name the prime minister. He appointed Jędrzej Moraczewski. As the power seemed to be in the hands of politicians connected closely to the socialist parties, the Polish right, principally the National Democracy Party was strongly afraid of their attitude toward the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. However, Moraczewski and the majority of socialist leaders from the very beginning rejected the idea of a revolution and underlined their strong dedication to the consolidation of Polish independence and political sovereignty. As the months that followed the regaining of independence were dominated by the struggle for its preservation and establishment of the borders, the issue of the political system – apart from the fact that Poland adopted a republican form of government – were postponed. The works on the foundations of the political system and the constitution were undertaken at the end of 1920 when the danger of a Russian invasion ended. Finally, on March 17, 1921 the Parliament adopted a new constitution that formulated the foundations of the Polish political system for the next several years. What could be observed during the period before the adoption of the constitution was a deep political division that resulted in a large number of political parties. In consequence of the intense political competition and the changing partisan composition of the political stage, a characteristic of the early period of Polish independence was frequent changes of the government. These did not help in the stabilization and implementation of a stable vision of the state (Albert 54-55, 99-104).

Initially one should start from the fact that territories that finally formed reborn Poland for decades were parts of three completely different economic, social, cultural and political realities. In effect, Poland included territories that strongly varied. There was, for example, the industrial region of Upper Silesia and purely agricultural regions at the eastern frontier. The same comparison can be done in the case of Teschen Silesia with its mines, foundries and textile industry and Eastern Galicia where there was no industry at all. In this situation, the unification of the country became one of the very first goals for the new Polish authorities. This was a particularly difficult task as the economic situation of Poland was a disaster. It was the effect of multiple factors. Firstly, the period of the partitions was the time when the Russian, German and Austrian authorities were not interested in the development of the Polish territories. In effect, the economy of these territories was quite underdeveloped.

Second, military campaigns carried out on Polish territories during World War I destroyed both industrial plants and agriculture to a significant degree. Finally, Polish economic subjects lost a majority of their contacts with partners that remained on the territories that came to be in foreign countries after the territorial changes in this part of Europe. Also, the complex internal situation of Poland, its not established borders in the first few years of independence, the war with Russia, all these elements were successfully discouraging foreign investors from locating their investments in Poland. In effect of all the unfavorable Polish economic situations, the first years of independence was extremely difficult. For example, as Wojciech Roszkowski writes, in 1919 only a few sectors reached the levels of 1913. Meanwhile, in the majority sectors of the economy the results were much lower: the production of steel was only 3% of its level in 1913, sugar – 15%, cement – 30%, paper – 24%. In general, industrial production in 1919 was only 30% of its level in 1913 (Albert 106-107). Recovering and developing the economy was an important task of every government in Poland between 1918 and 1939. However, there are still significant doubts if that goal was reached. For example, the comparison of the production of selected articles and its percent in world production shows that two decades were not enough to rebuild and develop the Polish economy. Among 14 natural resources and articles analyzed by Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski, only three reached a higher level in 1938 than in 1913 (salt, paper and coke) (Landau, and Tomaszewski 136). A source of improving this situation was the military confrontation with Russia that produced a state demand on industrial goods in the effect of the war. However, this was a short term improvement of the economic situation. In fact it was troubled by limited internal absorptivity. This was the effect of poverty of the Polish society. Despite a huge internal demand for a variety of goods, the purchasing power of the society was very limited. This was the effect of huge damages that the war caused to Polish agriculture and large unemployment in the cities (Albert 107).

There were also other phenomena that constituted significant difficulties on the road to economic recovery and development of reborn Poland. One of them was the inflation that occurred in the effect of the difficult financial situation of the new republic. Printing money was nearly the only instrument of gaining money by the state. The budget deficit in 1920 was 5 times larger than the income. However, this also had its second side. Inflation meant more money on the market but simultaneously stimulated the growth of prices, production costs and salaries. In effect, the inflation spiral helped to cover the budget deficit and also increased the costs of the state's orders. The income from taxes was also limited as it lost its value quite fast (Albert 110).

