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**ROMAN DMOWSKI'S OPINION ABOUT
THE ATTITUDE OF JEWS TOWARDS
THE REBIRTH OF THE POLISH STATE**

Dmowski witnessed the outbreak of WW I in July 1914 in Germany on his way back from Switzerland to Królestwo Polskie (Polish Kingdom). He managed to get through Sweden, Finland to reach Petersburg in August, from where he got through to Warsaw. Before the war, Dmowski in collaboration with Liga Narodowa (National League) decided which political direction was to be pursued in case of war¹. The war between the partitioning powers was to be taken advantage of for Poland's sake. The war was to lead to the rebirth of the Polish state. Dmowski, however, did not have adequate financial means, army or diplomacy. He was not even fully supported by the majority of the Polish society. This is why, wanting to make all of the supporters of his conception to co-operate, he initiated establishing Komitet Narodowy Polski (Polish National Committee) in Warsaw in November 1914². The next objective was to make the Polish issue international. As a result he left Królestwo and eventually settled down in London to promulgate Polish national interests³. The situation in Europe was not conducive then, however, to any success in the matter since France and England assumed that the Polish issue was an internal affair of Russia's. The circumstances changed in 1917 when the tsar regime was abolished by the February revolution carried out by Communists. As a result, Pi-

¹ Z. Berezowski, *Roman Dmowski*, „Polityka Narodowa” I–II 1939, no 1–2, p. 15.

² KNP consisted of: Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne, Stronnictwo Polityki Realnej and a group of politicians who were not members of any party. KNP believed itself to be a representative of Poland vis-a-vis Russia and other Entente's states.

³ R. Wapiński, *Roman Dmowski*, Lublin 1989, p. 220 and ff.

otrogradzka Rada Delegatów Robotniczych i Żołnierskich (Petersburg Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) published an appeal on 27 March 1917, while Rząd Tymczasowy (Temporary Government) – on 29 March, in which they wrote about the right of nations to decide about their fate. As a result, Dmowski gained new opportunities to pursue the Polish issue since Russia's allies decided in favour of independent Poland as well⁴.

Dmowski was keen on most advantageous decisions concerning the rebirth of the Polish state⁵. As himself testifies, he was hindered in his action by Jews. The tension growing already before the war in Polish-Jewish relations did not exclude a potential compromise with that population. However, activities they had undertaken at the disadvantage of the Polish interests during the war drove a deeper wedge between the two nationalities⁶. Growing importance of Jewish nationalism – zionism⁷ and awareness that Jews constituted a separate nation, related to it, were the reason. Their aim was therefore to win a territory where to create their own state⁸. Dmowski believed that Jews, owing to their financial power built over years, owing to their influence on top positions in many countries, made an impact on politics of European states, disregarding to which war party they belonged, hence they made an impact on the status of the Polish issue⁹.

Initially, the Jewish influence was not felt because during the war they supported central states. In Germany they owned major branches of economy: the banking sector, commerce and industry. This was why

⁴ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. I, Warszawa 1988, p. 348 and ff.; A. Czubiński, *Polska odrodzona. Społeczne i polityczne aspekty rozwoju odrodzonego państwa polskiego. Rozprawy i studia*, Poznań 1982, p. 19 and ff.

⁵ In his programme of incorporation, Dmowski demanded that the future Poland contain ethnically Polish territories in the South and the West, including Śląsk, Pomorze, while in the East – that the border of 1772 be re-established with some corrections.

⁶ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, Warszawa 1988, p. 44 and ff.

⁷ Zionism was created by Teodor Herzl, who in 1896 published a book *Państwo żydowskie* [The Jewish state]. The movement's programme was presented in 1897 during I Zionist Congress in Basel. It envisaged, among others, establishing an independent Jewish state in Palestine, collaboration of Jews from all over the world, blocking the process of their assimilation and promulgating emigration to Palestine.

