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THE WARMIA, MASURIA AND POWIŚLE PLEBISCITE ON THE FORUM OF THE LEGISLATIVE SEJM 1919–1920

Słowa kluczowe: plebiscyt, Powiśle, Sejm Ustawodawczy, Warmia i Mazury, stosunki polsko-niemieckie

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The 100th anniversary of the Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle plebiscite encourages interest in its developmental history and pattern of voting results\(^1\). Could Poland have taken action that would have contributed to a better outcome of the vote in these circumstances? Historiography mentions many reasons for the results of the plebiscite, so unfavourable for Poland, and one of the important ones is the lack of interest on the part of the Polish government\(^2\). When searching for an answer to this question, we should take into account the multiple and complicated internal and external conditions of the emerging Polish state, but also the actions of the Polish authorities towards the Masurians and the Warmians. It is worth noting the position of Poland in Europe, a country that regained its independence after 123 years, and the realistic possibilities of achieving the goals and territorial aspirations of the Polish nation. In the early period of shaping the state policy, the Legislative Sejm played a significant role; it was composed of representatives of Polish society

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and addressed important problems of the Polish state, therefore it is worth explaining its interest in the plebiscites in Warmia and Masuria and Powiśle. The issues of the plebiscite at the Legislative Sejm forum were presented half a century ago in one article, however, they are well worth recalling and presenting from another perspective.\(^3\)

The decision to conduct the plebiscite was made at the Paris Peace Conference and was included in the treaty ending the World War with Germany, signed in Versailles on 28\(^{th}\) June 1919. It was agreed to carry out a plebiscite on the disputed Polish-German territories with the exception of Działdowszczyzna, which was granted directly to Poland under Article 28 of the treaty. Rules concerning the plebiscite in Masuria, Warmia and Powiśle are contained in Articles 94–97 of the Treaty of Versailles. In Warmia and Masuria, the plebiscite area included the Olsztyn regency and the Olecko district from the Gąbin regency, the voting districts were the municipalities, i.e. villages and towns, as units of local government administration, since the voting results were to be counted in individual municipalities. Every inhabitant who met the conditions could take part in the vote regardless of gender: a) was at least 20 years old on the day the Treaty of Versailles came into effect, b) was born in a plebiscite area or had a permanent residence there or in the municipality where they were born, unless they weren’t permanently residing anywhere else.\(^4\)

The Conference of Ambassadors approved the plebiscite regulations on 14\(^{th}\) April 1920 and set the deadline for voting on Sunday, no later than 3 months from 15\(^{th}\) April 1920, thus the voting was to take place on 11\(^{th}\) July 1920 at the latest.\(^5\)

The permanence and sovereignty of the Second Polish Republic depended on Polish policy towards Russia and Germany and the West’s favourable attitude towards its actions, because only the victorious powers could force the Germans to recognise Poland’s western borders. During the final stages of World War I, the Polish political elites undertook a two-way effort to pursue the Polish raison d’état – in the country through the camp associated with Józef Piłsudski, and in Western Europe through the activities of Roman Dmowski and politicians associated with him. In Lausanne on 15\(^{th}\) August 1917 the Polish National Committee was established with Roman Dmowski, count Maurycy Zamoyski, Ignacy Paderewski and Erazm Piltz, which after a few months was recognised as the official Polish representation to the Allies.\(^6\) After being supplemented with representatives of na-

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\(^4\) Dziennik Ustaw, 1920, 35, 200.


tional state authorities at the beginning of 1919, it was transformed into a Polish
delegation for the peace conference in Paris. In Poland on 11th November 1918,
Józef Piłsudski, was given military power and the supreme command of the Polish
army by the Regency Council. Three days later, 14th November 1918, The Regency
Council, guided by the good of the Fatherland, dissolved and placed its full power
in Poland in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces,
J. Piłsudski who, on the same day, issued a decree appointing Ignacy Daszyński as
the Prime Minister. Finally on 18th November 1918, after political consultations
the first Polish government was formed by Jędrzej Moraczewski, a politician from
the PPS, but accepted by the right-wing parties.

The territorial program of the Polish government was included in the electoral
law for the Legislative Sejm, in which elections were also planned in the southern
part of East Prussia (sic!), a territory inhabited by the Masurians and the Warmians.
Polish demands were based on the conviction that the southern part of East Prussia
was inhabited by people from Masovia, speaking Polish, in whom Polish national
consciousness was awakening. The author of the ordinance, a national democrat
Stanisław Głąbiński, exaggerated the territory of the Polish state, without taking
into account the real possibilities of holding elections, so on the same day, 28th No-
vember 1918 the Provisional Chief of State J. Piłsudski issued the second decree on
the elections to the Legislative Sejm, which set the elections for 26th January 1919,
with their limitation to 33 districts of the former Russian partition, 11 districts of
Western Galicia and 1 district in Cieszyn Silesia. In District 61 with the counties
of Ostróda, Niborsk, Olsztyn, Reszel, Elk, Lecko, Olecko, Pisz, Szczytno, Mragowo,
Lubawa and Susz, 12 seats were assigned to the Polish Parliament, and at the same
time it was stated that the order of the elections would be made after an agreement
with the representatives of Polish society in the lands of the Prussian partition was
reached. The German government lodged an official protest in this matter, accus-
ing the Polish side of holding elections to the Sejm illegally because they covered
the territory of the German Reich, to which Poland had no rights.