The social nature of the Polish society in the first years after regaining independence is worth mentioning. Poland was definitely an agricultural country. In 1931, a significant majority still lived and worked in the countryside. This was respectively 61% and 73% of the total population. Most of them were peasants, meant here as small landowners. In that time this was a factor that confirmed the low level of economic development. The developed countries of western Europe had a much lower percentage of their rural population. However, some countries of Central and Eastern Europe also, in majority, had this level significantly lower than Poland. For example, in Czechoslovakia only 35% of the population was rural, in Hungary it was 52% (Landau, and Tomaszewski 40). The rural nature of the Polish society had its

impact both on the economy and the direction of the reform that should be carried out by the authorities. Land reform became an urgent issue, as Poland inherited an anarchical land structure. About 30 thousand landowners owned almost 50% of the land, meanwhile there were more than 2 millions small landowner (less than 5 ha) that owned 14% of the total rural land. About 3 million people that did not own any land lived in the countryside (Albert 111). The issue of land reform was discussed from the very beginning. However, the fact of war with Russia and the urgent necessity of defending a recently regained independence resulted in postponing the majority of important structural reforms. As a result the land distribution was very slow and ineffective. What also constitutes an important factor are the differences between the rural areas in different parts of the country. Agriculture was quite modern in the western provinces of Wielkopolska and Pomerania. The percentage of the population working in agriculture was also the lowest. Meanwhile, in the eastern frontier, agriculture was based on ineffective production methods, with anarchical land distribution with the great majority of the population working in this sector of the economy (in such provinces as Polesie more than 80% of the population worked in agriculture) (Landau, and Tomaszewski 43).

As the Polish Republic was based on territories that earlier had been under foreign control, it is natural that there was a significant number of people of different nationalities in the newly independent country. According to the data, one third of Poland's population was of non-Polish origin. The most numerous were Ukrainians – almost 4 million people (14% of total population of Poland) that were living mainly in south-east Poland. The second one were Belarusians – about 1 million (4%) that lived in the eastern parts of the country. In the west there was a German minority of nearly one million (4%). The number of Lithuanian origin was much smaller – about 70 thousand. Together with the Czechs, Russians and representatives of other small minorities, they constituted about 1% of the population of Poland. Finally, there has to be mention of the Jewish population that counted more than 2.5 million people, which was 8% of the general population (Wiśniewska, and Wyszczelski 39). It is important to notice that representatives of those minorities had mostly an unfriendly attitude toward the Polish Republic. Germans from the very beginning questioned the fact of the existence of independent Poland. As they were concentrated on the territories that directly bordered the German Republic they maintained fervent contact with it. Territorial disputes were the cause of hostile relations between the Lithuanian minority and the Polish authorities and population. Also, the majority of Ukrainians and Belarusians were hostile toward Polish independence. The first group because of national tensions with Poles based on historical factors but also on the events that accompanied the state-construction processes in Central Europe in the aftermath of World War I. There were also supporters of Bolshevik Russia and turning Poland into a socialist republic incorporated into Russia among some Ukrainians. As Belarusians did not have a very strong national identity, they perceived Poles mostly through a social class division. As they were an overwhelmingly peasant population and the Poles that were living in the eastern regions were mostly land owners, the hostile attitude was the effect of a social clash. The Bolshevik sentiments were also very popular among the Jewish population that lived in Poland. The national case in the situation of Poland between the two World Wars was very difficult not only because of numbers. Poland, as a new state that emerged

after the Great War was obliged by foreign powers to ratify the so called "small Versailles Treaty". In its intention it had to be a guarantee for national minorities that existed in new states before discriminatory practices of those states. However, as it was in case in Poland, it did not work according to the rule of reciprocity. In this situation, for example the German minority in Poland, from the very beginning, constantly used this treaty to accuse Polish authorities of discriminatory practices and claimed new postulates, however the Polish minority in Germany did not have that possibility. Taking the significant percentage of other national minorities and, in general, their hostile attitude toward Polish state into account, it should also be classified as a factor that made the rebuilding process even more difficult. It also created an important danger and – as the behavior of German minorities in 1939 showed – it was not only hypothetical danger.

