

## SUMMARY OF THE PHD THESIS:

### **SPAIN AND THE REBORN POLISH REPUBLIC 1918-1921: Political affairs, territorial disputes and ethnic minorities**

This research project analysed, on the one hand, the reactions in the Spanish press and in Spanish diplomacy to the political processes that led to the creation of a new Polish state as a result of the Great War and, on the other hand, the reactions in Spain's press and diplomacy to the political and military events, mostly territorial disputes with neighbouring states, which determined the borders of the new Polish state.

During the Great War most Spanish newspapers and their contributors and correspondents were in favour of Poland becoming a new independent state as a result of the war. Differences on the Polish question across the examined Spanish press sources of the time were focused on whether this new Polish state should be under the influence of Russia, or the Central Powers, or of the Western Powers. Similarly, most leading Spanish politicians were favourable to the Polish cause, and Spanish King Alfonso XIII engaged in one of the many charity campaigns in favour of Poland during the war, and also helped Poles by means of the pro-captives office. However, most Spanish press articles during the conflict focused on what the Central Powers, Russia and the Western Allies offered to the Poles.

Pro-allied newspapers reacted positively to the Great Duke's proclamation at the beginning of the war, whereas Germanophile newspapers were initially more sceptical about it, and once Russia lost its Polish territories in front of Germany and Austria in 1915 regarded the Russian proposal to the Poles as impossible to apply. Precisely, the Central Powers' occupation of Russian Poland in summer 1915 generated an increase of the repercussion of Polish affairs in the Spanish press. In late 1916 the November 5 Proclamation also increased the Polish question's internationalization from a Spanish perspective, with another increase in the number of press articles about the Polish question and meaningful reactions to the Central Powers' decisions in Spanish embassies in Petrograd and Berlin.

In addition, a few Spanish correspondents were in the Polish lands during the conflict to report on the war events in the Eastern Front and on the political and socioeconomic situation in the three partitioned areas of the historical Polish lands.

In regards to the conflicts with neighbouring states to establish the borders of the reborn Polish republic, often Spanish press editors and contributors were more focused on the Great Powers' stand on these conflicts that Poland faced rather than on the territorial conflicts themselves.

Two of the leading Spanish press correspondents of the time, Javier Bueno and Sofia Casanova saw the Greater Poland conflict as an internal German question. They believed that the Uprising had been planned and its goal was to ensure the disputed region was de facto Polish before the peace conference in Paris discussed its future.

Two foreign intellectuals residing in Spain, Tadeusz Peiper, a Pole and Andresz Revesz, a Hungarian, were, along Polish-Spanish diplomat Granzów de la Cerda, the press contributors that more attention paid to the Polish-Czechoslovakian conflict over Cieszyn Silesia. Spain's plenipotentiary minister in Warsaw criticised the French stand on this conflict, that eventually led to the allocation of most of the disputed region to Czechoslovakia.

Spanish press editors and contributors placed a lot of attention to historical, ethnographic and economic events when analysing the territorial disputes and conflicts Poland was engaged in against Germany and Czechoslovakia. The Germanophile press was generally against Poland's control of these disputed territories and pro-allied press was rather favourable to Poland's interests, but also criticised Poland, although the Spanish pro-allied press criticism of Poland was much stronger in regards to the Eastern territorial disputes than the Western ones that the new independent state faced.

Spain's plenipotentiary minister in Warsaw Gutierrez de Agüera was critical of the Polish leaders' attitudes towards the Free City of Gdansk, which in his view, hampered the cooperation between both entities, what was bad for both Poles and the inhabitants of Danzig. Granzów de la Cerda, chancellor in Spain's legation in Warsaw and at the same time press contributor to *La Correspondencia de España* was favourable to a Polish Danzig while 'ABC's' Sofia Casanova advocated a much larger Polish control of Danzig than what the Versailles had assigned Poland, which was not good enough in her view.