⁸ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 46.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

they linked the German expansion to Central and Eastern Europe to the expansion of their sphere of influence, and what follows from it – with acquiring territories. The situation in Austro-Hungary was similar – Jews intercepted power to such an extent that believed it was their own country which they should defend. Anti-Semite Russia, where Jews constituted the biggest diaspora in the world then, was in turn recognised as their main enemy. The majority of the Russian Jews lived in the Polish territory, which earned the name of a European homeland of the Jewish population. This is why they aimed either at total collapse of the Polish issue or making the reborn state as weak as possible for this was the easy way to take control of it and win land for themselves. Only after the Russian revolution, which abolished the anti-Semite state and when the United States joined the war (6 April 1917) the Jewish population took the side of the Entente's states. Zygmunt Berezowski, related to National Democrats, wrote that „since the moment, their struggle against the Polish politics became more and more dangerous, their influence grew, especially over the English government”¹⁰. The 1917 Balfour declaration may serve as an example¹¹, or – in Dmowski's opinion, Lloyd George's, the British Prime Minister's, good attitude to Jews¹². Big influence of Jews was also visible in the USA. The Jewish minority in the States was able to make an impact both on American authorities and the public opinion. Such was the news from Ignacy Paderewski, who stayed in the USA since 1915 as a representative of Narodowy Komitet Polski. His job was to win support of the American nation for the Polish issue, which was greatly helped by the fame of a great artist – piano player he enjoyed there as well as making acquaintance with colonel Edward House – a friend and advisor to President Woodrow Wilson¹³. His job included also mounting defense against anti-Polish attacks made by Jews who perceived the Polish national movement as anti-Semitic.

¹⁰ Z. Berezowski, *Roman Dmowski...*, p. 20.

¹¹ Arthur Balfour – British minister of foreign affairs, agreed in the declaration on behalf of Great Britain, the mandatary of Palestine then, to secure an area where Jews could settle down.

¹² R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 62.

¹³ L. Pastusiak, *Prezydenci amerykańscy wobec spraw polskich*, Warszawa 1992, p. 52 and ff; J. Zamoyski, *Powrót na mapę. Polski Komitet Narodowy w Paryżu 1914–1919*, Warszawa 1991, p. 45; J. Wędrawski, *Stany Zjednoczone a odrodzenie Polski. Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec sprawy polskiej i Polski w latach 1916–1919*, Wrocław 1980, p. 23 and ff.

As far as postulates made by Jews are concerned, the situation in the US was worse – in terms of the Polish rebirth – than in Great Britain, Jewish population demanded equal citizen rights from Poles in the future state. American Jews made further demands on Poles so that in free Poland the Jewish minority would be granted national rights. Paderewski tried to reach a compromise with the Jewish population all the more so that anti-Polish propaganda in the States became ever more intense¹⁴. To this end he asked KNP to issue a statement to define the status of Jews in Poland¹⁵. American Jews thought the statement not sufficient despite the fact that it guaranteed equal rights to all Polish citizens irrespective of their race or religion¹⁶. President of the American Jews Committee, Louis Marshall, explained the attitude was caused by the danger revealed by the Romanian precedence (Romania did not grant Jews equal citizen rights assuming that they were foreigners) as well as distrust in relation to Dmowski¹⁷. Nevertheless, he suggested a meeting be held.

Dmowski came to the USA in August 1918. Having talked to Paderewski, he assumed that the anti-Polish campaign went too far, which meant that new opportunities to fight the Jewish influence and neutralize it were to be sought¹⁸. Dmowski's first meeting with President W. Wilson took place on 13 September 1918. During the meeting he explained in detail both the Polish issue and the underside of the European politics¹⁹. As he stated afterwards, Wilson did not comprehend fully

¹⁴ See: T. Radzik, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki w latach 1918–1921*, Lublin 1988, p. 16 and ff.

¹⁵ So called II KNP was active under Dmowski's leadership then. Created in Lausanne on 15 August 1917, it moved to Paris and tended to rebuild Poland on the basis of the Entente coalition. It was subsequently recognized by governments of France, England, Italy and the USA to be an official representative of Poland. It ceased to act on 15 July 1919. More on the subject see in: J. Zamojski, *Powrót na mapę...*; M. Leczyk, *Komitet Narodowy Polski a Ententa i Stany Zjednoczone 1917–1919*, Warszawa 1966; J. Pajewski, *Wokół sprawy polskiej. Paryż–Łozanna–Londyn 1914–1918*, Poznań 1970.

¹⁶ Cf. T. Radzik, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie...*, p. 17; M. Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji do kwestii żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1918–1939*, Wrocław 1998, p. 20.

¹⁷ M. Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji...*, p. 21.

¹⁸ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 84–85.

¹⁹ W. Wilson asked Dmowski to send him maps of the Polish state describing territories which were to be included in it and explaining why.