The process of rebuilding and the consolidation of the state in the new realities – as demonstrated in the case of Poland in 1918 and the years that followed the regaining of independence – is not an easy one. However, this is not only in the case of countries that emerged after years of its absence on the political map of the world. The example of Mexico also shows that internal turmoil and revolutionary changes can create a new order and the necessity of building the state from the beginning. This does not necessarily include territorial recovery but almost all aspects of the functioning of the state are subjects of change and sometimes, total transformation. In this sense, Mexico in 1917 was – like Poland – a reborn nation.

The case of Mexico

The Latin American continent was quite away from World War I that was concentrated in Europe. Latin American countries did not participate in the military campaigns of the war. However, they carefully observed the events as for them the First World War was principally an economic issue. With its almost endless resources of agricultural products and natural resources Latin America, in a short time, became a crucial region as a source of import of almost everything by the countries involved in a military struggle. Mexico in this context is a special case. As it did not participate directly in combat on the fronts of the war, it was a subject of important diplomatic plots that made Mexico, at certain times, a hot issue in relations between the Central Powers and the Entente Allies. With its rich reserves of oil Mexico was an attractive partner for both sides of the conflict. As the internal situation of Mexico was extremely difficult and full of internal conflicts, the diplomacy of different countries tried to take advantage of this and assure themselves access to Mexican oil. Germany was among those countries in which diplomacy was quite active in Mexico. Some even can say that it was the Mexican affair that caused US military involvement against the Central Powers and the declaration of war. There are no doubts that the decision of President Woodrow Wilson to join the military struggle against Germany and its allies had an important impact on Mexico. It is worth noting that the US-Mexican relations were very difficult during the presidential term of Woodrow Wilson. As it was the time of revolutionary struggle in Mexico, his administration did not recognize the new government of Victoriano Huerta who took power in effect of the unconstitutional overthrow of President Francisco Madero. In the aftermath

of this event, the Wilson administration announced that it would not recognize any Mexican government that would appear by violating the Mexican constitution. Later on, the so called non-recognition strategy became the official doctrine of US Latin American policy during the presidential term of Woodrow Wilson. Meanwhile there was also a constant danger of US military intervention in Mexico. First, it was the effect of the crisis in mutual relations that resulted from the incident in the Mexican port of Tampico. On April 9, 1914 the commander of the Mexican troops in Tampico ordered the arrest of several US marines from the USS Dolphin that was visiting the port. This caused a deep diplomatic crisis between both states and resulted in a US military intervention where the American marines took control of the port of Veracruz. In fact, the escalation of the conflict between Mexico and the United States in that time was undesired for both sides. Mexico was in the center of the internal revolutionary struggle for a few years. Meanwhile, the United States carefully observed the situation in Europe where the tensions between the countries could have caused an eruption of great military conflict at any moment. In the end both countries were seeking the possibility of a peaceful resolution of this unexpected crisis. As the bilateral relations between the Wilson administration and president Huerta were not friendly, they willingly used the offer of mediation presented by the diplomatic representatives of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (the so called ABC group).

Bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States were also affected by revolutionary changes that took place in this first country. The culmination of these changes was the adoption of the new Constitution in February 1917. US investors in Mexico were highly preoccupied by the new laws that were characterized by firm nationalism and an unwillingness toward foreign capital. Even in the years before the adoption of the new Constitution in Mexico, there was strong pressure on president Wilson to undertake more firm steps toward the situation in Mexico. For them, the revolutionary turmoil was highly undesirable and was causing a significant economic losses. It was already quite visible during the American presidential campaign in 1912 when a group of 21 US companies that had their interests in Mexico supported the candidacy of Evans Hughes who promised to maintain a military intervention to establish order in Mexico (Matute 14). Meanwhile, Article 27 of the new constitution introduced statements that could really worry foreign investors among who the most numerous were those from the United States. This article assured the adoption of new agrarian legislation that would introduce land reform. It also gave the Mexican nation control over the underground and natural resources and subjected property to the modes that public interest demanded. Foreign investors were afraid that this gave Mexican authorities the possibility of acquisitions of foreign properties. For several years this issue was one of the most difficult topics in bilateral relations between both countries. In effect of such an interpretation of this article by foreign companies, significant pressure on US presidents to use force toward the Mexican government to repeal this law was still present. Firm tensions based on the problem of foreign properties in Mexico and Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917 were accompanied by military activity at the Mexican-American border. Hostility erupted at the beginning of March 1916 when the famous Division del Norte led by Francisco "Pancho" Villa attacked the town of Columbus on American territory. The immediate response of the Wilson administration was the mobilization of several thousand soldiers commanded by General Pershing. It turn to be the

next US intervention in Mexico as US troops wandered through northern Mexico in search of "Pancho" Villa for several months (Aguilar Camín, and Meyer 63).

The eruption of open conflict was very possible in these circumstances of strong tensions and deep distrust. Also, knowing the bad condition of mutual relations between Mexico and the United States there were attempts of German diplomacy to exploit it for their own interests. Soon after the withdrawal of Pershing's troops from Mexico the news that German diplomacy was trying to capture Mexico to form a kind of anti-American alliance erupted. The encrypted note written by German Foreign Secretary Alfred Zimmermann was sent on January 16, 1917 to Count Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador in Washington, who forwarded it to Heinrich von Eckard, the German minister in Mexico. The so called Zimmermann telegram contained a German proposition for Mexican diplomacy of a joint declaration of war against the United States, financial support for Mexico and the promise of reconquering the territories of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Mexican diplomacy was also asked to invite Japan to the plan of joint attack on the United States. As can be read in the text of the telegram, the German side assured that the presence of their submarine fleet in the Atlantic Ocean would successfully eliminate the danger of the British military response (Zimmermann). The last one presented the proposition to the Mexican government. As the text of the note was intercepted by the Americans, it turned out to be one of the most important arguments in favor of taking a decision about joining the war by the United States and sending American troops to fight against the Central Powers. As one can observe, the international position of Mexico was quite fragile. The neighborhood of the still growing American giant was a constant danger to Mexican security. The military potential of the two countries was incomparable and in the United States there were groups that used to perceive the power argument as an instrument of US foreign policy that should be used to assure a safe environment for American economic interests in Mexico.

As the danger of US military intervention was present in Mexico since the lost war of 1846-1848, the years of the Mexican revolutions are a particular period. When Francisco Madero announced the eruption of the revolution on November 10, 1910 he initiated the struggle for a new Mexico. In this sense, Mexico, after the overthrow of the Porfirio Diaz regime, should appear as a reborn nation, based on new foundations. As Madero's claim to stand for the fight against the Porfirian regime received a positive reaction from various regional leaders, from the very beginning the revolution had not be a monolith. There were a lot of ideas and a lot of regional leaders that viewed post Porfirian Mexico in different ways. In effect, what was planned as a common uprising against Porfirio Diaz turned out to be a decade of internal turmoil with periods of a firm military struggle between representatives of different views on reborn Mexico. For years since the beginning of the revolution Mexicans were unable to form the basis of the new order. Instead of this, there were ten years of long chaos and military struggle. Particular interests of various groups and single leaders, the multiplicity of ideas on how to organize the state after the fall of the Porfirian dictatorship. This multiplicity led to the chaos that resulted in Mexico needing to be reconstructed in almost all dimensions at the turn of 1910s and 1920s.