The election, in accordance with the decree of the Provisional Chief of State,
took place on 26th January 1919 and was peaceful, with a ceremoniaal atmosphere
and, despite the severe weather conditions, the turnout was high, ranging from 70%
to 90%. On the day of the beginning of the session, the Legislative Sejm had 340

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7 Dziennik Praw Państwa Polskiego (further: DzPPP), 1918, 17, 38.
8 Ibidem, 39.
9 Ibidem, 40.
10 DzPPP, 1918, 17, 46; DzPPP, 1918, 18, 47.
11 P. Stawecki, Stanowisko Sejmu Ustawodawczego..., p. 452.
members. That number changed with the holding of elections in districts where they were not held on 26th January 1919 for various reasons, e.g. in the Suwałki district the elections were held on 16th February 1919 and in Biała on 9th March 1919. Immediately after the elections, 10 parliamentary clubs were formed in the Sejm. They represented the parties, but also their political staffs and determined the directions of their activities. Later on, their number changed, and as a result there were 17 parliamentary factions during the final phase of the Constituent assembly work. Initially, the most numerous was Klub Sejmowy Ludowo-Narodowy, which represented the parties forming the National Electoral Committee of Democratic Parties. Wojciech Korfanty became the president of the faction, while Stanisław Głabisński and the hitherto unknown activist Leopold Skulski, the mayor of Łódź, an engineer and owner of a pharmacy, became its vice-presidents. The group acted against J. Piłsudski, also fought against the left, and consistently held a conservative position on social issues. The elections to the Sejm brought success to the National Democracy and the groups of right-wing parties in the National Electoral Committee of Democratic Parties, which won 34% of the seats, whereas the centrists and left-wing parties won over 30% of the seats in parliament. This situation proved to be unsustainable, and as the by-elections were held, and as a result of the numerous secessions, divisions and changes in club membership by MPs, the political face of the Constituent assembly evolved. Proportional elections revealed the political fragmentation of society, which originated during the period of national servitude, the complex configuration of political and social relations. MPs lacked experience in state work, accustomed to seeing the state as a hostile force from which they need to gain as much as possible, instead of working constructively for its benefit. Most of the parliamentary parties had factions and wings, there was practically no organisational discipline, there was a lack of attachment to the tradition of the political party, so there were so many fractures and secessions in parliament, especially in the first parliamentary term. Those factors played an important role during the execution of the objectives set for the Legislative Sejm.

On 20th February 1919, in an exposé at the 3rd session of the Legislative Sejm, the Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski did not address the issue of Masuria, Warmia and Powiśle's membership in Poland when discussing foreign policy. MP Błażej Stolarski, a self-taught peasant from Opoczno region, representing the left-wing

13 DzPPP, 6, 1919, 101–102.
16 Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego (further: SSSU), 4, 22.02.1919.
PSL-Wyzwolenie, said on 22nd February 1919: All the lands on which the Polish people have settled for centuries and have been working on so far must be united. Poznan, Upper Silesia, West Prussia and Masurians of Prussia will not be left outside the borders of our Republic. Indirectly in his speech on 22nd February 1919, S. Grabski from the National People’s Union (ZN-L) referred to the inclusion of the southern part of East Prussia, stating: ...The Sejm’s National People’s Union considers it necessary for the representatives of Greater Poland, Cieszyn Silesia, Upper Silesia and Polish districts of Middle Silesia, West Prussia and the Polish part of East Prussia (voice on the left: But only on the basis of elections), the Belarusian land and all those borderlands which should be a part of the Republic of Poland. As long as there are no deputies from these lands between us, our Sejm will not be complete. These speeches were the first voices in the Sejm to raise the demand for the inclusion of Masuria and Warmia into the Polish state. During the debate on the eastern policy of the Polish state held on 3rd and 4th April 1919, in which the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on the Eastern Borderlands and the correspondence of the Republic with the Russian Soviet authorities was discussed, unexpectedly Jan Dąbski from PSL-Piast, the later chief negotiator of the Treaty of Riga, submitted a resolution adopted by the Parliament: The Sejm demands that Warmia and Masurian Prussia, which until now belonged to East Prussia, as countries inhabited by a dense Polish population, be annexed to the Republic of Poland without the application of the plebiscite.