European matters, he simplified them frequently²⁰. Dmowski, wanting to win support of the American public opinion for the Polish issue, began to make waves in the American press which was interested in the international significance of the Polish issue. He wanted to neutralize the anti-Polish action by Jews in such a way.

The first meeting of Dmowski and L. Marshall was held shortly after the former's arrival to the USA. During the meeting he was told that Jews were Polish enemies because they were persecuted in Poland by means of a systematic economic boycott. As L. Marshall is believed to state: „Jews prefer pogrom to boycott”²¹. Dmowski was pressed then to stop the boycott which led to making the Polish Jews suffer from hunger. Dmowski agreed on the condition that Jews would cease to hinder the unification of the Polish state and would join in their recovery. The meeting brought no results for neither of the parties wanted to make any concessions²².

The next meeting of Dmowski and Paderewski with the leaders of the American Jews was held on 14 October. However, the earlier scenario was repeated. Dmowski, asked to issue an appeal to prohibit boycotting Jews, made it dependent on a statement encouraging the Jewish population to join the struggle for the independent Poland. This proved to be unacceptable for the Jewish party who also proposed a Jewish representative be included in KNP. Although Dmowski and Paderewski did not oppose, this was not done for no person was identified who could be accepted by both of the parties at the same time²³.

Lacking consensus meant losing an opportunity to forge a Polish-Jewish agreement. L. Marshall presented to president W. Wilson Jewish postulates concerning the status of Jews on the Polish territory. According to the postulates, Jews were to be allowed to keep citizenship of any of the partitioning powers as well as be granted equal citizen rights in Poland. Apart from this, they were to enjoy religious and cultural autonomy, equal status of their language, all Saturdays were to be free as well as all kinds of discrimination eliminated²⁴. After

²⁰ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 86.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

²² See more: *ibidem*, p. 93 and ff.; M. Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji...*, p. 22; T. Radzik, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie...*, p. 19 and ff.

²³ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 94.

²⁴ T. Radzik, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie...*, p. 21.

Dmowski's departure, American Jews started to carry out the anti-Polish campaign anew. At the same time they sent letters to the American administration informing about Jewish pogroms that were supposedly planned in the Polish territory – as a way to make the administration take the Jewish side on the issue of Jewish national autonomy in Poland²⁵.

During his stay in the USA, Dmowski faced crystallized demands from the Jewish party who did not want to give them up and what is more, who took advantage of Dmowski in their anti-Polish propaganda showing he was not interested in a dialogue. The attitude of American Jews was not dependent on his action, which Dmowski realized writing that: „when my stay in the USA was approaching its end, on this issue I knew the same as I had known before I arrived to America – namely that during the peace conference Jews would be the most violent enemies of our case”²⁶.

Before the opening of the Peace Conference (18 January 1919) in Paris, Jewish propaganda aimed against Poland was developed in the West, especially in the USA. They counted on painting the Polish case black in the eyes of the powers and broaching the Jewish issue during the conference²⁷. Jews were aware of their influence. As Ezra Mendelsohn writes: „they dispose of significant means of exerting influence, which they had not known before and would not happen afterwards”²⁸. They had influence over governments in the US and England. Berlin was in addition itself interested in their defending German interests in Paris, which – according to Dmowski – had already been sealed by the German-Jewish pact as early as November 1918²⁹. Dmowski, realising the danger, commanded Stanisław Grabski to reach an agreement with the Polish Jews. In return for their support for the Polish territorial programme, they were to be guaranteed that anti-Semitism would be elimi-

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 22–23.

²⁶ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 94.

²⁷ KNP was in a difficult position then because it did not have any quick means to communicate with the country to react immediately to the rumour. As it later turned out, the events that had taken place in Poland then were directed against individuals (including Jews) who stored food, made unfair profit on it, were supportive of the Bolsheviks. See: T. Radzik, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie...*, p. 22–23; R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 115.

²⁸ E. Mendelsohn, *Żydzi Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w okresie międzywojennym*, Warszawa 1992, p. 57.

²⁹ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 105.

nated in Poland³⁰. The agreement was never reached, though. According to Antoni Czubiński the failure was caused by the Polish Zionists' idea to create a state of Judeo-Polonia. The conception to create a Jewish state in Palestine seemed distant to Jews, which was why they wanted to create a bi-national, Polish-Jewish state in the Polish territory, within which both nations would be equal. In return, they wanted to support Polish territorial demands as well as lead to establishing the most advantageous Eastern border of Poland. In case Poles did not agree, they threatened to resume anti-Polish action³¹.

