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Dariusz Jeziorny, *Londyn wobec ochrony mniejszości żydowskich w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej (1918–1919)*[*London and the Protection of Jewish Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe (1918–1919)*], Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016, 192 pp.

The centenary of the end of the First World War is an opportunity to reflect on the events that accompanied the formation of a new political order in Central and Eastern Europe. At the Paris Peace Conference, the Great Powers determined the shape of the new state borders in this part of the continent and also imposed obligations for the protection of minority rights in separate treaties. The initiators of such a solution were influential Jewish organizations, which feared for the situation of the people of the Mosaic faith in countries emerging on the ruins of the Habsburg monarchy and on the western peripheries of Russia, still plunged into revolution and civil war. The Polish delegation was the first to be forced to sign such a treaty, which took place in Versailles on 28th June 1919. The origins of these events and Poland's position on the issue of protection of minorities in the interwar period have already been widely studied. Historiography, however, lacked a monograph treating the role played by the United Kingdom in developing the principles of the Versailles system of protection of national minorities. This issue was taken up by Dariusz Jeziorny, a professor at the Institute of History of the University of Łódź, who specializes in research on British foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe in the interwar period. In his extensive scientific output, two

monographs published so far are particularly noteworthy¹. The protection of ethnic minorities is not a *novum* in the research conducted by the Author of the reviewed monograph, and an announcement of its releasing and its main theses is a separate article published at the same².

The work under review consists of an introduction, five chapters written in chronological order, a conclusion, a list of references, a dictionary of people in the book and a list of abbreviations. The objective of the work, according to the Author's words (pp. 12–13) is to analyse the position of the British government towards the Jewish population living in Central and Eastern Europe between 1918 and 1919, i.e. in the period of shaping a new peace order after the end of the war, with particular emphasis on the activities and decisions of the Paris Peace Conference and the role of British diplomacy in establishing international guarantees of minority rights in Central and Eastern European countries. The maturity of the concept of the subject matter of the book under review is evidenced by the extensive catalogue of detailed research questions presented in the introduction.

The monograph is characterized by a solid source base, the result of an in-depth query, which yielded detailed information on the factors influencing the shaping of British policy on the issue under consideration and allowed for a precise reconstruction of the decision-making process of British diplomats and politicians. Using this collected information, the Author presented convincing and exhaustive answers to the research questions posed in the introduction. It should be emphasized that he reached not only the official records of the British Department of Foreign Affairs deposited at The National Archives in London, but also the private collections and papers of English politicians and diplomats held at The British Library in London and at the Churchill Archives in Cambridge. He also used, obviously, Polish archival materials from the Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw. Among the documents published, the British, American, French and Polish publications

¹ Dariusz Jeziorny, *Londyn a spuścizna po monarchii Habsburgów. Sprawa Austrii w koncepcjach i praktyce dyplomatycznej Wielkiej Brytanii (1918–1919)*, Toruń 2002. The monograph was nominated for the Waclaw Felczak and Henryk Wereszycki Awards in 2002. *Idem*, *Dyplomacja brytyjska wobec koncepcji paktu wschodniego (1933–1935). Analizy, projekty, działania*, Łódź 2011. The English version of this monograph was published as part of a grant within the frames of the National Humanities Development Programme: *idem*, *British Diplomacy and the Concept of the Eastern Pact (1933–1935). Analyses, Projects, Activities*, Stuttgart 2017.

² *Idem*, *Dyplomacja brytyjska a kwestia ochrony praw mniejszości żydowskich po I wojnie światowej*, [in:] *Dyplomacja europejska wobec wyzwań XX i XXI wieku*, ed. Elżbieta Alabrudzińska, Toruń 2016, pp. 9–46.

on the Paris Peace Conference were the most important for the Author. In this category of sources, it is noteworthy the inclusion of the edition of *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, little known in Poland and not yet widely used by Polish historians, containing the so-called Confidential Prints. From the point of view of the subject undertaken, D. Jeziorny also collected the most important diaries, memoirs and texts by politicians. However, the published diary of the legal advisor to the US delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, David Hunter Miller, is missing in this category of sources³.

The current accessibility of English press titles in digital form provides a possibility for historians to undertake in-depth comparative research, both into British public opinion and the role of the press in shaping it. Jeziorny made the most of these opportunity. For, in a situation where the United Kingdom did not yet have its diplomatic representations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of 1918 and 1919, the British press was the main, often the only, although not always reliable, source of information on the treatment of the Jewish population and anti-Semitic incidents in the countries of this region. Therefore, the Author conducted a detailed and systematic search in a number of titles of the British local press, giving priority to the London “The Times”, the liberal “Manchester Guardian” and the labourist “Herald” with the new name “Daily Herald” (since 1st April 1919).

The complexity and multidimensionality of the subject matter required the Author to use extensive literature related to the history of the Paris Peace Conference and the origins of the system of international guarantees of minority rights in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the location of the Jewish population in the countries of the region. It also includes analyses of the political agendas of individual Jewish organizations, an assessment of British diplomacy’s preparations for the Peace Conference and the decision-making process in British foreign policy. Literature on each of these issues includes dozens of books and hundreds of scientific articles. In this situation, the Author had to make a difficult selection. I consider his selection to be essentially accurate. Only the omission of Carole Fink’s monograph⁴ is surprising.

³ David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris with Documents*, vol. I–XXI, New York 1924.

⁴ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others. The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938*, Cambridge 2004.