Relatively much time was devoted by the MPs to the plebiscite in Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle during the debate on the prepared peace treaty with Germany. On 22nd May 1919, Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski, in his report on the work at the Paris Conference, discussing the provisions of the prepared treaty with Germany, informed the Parliament: However, let me note briefly that under this treaty we are to receive 53 thousand square kilometres of our Polish land with more than 5 million people (applause). This area can be enlarged even more if the plebiscite in other, once Polish districts will be in our favour. These lands are subject to the plebiscite: Warmia, Prussian Masovia, part of Malbork County, and counties of Sztum, Kwidzyń, and Susz, through which the iron railroad line, unfortunately not yet granted to us, passes: Gdańsk – Mława – Warsaw. The MPs’ speeches showed their conviction that Polish activists conducting propaganda activities in the plebiscite areas were discriminated against and expressed concerns about the outcome of the plebiscite. Stanisław Gląbiński MP of ZL-N, said: We lament the fact that the fate of our Masurians has to be decided by a plebiscite. Masurians, which for centuries have

17 SSSU, 4, 22.02.1919; the article quotes to a large extent the statements made by MPs due to their emotional nature and the atmosphere of time they represent.
18 SSSU, 4, 22.02.1919.
19 SSSU, 25, 4.04.1919.
20 SSSU, 40, 22.05.1919.
been bemoaned and driven against Poland in order to arouse hatred and distrust towards it. But we hope that we will get enough time – we would ask our delegation to make the appropriate presentations at the conference – so that we can make these people fully understand and that the outcome of the plebiscite is what we rightly deserve. We draw this hope from the conviction that the Masurian land has so far remained truly Polish. For one should not look only at Prussian censuses, one should rather look at the great difference between the Polish population shown in Prussian statistics and school statistics, which shows that in each district there are 20% or 30% more Polish children in schools than the population statistics showed. There is no doubt that the statistics were one-sided and biased, because the aim was to show the entire world that it was not Polish land, but German land. Maciej Rataj of PSL-Wyzwolenie on 23rd May 1919, questioned the principle of the plebiscite as a way to resolve the territorial dispute in East Prussia. And this is how things are presented, among others, with the plebiscite in East Prussia. The will of the people in these lands is to be revealed, where during the decades, the Prussians of the Masuria region and the inhabitants of Warmia were deliberately and with the use of all state means tried to be transformed into Prussians. The will of the people in East Prussia is to be revealed, which today are still under the terror of the Prussian gendarme and the related to him character and mentality of the Prussian teacher. It is enough to read a few issues of “Gazeta Olsztyńska” about these things that are happening there today to get an idea of the conditions under which this plebiscite would take place and if the whole result of this plebiscite could be fair and just. The only thing we have to demand, if the plebiscite were to be held there, is that it would take place some time after the Prussian gendarme has resigned, after the Prussian fist has been removed. The local people must be given the opportunity to breathe freely, to recover in a way, to get acquainted with Poland, from which they were separated for decades by a wall. Jan Dąbski of PSL-Piast on 23rd May 1919 presented extensively the conditions related to the plebiscite in Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle. Then we are saddened by the fact that the issue of the Prussian Masurians, our poorest people, has been settled. Because while all districts of the Polish nation have their caretakers, which are exposed to foreign blows, the Prussian Masurians have somehow been forgotten by Polish society. Those Prussian Masurians have the least friends. And if today we consider how to prepare a plebiscite in Masuria, we simply need to search for people who have had any contact with these Masurians so far. (...) We want the coalition committee, which will watch over the plebiscite there, not to stay only in Olsztyn in Warmia. Warmia is Catholic, and far more informed than the Prussian Masuria. The point is that this coalition committee should take care of the Masuria region in the first place, and therefore, in my opinion,

21 SSSU, 40, 22.05.1919.
22 SSSU, 41, 23.05.1919.
it should be a burning desire of the Poles that in Szczytno, the capital of the Masuria region, and then Elk, subcommittees should be established to watch over the issue so that there is no terror from the Prussian side. (...) We demand the removal not only of the army, but also of the civil administration, county governors, district governors and other lower officials. The aim is for the Poles to have complete freedom to do the same thing in this country as the Germans do and will continue to do. And when the Polish awareness-raising campaign in Masuria comes to the fore, when it gets there above all the word that Poland is a religiously tolerant country, that Poland will give all its inhabitants equal religious rights, and this is what the Masurians are most afraid of due to the German agitation picturing us as a Catholic and intolerant country; if there is an opportunity for at least a few, at least 6 years of free awareness-raising of the Masuria region, they will declare themselves in favour of belonging to Poland.

And Masuria is an extremely important country, maybe more important than other parts of the country we are so focused on. As long as there will be a Prussian enclave in the form of Teutonic Knights of East Prussia, Poland will not be calm and its access to the sea will be endangered forever. If we narrow the East Prussian shoal by a successful plebiscite, we will at the same time weaken the Prussian pressure from the west side on the narrow neck of our access to the sea. (...) That is why I think that our diplomacy, and above all the Prime Minister, will make every effort, realising the incredible importance of the plebiscite in Masuria, to postpone this plebiscite for as long as possible, so that Poland has the opportunity to fulfil its duty towards this people, forgotten and neglected by her23.

The MPs had knowledge about the situation of the Masurians and Warmians as well as the inhabitants of Poviłe in East Prussia, they were aware of the possibility of an unfavourable outcome of the plebiscite, which they expressed in their speeches. The proposals to postpone the date of the plebiscite as late as possible from the date of ratification of the Treaty of Versailles made by the Members of Parliament during this debate were ultimately not considered by the Entente.