The Peace Conference was to shape a new post-war political order. The fundamental objective was however to prepare a treaty with Germany, which was related to the issue of marking the Polish-German border. I. Paderewski and R. Dmowski were Polish representatives. The US, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan played decisive roles as the states which were engaged in and won the war. Smaller states were granted the right to speak on the issues that were directly pertinent to them. Decisions were to be taken by the High Council. The Japanese representative did not deal in Central and Eastern European issues. Italy was also mainly interested in those issues that pertained itself. As a result, English, American and French voices counted only while taking decisions concerning the Polish issue. The Polish issue was dealt with by a committee chaired by the French ambassador in Germany Jules Cambon. The committee comprised representatives of the four victorious European states. All of them supportive of Poland to a great extent³².

As far as the attitude of the allied powers to Poland is concerned, the attitude of France was positive for it perceived that a strong Polish state would further weaken its enemy – Germany. Dmowski believed also, in spite of the Jewish pressure, in a friendly attitude on the part of President W. Wilson. The situation was much more difficult in the case of England. Initially, when A. Balfour, Minister of Foreign Affairs was responsible for the British politics at the conference, Dmowski had no reason to complain about anti-Polish action. As a result, Cambon's committee approved the Polish – German border as proposed by

³⁰ S. Grabski, *Pamiętniki*, vol. II, Warszawa 1989, p. 83.

³¹ A. Czubiński, *Historia Polski XX wieku*, Poznań 2000, p. 114 and ff.

³² R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 130; A. Czubiński, *Najnowsze dzieje Polski 1914–1983*, Warszawa 1987, p. 64 and ff.

Dmowski to a large degree³³. In the blueprint, presented on 12 March 1919, it was decided that Górny Śląsk, Poznańskie, excluding some small Germanized areas, Western Prussia with Gdańsk, Kwidzyń district and other parts of land would be returned to Poland so that the whole railway line Warszawa–Gdańsk was included in the Polish territory. The plan was not implemented for this was when British Prime Minister Lloyd George arrived to Paris.

Dmowski thought Lloyd George was subordinated to Jewish interests, while the interests, he believed, were concurrent with Germany's. Dmowski linked the initial absence of Lloyd George within the first months of the Versailles conference and concurrently, lacking Jewish activity there with the fact that he had to strengthen his position in England first, take control over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which represented England and made decisions on its behalf during the conference. Not long after the British Prime Minister appeared in Paris, Jews, so far passive, became more active. According to Dmowski this happened when Jewish representatives from all over the world had elaborated a common policy, which was also inclusive of the German-Jewish pact³⁴. Komitet Delegacji Żydowskich na Konferencję Pokojową [Committee of the Delegates for the Peace Conference] was created, which comprised representatives of the milieux from e.g. the USA, England, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Palestine. It was chaired by American delegates L. Marshall and Julius Mack, who tried to influence the powers' decisions in the pertinent issues. The moment Lloyd George did not approve of the Cambon's committee's project, accusing it of not taking into account German postulates, Dmowski realized that the supportive attitude of England was over due to the Jewish influence.

England or rather, its Prime Minister was unwilling to further weaken Germany for several reasons. Old, traditional, anti-French orientation which originated as far back as the eighteenth century and the cooperation between England and Prussia, were among them³⁵. In both

³³ As far as the Western border is concerned, Dmowski demanded the Polish part of Śląsk Cieszyński, Spisz, Orawa, Górny Śląsk, all of Western Prussia as well as a zone wide enough to secure the possession of Gdańsk and Olsztyn region (Eastern Prussia).

³⁴ See: R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 125.

³⁵ W. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski. Okres 1914–1939*, Gdańsk 1990, p. 264 and ff.

countries, as Dmowski maintained, there already existed modern masonry, which made it possible for ruling elites to influence the course of affairs in other countries, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe³⁶. Dmowski in turn, already before the war saw that international organization, masonry first of all, were more and more controlled by cosmopolitan Jews who gained ever bigger influence in the states' economies. Such was the manner in which Jews started to influence England, where people of Jewish, German or Jewish-German descent occupied many top positions in the state³⁷. Dmowski was sure that the war did not cut through the English-German ties despite the fact that the two countries found themselves on opposing sides. He was convinced, since that moment, that all of the moves by Lloyd George which were inimical to the Polish interests were animated by Jews, who also represented German interests. Dmowski wrote: „England could be not friendly towards Poland but only Jews could be so violently inimical towards her”³⁸.