The term nation reborn perfectly suits Mexico with regard to the final days of the revolutionary battles as the country required a total reconstruction in all

dimensions: political, economic, social, infrastructure, international relations, demography. After the military triumph of the Constitutionalist movement led by Venustiano Carranza, the efforts were oriented toward recovery from the disastrous years of civil wars. However, the recovery was still accompanied by a military struggle with two symbols of the rebellion who were still fighting, Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Taking this into account, the adoption of new constitution in the beginning of 1917 can be marked as moment in which the process of recovery in Mexico began. The cost of the revolutionary decade was the loss of almost 1 million inhabitants. A large part of this amount was the effect of deaths in military battles. However, this also includes people who lost their lives in effect of the epidemics that had been spreading across the country. Additionally, the first wave of massive Mexican emigration to the US appeared during the decade of internal turmoil. The estimated number of emigrants is about 200,000 people (Derwich 146). One of the main aims of the revolutionary leaders was to modernize the country as the heritage of the Porfirian regime was an underdeveloped country. Although the years of Porfiriato were a period of intensive development, benefits were accessible only to a very limited group of the regime's supporters and foreign investors. The Mexican society did not benefit from this at all. The underdevelopment of Mexico is well presented by the social structure. In the final years of revolutionary struggle, 1917-1920, the Mexican society was divided between three sectors: agriculture – 71.4% of the population, industry – 11.5% and services – 17.1% (Matute 201). This had two implications. First, Mexico was a rural country, where the majority of the population lived in rural areas and worked in agriculture. Second, this resulted in the huge necessity of the transformation of Mexican agriculture, mainly in the area of land distribution. That is why land reform was a highly required issue. It should be emphasized that during the revolution, for some of its leaders – principally Emiliano Zapata – the issue of land reform was an absolute priority. As the consciousness of the agrarian problem was wise among revolutionary leaders it found its expression in the new constitution that was adopted in 1917. Article 27 included the promise of land reform. However, as the new elites were based mainly on landowners from the north western part of the country (the state of Sonora) it should not be a surprise that the progress in land distribution was very slow. The policies of the Carranza administration were not directed toward the fulfillment of its own promises of land reform. It was interested in the cooperation with the land owners – *hacendados* – so there was no interest in taking their lands and distributing them to the peasants. Carranza wanted to rejuvenate economic activity through the activation of haciendas as productive units thinking that this would provide a quicker response to the widespread lack of food and high prices that was affecting his government (Aguilar Camín, and Meyer 65). A very restricted attitude toward land reform among the new revolutionary elites had its repercussion in the process of land distribution that was quite limited until the mid-1930s. The proportion of distributed lands and the number of peasants that received it was rather disappointing: in 1917 – 7,000 hectares for 2,797 persons, 1918 – 75,000 hectares for 17,868 people, 1919 – 115 hectares for 32,816 and in 1920 – 180,000 hectares for 48,382 persons (Matute 202).

In general, the economic cost of the Mexican revolution was estimated by the experts at 37% in terms of GDP not produced. Apart from the oil industry, all others