The Ratification Committee was established on the ratification of the peace treaty between the Allied and associated powers and Germany signed in Versailles on 28th June 1919, on the grounds of the reports of the appointed referees (a Silesian MP, father Paweł Pośpiech was appointed in the matter of plebiscites) and after hearing Prime Minister I. Paderewski and deputy Władysław Grabski it ordered in its report the organisation of the plebiscite in Upper Silesia and Masuria, where the Polish population, separated from Poland for so many decades, has lost much of its national awareness24. In the debate on the Commission’s report, MPs expressed their opinion about the plebiscite in Warmia, Masuria and Poviłe. Prime Minister

23 SSSU, 41, 23.05.1919.
24 Sejm Ustawodawczy (further: SU), no. 933.
I. Paderewski, informing about the signing of the peace treaty recognising the independence of Poland, stated: *If the plebiscite in Warmia, Ducal Prussia and Upper Silesia is to our advantage, we will regain a considerable piece of our homeland and even that old, precious part which was not in our hands already in the most glorious Jagiellonian times*\(^\text{25}\). S. Głąbiński of ZL-N expressed his concern about the rapid ratification of this treaty and postulated: *Unless we pass the ratification as soon as possible, it will not be possible to think about developing any kind of peaceful action to make the population more aware, as for example in Masuria, it doesn’t even realise it is Polish. Well, we cannot and should not take such a risk on ourselves*\(^\text{26}\). Andrzej Wierzbicki, MP from ZL-N, who on behalf of the Polish National Committee, chaired the Polish Economic Delegation to the 1918–1919 Paris Peace Conference in the ratification debate, said: *In the face of the upcoming plebiscites in Upper Silesia, Cieszyn Silesia and East Prussia, Poland must prove to be an efficient, well organised country, so that the inhabitants of the plebiscite areas want to stand for Poland*\(^\text{27}\). Fr. P. Pośpiech submitted a resolution to the Sejm, stating that the plebiscite is an injustice and humiliation of the inhabitants of the plebiscite areas and of the Polish nation, and expressed his conviction that the results of the plebiscite voting would be favourable. Due to the Polishness of the vast majority of the population of the plebiscite lands, citing the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) point of the US President Woodrow Wilson’s programme, he stated they should be incorporated into Poland without a plebiscite vote\(^\text{28}\).

On the second day of the debate on 31\(^{\text{st}}\) July 1919 W. Witos presented the position of the PSL-Piast faction, expressing regret for the decision to order a plebiscite in the areas that should be granted to Poland without a plebiscite vote\(^\text{29}\). Ludwik Waszkiewicz of the National Workers’ Union (NZR) stated: *The Treaty of Versailles left thousands of our brothers in Germany without having the national rights that it gave Germans in Poland. By administering the plebiscite in East Prussia and Upper Silesia, i.e. in the ancient Piast land, which even according to German testimonies still has the vast majority of the Polish population, the treaty left millions of Polish peasants and workers in further tiring uncertainty about their future fate*\(^\text{30}\). The speeches of the MPs and the Prime Minister are characterised by a certain optimism about the outcome of the plebiscite, but the actual situation in the plebiscite areas, which they mentioned in the May debate, did not justify such optimism.

In December 1919, MP Władysław Herz of the NPR appealed to the Polish government to increase interest in the fate of the Polish population in the plebiscite areas.

\(^{25}\) SSSU, 81, 30.07.1919.

\(^{26}\) Ibidem.

\(^{27}\) Ibidem.

\(^{28}\) Ibidem.

\(^{29}\) SSSU, 82, 31.07.1919.

\(^{30}\) Ibidem.
areas, stating that so far the government has done nothing to help the Poles living there: As far as foreign policy is concerned, I would also like to express the wish that the Prime Minister [Leopold Skulski] devotes some attention to the matters of the plebiscite lands, because the committee that was sent to Berlin, which signed various agreements, did not quite, according to a common opinion, successfully accomplish its task, since other plebiscite lands, apart from Upper Silesia, were treated neglectfully. I shall only mention Masuria and Warmia, where to this day our Masurian brothers and sisters, waiting for the moment when they will be able to connect with Poland, are always treated in the same way as it happened in Upper Silesia. Daily imprisonment is not uncommon and this should be given close attention. We were sending a telegram after telegram to the Prime Minister’s Office, and to the commission in Berlin, but those of our Masurian brothers are still imprisoned to this day and nothing has changed for the better. Therefore, even today, on this occasion, we demand that the Minister of Foreign Affairs pays as much attention to these plebiscite areas as Masuria and Warmia and others, that these German abuses, which are happening to this day, be abolished by the intercession of our Government with the Coalition. It is impossible to look at this with any more impunity, people who want to stand for Poland, and as a result of the German governments cannot do so, are punished for it and considered traitors. In his speech, the deputy referred to the departure of Bogumił Linka from Wawroch together with Józef Zapatka, Adam Zapatka and Zenon E. Lewandowski to Paris in order to ask for Masuria to join Poland. After the return of the delegates, they were arrested and a treason trial was initiated against them (the military court sentenced them to one and a half years in prison). They were released at the request of Marshal Ferdinand Foch.