As already mentioned, the book under review consists of five chapters, which show in detail the evolution of the British position on the problem in question. In Chapter I the Author presents the complex reasons for the intensification of anti-Jewish resentment in Central and Eastern Europe during and after the end of World War I, which in turn led to the occurrence of anti-Jewish incidents in Galicia, the lands of the former Polish Kingdom, Wielkopolska, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Ukraine, as well as in Germany and the Austrian capital. He also pointed out that the information published on this matter in the British press (and not only) between October 1918 and July 1919 was dominated by reports of anti-Semitic incidents by the Polish population, hindering the activities of the authorities and diplomacy of the recovering Poland on the international forum and in Paris. It was then that some American and British politicians came to believe that the “Jewish problem” – understood as guaranteeing the rights of the Jewish population in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – should be regulated by means of an international agreement. He dedicated Chapter II to the position that British diplomacy was taking on this issue on the eve of the Paris Peace Conference. It also contains a detailed overview of the divergent demands made by the most important Jewish organizations: i.e. the World Zionist Organization, the Joint Foreign Committee in the United Kingdom, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in France and the American Jewish Committee in the USA. It is extremely important because their representatives at the Paris Peace Conference tried to influence the policies of the Great Powers behind the scenes. Jeziorny proves that before January 1919, when the session began, in London there was no clear position on the rights of the Jewish population, let alone instructions for the delegation going to Paris. For among the officials of the Political Intelligence Department in the Foreign Office there were different views on this subject. The fundamental dispute was whether to support only and guarantee equal rights for Jews in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or to additionally consider them as a separate nation? For this reason the tactics of the British delegation on this issue, in the first phase of the Paris Conference, were based on the maxim “wait and see”.

In Chapter III, the Author confronted extremely anti-Polish information published in the British press about the ill-treatment of Jews and pogroms of their population with the content of reports of British members of successive missions that were sent to Poland in early 1919. Jeziorny also stresses that in their reports they did not confirm the exceptionally anti-Semitic attitude of Poles. In February

1919, almost the majority of British diplomats were already inclined to the idea of resolving the Jewish question by guaranteeing Jews only equal treatment among other citizens in the various Central and Eastern European countries. An exception in the Foreign Office was the leading expert on Polish affairs, Lewis Namier (actually Ludwik Niemirowski), who continued to support the concept of treating them as separate nation and demanded that they be granted cultural and national autonomy. The further evolution of the British stance towards the Jewish problem in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was presented in Chapter IV, where the Author wrote that in March and April 1919, at the Peace Conference, the efforts to protect Jewish rights were intensified. Jewish organizations active in Paris sought to internationalize the issue, and reports from Poland of new anti-Jewish incidents and pogroms of the Jewish population, regardless of how they were presented and interpreted, led the Great Powers to finally decide on 1st May 1919 to establish a special commission to develop clauses to protect the rights of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, the idea, originally pushed by the President of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, that the clauses would be included in the League of Nations Pact was abandoned. The Japanese postulate to include a clause on racial equality in the Pact, i.e. to prohibit the deprivation of equal rights of people on the basis of their race and nationality, contributed to this. This proposal was unacceptable to the Americans because it would have prevented Washington from applying a restrictive immigration policy.

In the last Chapter V, Jeziorny presented the participation and role of British diplomats and politicians in the Committee on New States, preparing the final version of the clauses of the Declaration guaranteeing minority rights in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The final shape was given to them during the discussion in the Council of Four with the participation of the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Jeziorny points out that the work of the Committee on New States was dominated by British James Headlam-Morley and American David Hunter Miller. They argued for different ideas on how to address the protection of minorities in terms of both content and form. Headlam-Morley was in favour of less radical solutions, and in many cases he consulted Lucien Wolf, representative of the Joint Foreign Committee, who represented the “moderate” wing of the British Jewish movement, while Miller was the “tube” of the American Jewish Congress and supported its far-reaching proposals. As a result, the

relationship between Headlam-Morley and Miller was tense, as they wrote in their diaries, using harsh epithets.

The British delegates seek solutions to stabilise the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. For this reason, Headlam-Morley and Lloyd George effectively opposed giving the Jewish people national and cultural autonomy and recognising them as a separate nation. At their request, it was also established that the right of appeal for failure to respect minority rights was only available to member states of the Council of the League of Nations. In conclusion, the Author emphasized the paradox that the British delegates who came to the Peace Conference in Paris without a specific position on this issue ultimately became the main architects of the Versailles minority protection system.

The book under review is essentially a study of the history of diplomacy, with dozens of diplomats, politicians and military men, etc. appearing on its pages. This orientation is facilitated by the dictionary of people at the end of the book, which does not limit itself, as is usually the case, to the names and surnames, but contains a short biographical note at each of them. At this point I would like to point out a small mistake: Arthur James Balfour, who appeared on the pages of the book many times, only obtained the title of Count in 1922. Before that he functioned in a public space as “Mr Balfour” and calling him “Lord Balfour” is not appropriate. I have no great complaints about the correction of the text of the work, although General Adrian Carton de Wiart has been written down as de Wiatr, but this is the only serious of the few misprints and typos noticed by me. In this case, it was probably caused by a Polish text editor.

To sum up, we have received a very well-written book, which treats an important and at the same time sensitive issue in a competent and very balanced way. It would be good to have this book translated into English in order to introduce the latest findings of Dariusz Jeziorny into international scientific circulation. Undoubtedly, this book deserves it. It would then be worth supplementing it with an annex containing the text of the Minority Treaty signed between the Allied and Associated Powers and Poland on 28th June 1919 in Versailles.