suffered a significant decline. The global agricultural production of the country had grown at an annual rate of 4.4% between 1895 and 1910. Between 1910 and 1921 it fell at an average rate of 5.25 and it became just half of what the maximum Porfirian production had been. The agricultural exports, which constituted about 31.6% of the total export in 1910, fell to only 3.3% in 1921. The second most important sector of the Mexican economy was mining. It suffered a similar disastrous impact of the revolutionary period as agriculture. Its production fell at an annual rate of 4%, from 1.309 million pesos in 1910 to 620 million pesos in 1921 (Aguilar Camín, and Meyer 71). Revolutionary turmoil accompanied by series of civil wars was a total disaster for the Mexican infrastructure. As one of the main characteristics of the Porfirian era was the enormous development of railways and telegraph lines, a majority of that was devastated during the struggle. However, during the military battles the new leaders observed benefits that developed transport and communication infrastructure that is why after concluding the military engagement, it was one of the fastest recovering sectors. Recovery in the mining sector was quite efficient. Already in the end of the second decade of the 20th century, increased levels of the extraction of gold, silver and copper could be observed (Matute 205). However, the most important natural resource and export good was oil. The internal chaos did not stop the fast growing oil extraction. If in 1910 the Mexican oil industry extracted about 200 thousand barrels, in 1921 it was more than 15 million barrels (Derwich 147). In effect, at the beginning of the 1920s, Mexico was one of the largest producers of oil in the world. For the economy that was destroyed by the years of military struggle it quickly became the fundamental source of income. As the Porfirian era was the time of economic development, it also touched industry. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, Mexico was a country where the industrial sector was not the basis of the economy but was developing quickly and its role in the economy was increasing. The revolutionary period, however, was equally disastrous for the Mexican industrial sector as for its agriculture or mining. As Mexican workers were one of the first who rose up against Porfirio Díaz regime, their expectation of revolutionary changes in their economic and social situations were big. However, similarly to the peasants, the new elites represented by Carranza and the Constitutionalist movement were not interested in revolutionary reforms and changes in the social area. The disadvantage of the workers situation – again in comparison to the rural sector – was that they were distracted and did not have a strong leader, as for example Zapata was for the majority of peasants. It could be “Pancho” Villa who tried to unite the workers in the northern regions of the country but his lack of a clear vision and idea of reforms declassifies him as someone more than just a military leader. As the socialist and anarchist ideas and organizations were quite numerous among Mexican workers already before the eruption of the revolution, they broadly used strikes as an instrument in their struggle for social reforms. It was common during the final years of the Porfirian era, during the revolutionary struggles and did not stop during the time of recovery. Venustiano Carranza, similarly to Porfirio Díaz, turned out to be unable to talk and cooperate with Mexican workers. The critical confrontation took place in the end of July 1916, when the unions of the Federal District declared a general strike. Carranza’s response was harsh and one can say in Porfirian style – he declared martial law, dissolved the electrician’s union meetings with the army and decreed the death

penalty for workers associated with any proposition or attempt of striking (Aguilar Camín, and Meyer 66). As relations between workers and the Constitutionalist movement that took power in the final years of revolutionary struggle cannot be described as friendly, their major demands were realized. First in the general agreement in 1915 and finally in Article 123 of the Constitution of 1917. A broad spectrum of social claims presented by Mexican workers at least since the beginning of the 20th century was completed. Any other Latin American country assured so wide a catalogue of workers' rights as it was in the Mexican Constitution of 1917. Together with the increased position of workers in the Mexican society it was one of the social groups that benefited most in a long perspective (Łepkowski 424).