The subject of the plebiscite in the Legislative Sejm returned again at the initiative of Father Władysław Mąkowski on 9th March 1920. Acting on behalf of NZ-L MPs in the Sejm, he made an emergency motion to call on the government to take action to dissolve all German military and police organisations in the Olsztyn plebiscite circuit. In his explanation, he presented the situation of the population opting for Poland and stated: A plebiscite in these conditions, in which the people there are now, would not give the desired result for Poland, it would simply be a comedy, if these conditions were to continue. The motion was passed unanimously and sent to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. In his speech he talked about the tragic events in Szczytno on 21st January 1920, when the Germans broke up the assembly of the Masurian People’s Council and the Masurian People’s Association; a participant, B. Linka, was beaten to death. MP W. Herz was very active in the Sejm; on

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33 SSSU, 128, 9.03.1920; [the text of MP W. Mąkowski’s speech included in the appendix].
34 J. Jasiński, *op. cit.*, p. 38–79.
10th March 1920, he and his companions from the National Club of the Workers’ Party submitted another emergency motion to remove the German security guard (Sicherheitswehr) and to guarantee full equality and freedom of meetings, rallies and agitation work in the Olsztyn plebiscite area. It was referred to the Committee of Foreign Affairs at the session of the Sejm on 16th March 1920. On 18th March 1919, the Sejm considered the urgency of Fr. Antoni Ludwiczak’s request and his companions from the NZL and other factions concerning German provocations in Warmia, Masuria and the Vistula districts, calling on the government to take immediate action to counteract such proceedings. The motion was passed by a majority of votes and sent back to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. On 29th March 1920, the Prime Minister’s Office issued a letter to the ministers and heads of ministries concerning the issue of detailed orders by them, in an effort to strengthen the cooperation of all the administrative units in the preparation of the plebiscite. In the spring of 1920, the Polish government conducted intensive diplomatic and military preparations for the war with Bolshevik Russia, so apart from formal interest, it was not able to take effective action in the plebiscite areas.

Concerns about the outcome of the plebiscite resulted in the emergency motion of Ludwik Gdyk, MP of the National Christian Worker’s Club, and his companions on 6th July 1920, five days before the plebiscite vote, for the Legislative Sejm to call on the parliaments of the Allied Powers to postpone the plebiscite. In the explanatory memorandum to the motion, he urged: “…that the High Parliament, as a representative of the Polish nation, should ask the parliaments of friendly countries to influence their governments, so that this quick plebiscite in Warmia, Masuria and on the right bank of the Vistula river could be postponed, because it is unthinkable that in this rape, in this general persecution, the plebiscite could be carried out according to the wishes of the inhabitants of these lands.” After presenting the validity of the motion, Speaker Wojciech Trąmpczyński, in the absence of objections, considered the urgency of the motion as accepted, but the applicant requested that the motion be handled in merito. Jędrzej Moraczewski, the first prime minister of independent Poland, opposed this proposal and requested that L. Gdyk’s proposal be sent back to the Foreign Affairs Committee, but in a majority vote, MPs rejected J. Moraczewski’s motion. No Member of Parliament took the floor in the plenary discussion, L. Gdyk’s emergency motion passed by a majority and the Speaker informed the House that the letter would be sent to the parliaments of all allied countries.

35 SSSU, 130, 16.03.1920; SU, no. 1604.
36 SSSU, 132, 19.03.1919, [the text of fr. A. Ludwiczak’s speech attached in the appendix].
37 W. Wrzesiński, Polska – Prusy Wschodnie..., p. 258.
38 SSSU, 159, 6 VII 1920; SU, no. 1974.
39 SSSU, 159, 6 VII 1920.
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the plebiscite on 24th July 1920, during the last session of the Sejm before the break related to the decisive battle with Soviet Russia, during the Red Army’s approach to Warsaw, W. Hertz and a member of the NPR faction filed an emergency motion concerning new violations of the Polish population in Masuria and Warmia, which was sent to the relevant parliamentary committees40. The motions presented by the Members of Parliament in the given circumstances were impossible to implement.

After the interruption caused by the Polish-Soviet war, the Legislative Sejm met on 24th September 1920 and W. W. Herz MP and colleagues from the NPR submitted an emergency motion concerning the plebiscite in Masuria and Warmia and the decision issued by the Council of Ambassadors in Paris. In the motion they proposed that the Sejm should call on the government to protest in the Council of Ambassadors in Paris, against the validity of the decision on the division of Masuria, Warmia and Powiśle, taken on 27th August 1920, not to acknowledge the results of the plebiscite and its revision, and to present the plebiscite problem in the forum of the League of Nations. In his statement in support of the motion, W. Herz spoke of the reasons for the unsuccessful outcome of the plebiscite, pointing out the manipulations and abuses of the election in the plebiscite areas committed by the Germans. He argued that the Allied Committee was unable to introduce equal rights for Germans and Poles, accepting the actions of the German side. He presented examples of electoral fraud, intimidation of Masurians opting for Poland, but also stated that the date of the plebiscite was set too quickly, because the Polish side did not have the opportunity to prepare for it. He described the activities of the Polish government: …so far the position of our Government has not been as it should have been in the context of the plebiscite in Warmia and Masuria. The Sejm passed the urgency of the motion and sent it back to the Foreign Affairs Committee41. During the debate on the exposé of Prime Minister W. Witos on 8th October 1920, NPR representative Adam Chądżyński drew attention to an important issue: What happens to Poles in Warmia and Masuria after the plebiscite, what happens to Polish immigrants, simply cannot be understood in modern cultural times. And what do our foreign missions do, how does our diplomacy react to the fact that defenceless people who are voting for Poland are beaten, murdered and expelled from their native land?42. It was the last speech concerning the Masuria, Warmia and Powiśle plebiscite in the parliament, the question posed by the MP was not answered, and the reality for these people was often tragic.