The English Prime Minister quickly launched a campaign to change the first project prepared by the Cambon Committee. He first won approval of a plebiscite to be held in four districts on the right bank of the Vistula, including Kwidzyń. Next he broached the issue of Gdańsk which was, by the accord of W. Wilson and the French Prime Minister Clemenceau to be included in Poland. A compromise was struck according to which Gdańsk would be granted the status of a free city under the aegis of the League of Nations³⁹. Having acquainted himself with the already corrected border project by the German delegation, the British Prime Minister issued a statement concerning Śląsk as well. He decided against the interest of Poland in this case as well, voting for a plebiscite to be held there. W. Wilson surrendered not wanting to prolong his stay in Europe and wishing to end the conference quickly. Apart from this, Lloyd George insisted that the plebiscite would bring results favourable to Poland and would reinforce its

³⁶ Dmowski claimed that the influence of the Prussian masonry was responsible for the existence of Polish organizations to support central states before and during the war. The British Prime Minister often stressed during the conference that Poland helped Germany more than the Entente's states.

³⁷ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 141 and ff; J. Zamojski, *Powrót na mapę...*, p. 90.

³⁸ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 148.

³⁹ More: L. Pastusiak, *Prezydenci amerykańscy...*, p. 62; R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 150 and ff.

claims to the territory⁴⁰. Dmowski was to say afterwards that it had not been a „struggle with England but with Germany advocated by Lloyd”⁴¹.

The minority treaty, which Poland had to sign as it constituted an integral part of the Versailles treaty, was however the biggest success of the Jews. Both were then signed on 28 June 1919. Dmowski learned about the preparation of the project in the second half of June. The project aimed at protecting national minorities in newly established states as well as in smaller states. Dmowski immediately saw that Jews were at stake⁴². According to him, Jews, by underhand and secretive dealings, wanted to have rights guaranteed to themselves in Central and Eastern Europe. Jews in Poland demanded, among others, to be recognized as a national minority and be granted autonomy within the Polish state. They demanded Hebrew and Jidish were equalled in status with Polish, sabbath was not violated, Jewish system of education established, Jewish curia created⁴³. The High Council did not approve of all of the demands however, hence not all of them were included in the small Versailles Treaty. National autonomy, special political rights or specific status of Jewish population were not envisaged in the Treaty. Even Lloyd George accused Jews of wanting to create a state within a state⁴⁴.

The signing of the Treaty guaranteed Polish Western border. The agreed conditions did not satisfy Dmowski fully; he did not think that Gdańsk would be established as a free city or plebiscites would be organized. The Eastern border remained to be discussed. Dmowski perceived anti-Polish activities of Jews and those opposing strong Poland in this case as well. Already during the war, Germany, occupying Lithuanian territories motivated the population against Poland, supporting their national ambitions. In the West, in turn, the masonry – according to Dmowski – tried to make fuss about the Lithuanian issue and separate it from joint negotiations with the Polish issue⁴⁵. Moreover, Jews supported incorporation of Vilnius in Lithuania counting that they would quickly gain influence in the Lithuanian state as they constituted

⁴⁰ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 155.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 180.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁴³ More: M. Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji...*, p. 38 and ff.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. II, p. 176 and ff.

a significant of the population of in city⁴⁶. Such an attitude made the British Prime Minister support the solution to the problem to the disadvantage of Poles.

Dmowski, watching the Peace Conference to develop, came to the conviction that in many issues that were important to Poland the opinion of England prevailed. The British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, who was an instrument of the Jewish politics, „consciously struggled to save what might be saved from the German programme”⁴⁷. Views of Roman Dmowski evolved thus considerably over the few years. Before the war he believed that the Jewish issue could be seen through economic problems or weak self-organization of the Polish society. Introducing the postulate to boycott Jewish commerce, he created a space in which the Polish-Jewish relations might deteriorate. The war period and the Versailles conference witnessed in turn open rivalry between the two societies, which made it impossible for Dmowski to accept any compromise between them.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 179.