There are no doubts that some of the main reasons for the revolution were political ones. It was an increasing desire to end more than three decades of the Porfirio Díaz regime but it was also a growing consciousness of the inclusion of sectors that were marginalized into public life. In political terms, one of the first and most important factors was the Constitution of 1917. The impact of its adoption was perfectly expressed by Frank Tannenbaum, who wrote: "The Constitutional Convention of 1917 was the most important single event in the history of the Revolution... Whatever may be said about this Convention and all possible things both good and bad have been said, it once and for all set a definitive legal program for the Mexican Revolution, and laid the legal foundation for all of the conflicting currents of the last fifteen years." (Tannenbaum 166). As the aim of every single revolution is to create a new political, economic and social reality, the Mexican Revolution was not as revolutionary as one could expect. It is beyond any doubts that the Revolution created a new political and economic elite. As the *científicos* – as the Porfirian elite used to be called – were ousted from power and any influence and were ultimately replaced by the new elite. First by the *sonorenses* – a group of military, political and economic leaders from north west Mexico. Later by the elite related to the "revolutionary" party created by Plutarco Elias Calles in 1928 that for decades was known as the *PRI* – *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*. The revolution that in the intention of Francisco Madero should result in establishing a democratic political system, produced a new authoritarian regime. In the aftermath of the Revolution, the Mexican state turned into a strong and centralized one. The old elite was replaced by the new one with the same desire to preserve its monopoly on power using all the available economic, political and social means to do so. In this sense, it was a continuity of the Porfirian regime and it did not make a revolutionary change (Łepkowski 425). The Constitution of 1917 reduced the power of Congress meanwhile it enlarged the competences of the executive power represented by the president. As the rule of checks and balances was quite ignored by the authors of the Constitution, the consequence was a slow but permanent expansion of the executive power (Schettino 94). As the Mexican revolution is hard to put in the time frames, because it is not restricted to the period of military struggle, it had various phases or faces. Some were more revolutionary – as the *sexenio* of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) – others were much more restricted and revealed their authoritarian nature – as for example Gustavo Díaz Ortiz (1964–1970). It seems that Mexico reborn was much more revolutionary in terms of nationalism and social aspects than in the area of the political system. As Enrique Krauze rightly points, Articles 27 and 123 were the most revolutionary elements of the new Constitution. The first one returned "the original ownership of lands and

waters" to "the Nation". The Nation, by which are mean all Mexicans, had the right to "transfer control to individuals, creating private property". Obviously, this capacity to create private property implied the complementary right to revoke it in the name of the public interest. And if the Nation – that was understand as a State – was to be the ultimate owner of the land, it would also own what lay beneath the surface. In effect it also became the owner of all natural resources, with oil as the most important one. According to Krauze, only Bolsheviks in Russia revolutionized the concept of property more than the Mexican Revolution did in Mexican and international law (Krauze 359-360). The same can be said about the social rights mentioned in Article 123. I was definitely inspired by the socialist trends so popular in the first decades of the 20th century. As these included an eight hour day, the abolition of child labor, provisions to protect working women and adolescents, required holidays or a reasonable salary paid in cash, it was probably the first Constitution in the world that was so progressive in the social dimension.

Conclusions

Talking about Mexico reborn in the aftermath of the Revolution is not as obvious as in the case of Poland. The Polish state was returning to the family of independent states after over 12 decades of inexistence. As the Polish national identity survived, despite strong efforts of Russian, Prussian and to a lesser extent Austrian, it was a strong foundation on which new Polish state could be rebuilt. However, the reality was completely different to that when Poland was divided between three neighboring powers. The new republic emerged in a different international system. With Germany defeated in the war, the Austro-Hungarian empire already disappeared meanwhile in the east the Bolshevik Russia replaced its Tsarist predecessor. In effect of the different borderlines and migrations that had been taking place during the inexistence of the Polish state, its social and ethnic characteristics were also different. In the case of Mexico, the situation is not so obvious. However, if one takes the chaos that seized Mexico for several years and the level of destruction that was result of firm military struggle into account, talking about Mexico being reborn in the aftermath of the Revolution seems to be proper. As the area of politics was in general resistant to revolutionary changes, other sectors of Mexican public life were much more revolutionized. In effect of the constitutional changes dedicated to the land and natural resources property, it also created a new equilibrium for Mexico in the international system. As it was much more noticeable by foreign companies and land owners than common citizens, the changed rules of land and natural resources owning created serious difficulties in Mexico's relations with other countries. The United States, Great Britain and France – the most important foreign investors in Mexico prior to the Revolution – tried to pressure the Mexican authorities to revoke the new law. As an instrument of pressure they stopped buying Mexican oil that was a crucial source of income for Mexico. Meanwhile Germany, another significant economic partner before the Revolution, could not restore its position as a result of its defeat in World War I. For new authorities in both countries the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with other countries was one of the important elements of strengthening their position in international relations. As both nations

were recovering from extremely difficult situations, it was important for them to build their new role in the international system which was not as friendly as one could expect.

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