The Polish government did not take action in the voting areas, it was due to international conditions – in order not to be accused of acting within the jurisdic-

40 SSSU, 166, 24 VII 1920.
41 SSSU, 168, 28 IX 1920; SU, no. 2086 [the text of the motion is included in the appendix].
42 SSSU, 171, 8 X 1920.
tion of Germany and of violating the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, as well as to internal conditions, unfavourable attitude towards the organisations operating there related to the Poznań establishment, therefore, not enough help was offered. The government circles saw no need to actively influence the attitude of the Polish population from the plebiscite areas by economic methods. The matter of the plebiscite was treated as an autonomous Eastern Prussian problem without taking into account its international conditions and Polish-German relations. In the plebiscite area, the local socially active pro-Polish inhabitants of Masuria and Warmia constituted only a small percentage of the population of the area.

The result of the plebiscite was definitely in favour of Prussia, i.e. Germany, which meant a devastating defeat for Poland. In 1923, the Polish Central Statistical Office published the official results of the plebiscite at the county level, which also included the persons eligible to participate in the plebiscite, the number of the population in 1910 and 1919, with a breakdown of the language spoken by the inhabitants of the plebiscite area. In the Olsztyn region 363,159 people voted for Germany, 7924 for Poland, in Kwidzyń district 96,895 for Germany, 7947 for Poland. In both districts only 3.4% of those entitled to vote voted for Poland. The highest number of votes for Poland was cast in counties of Sztum (19.07%) and Olsztyn (13.47%), while the lowest number of votes was cast in Masurian counties, e.g. in Olecko county, only 2 out of 28,627 participating in the poll.

In total, the German option won in 1694 municipalities, and the Polish in 9.

Members of the Legislative Sejm raised issues related to the organisation of the plebiscite in Masuria, Warmia and Poviśle, accurately pointing to conditions that may significantly affect its outcome. The most active and committed Member of Parliament for Warmia and Masuria was W. Herz from Greater Poland, co-owner of the Polish House (Hotel Reichshof) in Olsztyn. After the plebiscite, he was organising help for Poles coming to the country from the polling territories. It seems interesting that there was little activity on the part of government representatives who did not present plebiscite issues at the plenary sessions of the Sejm. At this point it should be noted that the minutes of the sessions of the Sejm’s Foreign Affairs Committee have not been preserved, having been destroyed during World War II. All emergency motions were addressed to it, and they were certainly discussed at committee meetings, unfortunately this was not later reflected in the plenary work of the parliament, which to some extent depletes the perception of the views of the political parties and the government.

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43 W. Wrzesiński, Polska – Prusy Wschodnie..., p. 129.
45 W. Wrzesiński, Polska – Prusy Wschodnie..., s. 408–409; idem, Plebiscyty..., s. 270.
Polish political elites faced too many internal and international problems for them to be able to effectively take action to strengthen Polish national aspirations of Masurians and Warmians. After World War I, the Polish state fought with the Czechs for Zaolzie, with the Ukrainians for Eastern Galicia, and in the Eastern borderlands it waged war with Soviet Russia; the Greater Poland Uprising and the Silesian Uprisings also absorbed the government’s attention, all the more so because in European relations, Poland was actively engaged in diplomatic activities aimed at obtaining the best possible territorial and economic outcomes from the war that was nearing its end. The actions on the favourable outcome of the plebiscite required an enormous organisational and economical effort that the emerging Polish state could not afford. Internally it had to deal with integrating the lands of three former partitions – legally, transportation and communication wise and economically; it had to prepare for the looming economic crisis to be able to field an army defending its newly gained independence and territory. In those circumstances the issue of the plebiscite was not on the Legislative Sejm’s priority list.
Appendix 1. Speech by MP W. Mąkowski of ZL-N from 9th March 1920 justifying the emergency motion to call on the Polish Government to take action to disband German military and police organisations in the Olsztyń region.\footnote{SSU, 128, 9.03.1920;}


W trakcie posiedzenia komisji, w czasie dyskusji, wypowiedzieli się kilka głosów popierających działanie Komisji. Jednakże kadencja tej komisji była ograniczona do określonego okresu i nie została przedłużona. Wskazano na konieczność zainteresowania się sprawą w niższych organach samorządu.

Wśród zgłoszeń, które pochodziły z różnych stron, można wymienić następujące:

- Komisja Ochrony Praw Człowieka proponowała podjęcie działań wobec osób podejrzanych o nienawiść wobec ludności narodowej.
- Komisja Obwodowa w Powiecie Pomorskim stwierdziła, że w okolicy miejscowość Olsztyn jest szczególnie narażona na napady i przestępstwa.
- Komisja Obwodowa w Powiecie Warmińskim podkreśliła, że istnieje potrzeba poważniejszego podjęcia działań wobec osób podejrzanych o nienawiść wobec ludności narodowej.