The public works minister of the Danzig Free City asked Spain's consul in the city to help stop the closure of the local rifles factory, by interceding in the League of Nations. Later, Spain's consul discovered that there were rumours in Danzig about Spain having asked Latin American countries to vote in the League of Nations in favour of the factory's closure, what was not true as State Ministry confirmed. In the ministry there were concerns these rumours could damage Spain's relations with the Free City and with Poland as well.

in his diplomatic correspondence about the Polish-German dispute over Warmia and Mazuria, Gutierrez de Agüera placed a lot of attention to the violence the Germans were using against Poles in the region to make sure they won the plebiscite, but also argued that Germany would have won the plebiscite without this violence anyway, because the local population in the disputed area was Lutheran and identified themselves more with Eastern Prussia than with Poland despite speaking Polish. Most Spanish press editors and contributors had a similar view, and also highlighted, as in the case of Upper Silesia, that these people who until then had been under German administration preferred to remain in Germany because they feared a worse Polish administration.

Spanish press editors and contributors highlighted the significance of Upper Silesia from an economic, due to its coal and industry, and strategic point of view and advocated its belonging to Poland or to Germany depending on their Germanophile or pro-Entente profile. The results of the Upper Silesia plebiscite were interpreted differently across Spanish newspapers. Most examined Spanish sources, including the Germanophile ones, recognised the Polish ethnographic majority in the disputed region.

The Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilna involved Spain indirectly because Spain accepted the request from the League of Nations to participate with its navy troops in a contingent that the international organization planned to send to Vilna to ensure a proper and safe organization of a plebiscite that would decide the belonging of the region either to Poland or Lithuania. Spain's planned alleged in the League's contingent and the way the conflict was approached by the League of Nations generated a lot of strong criticism in the Spanish press. In addition, Spain's minister in Warsaw criticised Lucjan Zeligowski's military occupation of the disputed region as well as Polish Foreign Minister Sapieha and Pilsudski for being behind general Zeligowski's military operation.

Granzów was more focused on ethnographic and historical facts than Casanova in regards to the territorial disputes the new Polish state had to face at the beginning of its existence. In addition, the analyses of Poland's eastern border conflicts in the Spanish press and in Gutierrez de Agüera's diplomatic reports often made references to military, strategic and geopolitical aspects.

The Polish-Soviet War had a great repercussion on the Spanish press and was covered with plenty of attention by Spain's ministry in Warsaw Francisco Gutierrez de Agüera. The Spanish

diplomat attributed French general Weygand a large role in the Polish victory against the Bolsheviks in the Battle of the Vistula.

Many Spanish press editors and contributors, mostly those with a Germanophile orientation but also pro-allied conservative newspapers strongly criticised the leaders of the new Polish independent state for what in Spain was perceived as Polish imperialist ambitions, particularly in Lithuania, Eastern Galicia and Ukraine, but also in Cieszyn Silesia, Upper Silesia and Greater Poland.

Many press editors and contributors strongly condemned the anti-Jewish violence that occurred in the first months of existence of the new Polish state and some of them accused the Polish state of not protecting its Jewish population. The published information about pogroms in reborn Poland led a group of leading Spanish liberal intellectuals to send a complaint letter to the leader of the Polish National Committee Roman Dmowski, and led the committee to send notes to the Spanish press in order to protect Poland's good name in Spain.

On her articles for 'ABC' Sofia Casanova wrote many articles about the reality of Polish Jews emphasizing the differences between ghetto lower-class Orthodox and high-class assimilated ones, which in her view mistreated the former. She described with plenty of details the beliefs, behaviours, and appearance of lower-class Jews in Poland. Despite the fact that Casanova had the chance to know the reality of Polish Jews first hand, her views on Jews can be perceived as very stereotypical. In addition, regarding the Polish-Jewish question, many Spanish press contributors highlighted that Polish Jews wanted autonomy, but many of these columnists claimed that assimilation like in the West was a better solution for the Jews in reborn Poland.

Spain's views on Poland were much more positive during the Great War period than during the aftermath of the war, because in the 1918-1921 period many Spanish press editors and contributors on the one hand disliked Poland's fait accompli or aggressive strategies to take control of disputed territories in Greater Poland, Lithuania, Eastern Galicia and Upper Silesia, and on the other hand disliked the Entente's and especially France's overprotection of Poland. Spanish diplomats were very aligned with the Entente's Eastern Policy, especially France's and were less critical of Poland's attitudes in its border conflicts than the Spanish press. However, Agüera strongly criticised the head of state Pilsudski, foreign minister Sapieha and Żeligowski for the military occupation of Vilna, among other aspects of the new state's foreign policy.