W trakcie debaty w Sejmie zakończono posiedzenie, oczekując na kontynuację dyskusji w przyszłych posiedzeniach Komisji.

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\footnote{SSU, 128, 9.03.1920;}
Pieczna. Oto pomiędzy innymi np. w Ośniaku:
5 ludzi, którzy się podpisali przeciwko Polsce i zapisali się do Heimatavereinu do-
stało karabin i amunicję, aby straszyć tych, co do organizacji takich nie należą. Straszą ciągle, że jeżeli kto się nie zapii-
szże, stworzy się tam niemieckich, to go zabiją, albo w razie korzystnego dla Niem-
ców plebiscytu pozbawia go własności i wtrąca do więzienia, „Heimatavereinu” śmiercią grożą ludziom, którzy za Polską stoją. To samo czynią rektory szkoły i beamerzy, czyli urzędnicy. W Farynie
16-letniego chłopca, który nie chciał nale-
żeć do „Heimatavereinu”, zbilo kilku dra-
bów, wzbijając: Dawaj pieniądze, które do-
stałeś na agitację za Polskę*. Niedziw przeto, że nawet ludzie, którzy pracę swoją poświęcił dla uświadamiania Mazurów,
boją się obecnie rozmaitych sykan i prze-
śledzania ze strony Niemców i cofają się, albo siedzą spokojnie. A najlepszym do-
wodem, że tam rządzą po dawnemu zan-
darmi niemieccy, i młothech podjąłbymi, a nie wojska koalicjne, jest ostatni wy-
padek, kiedy to pospolitstwo podburzone pomimo obecności Misji koalicjnej, znie-
ważyło godno narodu polskiego w Olsztynie.
Mój wniosek zmierza do tego, aby Rząd
pocznął energiczne starania, aby wszelkie or-
dzanie wojskowo-polityczne niemieckie, czy to jawne, czy zamaskowane, były na-
prawdę usunięte. Jeżeli ludność mazurska przekonała się wręcz o ile i bezstron-
ności komisji międzynarodowej, żeby każdy mógł z całą świadomością i wolnością,
swobodnie i bezpiecznie wypowiedzieć swo-
ją wolę, czy chce, jak mówią tam, „wela-
wać” za Polską, czy też pozostawić przy Niemczech.
Nadm chodzi o to, żeby równo-panniejie,
ogłoszone urzędowo przez Komisję
sojuszniczą, pozostało tylko na papierze,
ale było w rzeczywistości, żeby urzędnicy jednostkowo i lojalnie traktowali tak ludność polską jak i niemiecką, żeby ludność polska miała naprawdę swobodę zebrań, wie-
ców, agitacji, na rzez połączenia się z Pol-
ską, a następnie, żeby miała ułatwioną moż-
ność dochodzenia krywy swoich i upo-
ominania się o swoje prawa. Sprawa to,
proszę Wysokiego Sejmu, bardzo ważna,
inaczej bowiem my tę walkę, którą toczy-
my na Mazurach pruskich przegramy,
a przegrać jej bezwarunkowo nie możemy. Zemia ta jest krajem bezwzględne pol-
skim, mieszka tam przeszło 350000 ludno-
sci polskiej, znajduje się tam 18 wielkich miast, 1800 wsi, które w większości swo-
jej są polskie; jest tam 3300 wielkich ryb-
nych jezior, ta dzelinka Polski jest drogą
szeroką do naszego morza. My wszystko
uczyć powinniśmy, ażeby nasz dostęp do
morza być jak najdogodniejszy i jak naj-
szerzej.
Przy tej sposobności zwracam się do
Rządu, żeby w tych okolicach, które doty-
kają obróg plebiscytowych, wszystko
uczyć, aby ludność z obszarów plebiscyt-
towych zachęcić do welowania za Polską.
A przedewszystkim, aby dla zniszczonych
powiatów: przysażyńskiego, ziem Łomżyń-
skiej i dalszych, aby Rząd wysygnował
nareszcie odpowiedni fundusz na odbudo-
wę tamaowych okolic. Niech Niemcy nie
mówią: patrzcie, jest już Rząd polski, ale
nic nie czyni dla ludności polskiej dla po-
prawy jej bytu. Wszystko zrobić należy,
by tej ludności nikt nie odtrącić od Polski,
ale owsem wszelkimi sposobami
zachęcić ją do głosowania za Polską.
Proszę Wysoki Sejm o przyjęcie nagło-
ści wniosku, wzywającego Rządu do posta-
rania się o usunięcie organizacji niemie-
ckich wojskowo-politycznych teroryzujących
ludność polską na Mazurach (bravo).
Appendix 2. Speech by MP fr. Antoni Ludwiczak from 19th March 1920, justifying the urgency of the motion on German provocations in Warmia, Masuria and the Vistula districts.

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Appendix 3. MP W. Herz’s emergency motion on the plebiscite in Masuria and Warmia from 24th September 1920.⁴⁹

WNIOSEK NAGŁY

posta HERZA i kol. z klubu N. P. R. w sprawie wydanej decyzji przez Radę
Ambasadorów w Paryżu w kwestji plebiscytowej na Mazurach i Warmii.

Plebiscyt na terenie Olsztynia (Masur i Warmii) odbywał się dla Polski
w sposób nieuprawniony, bezprawny. Plebiscytowa Komisja Aljancka, jako najwyższa
władza wykonawcza i administracyjna na terenie plebiscytowym, nie zapewniała Polakom
w praktyce zasad wolności i równouprawnienia, która to zasada jest główną
podstawą plebiscytu.

Na liczne żądania ze strony polskiej zaproponowania parlementarnego ustroju
w administracji, policji i życiu społecznym, Komisja Aljancka nie reagowała. Wszelka
władza pozostała w rękach niemieckimi, ząd terror i martwocięgi polskiej ludności na-
maszkiej, tak przez władze, jak i ludność niemiecką, była na porządku dziennym.

Z tych względów ludność polska z obawy straty życia i mienia nie mogła
jawnie i swobodnie wypowiedzieć swoich przekonań narodowych i politycznych. Polska
praca plebiscytowa, skutkiem stronniczej postawy Komisji Aljanckiej oraz terroru nie-
mieckiego, ograniczona była do minimum. Niemcy sprawnie do głosowania ludzi z poza terenem plebiscytowym, którzy nie mieli żadnego prawa do głosowania, na pod-
stawie fałszywych papierów.

Nadużycia przy wyborach ze strony niemieckiej, jak i naruszanie tajności
głosowania, jawną agitacją w lokalach wyborczych za Niemcami, fasowanie wyniku
głosowania na szkodę polską, jawnie teroryzowanie polaków przez Komitet wyborczy
przy głosowaniu, pozbawiły cały akt głosowania podstawy prawną, a zamieniły go w
komedję. Setki protestów zebranych przez Komitet Mazurski i Warmiński są nie-
zbędny dowodem, iż głosowania podobnego charakteru nie można, jako prawdziwego wyrazu
ludności, zamieszać na terenie plebiscytowym.

— 2 —

Rada Ambasadorów w Paryżu, nie odczekawawszy nadesłania od Rządu Pol-
skiego całego materiału dowodowego, uznała plebiscyt za ważny i wydała decyzję
z wielką szacunku dla Polski. Przeciwko tej decyzji należy postawić protest i załączyć
rewizji.

Wobec tego nieżej podpisują wnoszą:

Wysoki Sejm uchwalić raczy:

Sejm wzywa Rząd

1) do założenia na drodze dyplomatycznej protestu w Radzie Ambasadorów
w Paryżu, przeciwniu ważności poważnej przez nią decyzji, jako aktu krzywdy i gwałtu
wobec Polski,

2) do nieuznawania plebiscytu i domaganie się rewizji,

3) do wyluczenia całej sprawy przed forum Ligi Narodów.

Warszawa, dnia 24 września 1920 r.

Wnioskodawca

W. Herz.

Dr Brojki, Chądzyński, Festekiewicz, Fichna, Gałkiński, Helich, Lichtecki, Mi-
chałak, Nader, Niewiński, Nowicki, Nurek, Piaszczka, Piekarz, Pietrzyk, Posto-
ski, Rajca, Reeder, Rymer, Strzębański, Swiniarski, Tomażak, Dr Wachowiak, Wasz-

⁴⁹ SU, no. 2086.
Chart. Results of the 11th July 1920 plebiscite in Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle according to the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

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<th>Powiaty</th>
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<th>Ludność w 1910 r.</th>
<th>Populacja en 1910</th>
<th>Ogółem mówilo w językiem polskim</th>
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<th>Uprawiano głos wyrażony w procentach</th>
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<th>Głos wało za Niem.</th>
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Zbigniew Kudrzycki, Plebiscyt na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu na forum Sejmu Ustawodawczego 1919–1920

Streszczenie

100. rocznica plebiscytu na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu skłania do zainteresowania się jego antecedencjami i wynikami głosowania. Powstaje pytanie, czy Polska w ówczesnej sytuacji mogła podjąć działania, które przyczyniłyby się do uzyskania lepszego wyniku głosowania? Szukając odpowiedzi na postawione pytanie, należy uwzględnić wielorakie i skomplikowane uwarunkowania wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne powstającego państwa polskiego, ale też działania władz polskich wobec Mazurów i Warmiaków. Warto uwzględniać pozycję Polski w Europie, państwa odzyskującego po 123 latach niepodległość i realnych możliwości realizacji celów i aspiracji terytorialnych narodu polskiego. W początkowym okresie kształtowania polityki państwa niebagatelną rolę odgrywał Sejm Ustawodawczy, w którym zasiedli przedstawiciele polskiego społeczeństwa i przedstawiali na jego forum istotne problemy państwa polskiego, dlatego warto wyjaśnić zainteresowanie tej instytucji państwa plebiscytami na Warmii i Mazurach oraz Powiślu. Problematyka plebiscytu w Sejmie Ustawodawczym została przedstawiona przed pół wiekiem w jednym artykule, lecz warta jest przypomnienia i przedstawienia z innej perspektywy.

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Zbigniew Kudrzycki, Volksabstimmung in Ermland, Masuren und im Weichselland bei der Versammlung des gesetzgebenden Sejms 1919–1920

Zusammenfassung


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