

TERRITORY OF II RZECZYPOSPOLITA IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN CLASSICAL GEOPOLITICS

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Abstract: There are many arguments for distinguishing Central Europe that can be understood as the belt of countries which runs west of the border of Germany, Austria and Italy, and to the east of the border of Russia (without the Kaliningrad enclave), Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Geographical conditions of the central part of Europe had also their impact on a formation of "the region of the centre". In the north the transitional character of land relief reflects the transient of Polish Plains. In the center of the region the existing highlands, old mountains and the Carpathian Mountains clearly separated some countries in the region from neighbors closing even the tribes of Magyars on the Hungarian Plain. In so changing its borders and extent Europe of Centre the borders of the Polish state have been also changing. It was connected with many historical facts like: the formal division between Austria, Germany and Russia and the independence period between 1918 and 1939. Together with the new geopolitical boundaries and circumstances a Polish point of view for Central Europe has changed.

Key words: Central Europe, II Poland, geopolitics, theory,

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Introduction

Due to the terminological difficulties as well as diverse definitions of the region that it is possible to come across in literature (Rykiel; 2001), it seems necessary to clarify the notion of the region as well as its spatial extent in Europe. The division of space into specific areas can serve as a tool for the intended research, either for the organization of a specific social action in the space or may constitute the subject of research. There are many arguments for distinguishing Central Europe that can be understood as the belt of countries which runs west of the border of Germany, Austria and Italy, and to the east of the border of Russia. These arguments can be divided into geographical, economic, historical, political and cultural criteria. Putting them together indicates the existence of a separate specific spatial formation with distinct features different from the surrounding area and at the same time with the borderline that is difficult to determine.

Such defined Central Europe, with Poland situated in the center, had been developed primarily as the transitional region between two highly diverse civilizations centers in the East and the West of the continent (Cohen, 1963; Wendt, 1999; 2004). Geographical conditions of the central part of Europe had also their impact on a formation of "the region of the centre". In the north the transitional character of land relief reflects the transient of Polish Plains. In the center of the region the existing highlands, old mountains and the Carpathian Mountains clearly separated some countries in the region from neighbors closing even the tribes of Magyars on the Hungarian Plain. In so changing its borders and extent Europe of Centre the borders of the Polish state have been also changing. It was connected with many historical facts like: the formal division between Austria, Germany and Russia and the independence period between 1918 and 1939.

Area and borders of Central Europe

The location of Centre Europe is determined not only by its geographic coordinates - halfway between the capes, North in Scandinavia and Mattapan in Greece, and Roca in the Iberian Peninsula and the Ural Mountains, but also a common history and similar transformations in the economy. The

notion “Central Europe” (“Mitteleuropa”) is a historical notion. However, these two words that make it up have geographical importance and mean the space being in a centre of Europe. The first instinct is to turn to physical geography to determine the environmental framework that may impose or suggest the existence of the almost homogeneous unit. However, it is said for a long time that the region is primarily a result of the forming of space by human beings, especially when it is located on the continent so deeply transformed by people as Europe. Also the cultural aspect suggests that many common elements are characterizing countries of the region. Some of them are: the farthest range of Gothic buildings in the east of Europe, a western border of democratically exercised political systems, the Latin alphabet or common Roman Catholic roots with the later development of the Reformation.

However, Central Europe had different dimensions. They can be classified, in terms of the period in which concepts were formed, into three groups:

- concepts of the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century associated with the process of unification of German states and its hegemony (1866 - 1914);
- concepts of the First World War period (1914 - 1918);
- concepts of the interwar period (1918 - 1939).

The first concepts of German Central Europe emerged with the development of unification tendencies, in which the area of political and economic influences of two German-speaking states, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the kingdom of Prussia largely overlapped with each other. In that time the range of Central Europe was associated respectively with the concept of unification of the German states with Austria or Prussia as hegemony. Thus, among the Austrian researchers Central Europe reached far into the Balkans, including Transylvania in the south, or even the whole Romania and Bulgaria, while Prussian geopoliticians reduced the boundaries of Central Europe to Transylvania.

In the period between the outbreak of the First and Second World Wars, among many geopolitical concepts the greatest recognition gained: J. Partsch, F. Nauman, E. de Martonne, G. Wirsing, and J. Ancel. According to F. Naumann’s concept (1945) Central Europe covers the territory

of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Second Reich reaching seas: Baltic, North, Black and Adriatic. Further plans from the period 1914-1939 include respectively territory from the Rhine in the west, to Prypec River in the east, the Baltic Sea in the north and the Carpathians in the south.

	Nau mann 1915	Marton ne 1923	Wirsing 1931	Ancel 1936	Wendt 1939
Albania			+		
Austria	+	+		+	
Bulgaria			+		
Czechoslovakia	+	+	+	+	+
East Prussia	+	+			+
Estonia			+		+
F.C. Danzig		+			+
Germany	+	+			+
Hungary	+	+	+	+	+
Latvia			+		+
Lithuania			+		+
Poland	+	+	+		+
Romania		+	+	+	+
Switzerland		+			
Yugoslavia	+		+	+	

Tab. 1. Changes of the spatial range of Central Europe in geopolitical concepts from 1914-1939

Source: Own study based on: F. Naumann, 1945, *Mitteleuropa*, Berlin; V.S. Cucu, 1992, *Romania - Consideratii geopolitice*, „Terra” nr 3-4, s. 22-38; G. Parker, 1997, *Geopolitics*, Pinter, London; J.A.Wendt, 2014, *Quo vadis Europa Centralis?*, University of Oradea, Oradea (data for 1939).

It is possible to notice (Tab. 1) numerous changes of the spatial range of Centre Europe in geopolitical concepts in consecutive years. There is a noticeable trend towards a slow "movement" of the region to the east. It becomes even more evident when compared with the concept of J. Partsch from 1904, in which Central Europe extends from the Netherlands and Belgium only to Germany and Austro – Hungarian Empire. In this context, an interesting role is played by Polish

and Romanian geopolitical concepts specifying the spatial range of the region. Both countries are located at the north-eastern and south-eastern end of the region and limit its spatial range respectively to north and south of its borders based on the assumption that both Romania and Poland belonging to Western Europe cannot be a part of the German sphere of influence. A short period of the World War II did not change the view, in spite of the inclusion of parts of Poland directly to the III Reich and treating Romania as a German sphere of economic influence.

Polish state under neighbor occupation (up to 1918)

The first Polish geography textbooks from the half of the 19th century clearly show what can and should be regarded as the Polish lands. First of all, it is the part of Russia, the Polish Kingdom consisting of five provinces: Warsaw, Radom, Lublin, Płock and Augustów (Kołodziński, 1861:90). In the Prussian state Poles live in the Great Dutchy of Poznań and in the "Countries of Prussia - which - when belonged to Poland were divided into provinces: Chełmno, Malbork and Pomeranian." In the Austrian Empire the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria are inhabited by the Poles. It is located "on the northern steep slopes of the Carpathians, includes Bucovina, mountainous country, close to the Moldavian border. It is bordered to the east of Volhynia and Podolia, to the north of the Polish Kingdom" (Kołodziński, 1861:115). Such a laconic record, showing the Polish lands without the attempt to have a look from a wider perspective, was probably dictated by the fact of publication of the textbook in the Russian annexed territory, although it was not yet the main period of Russification. The results of the work prove that the existing to Partitions of Poland country covered only the mentioned above territory - and such a point of view was probably supposed to constitute the basis of education for young people in the Kingdom. Only parents were supposed to teach about the real, far wider extent of the state, like e.g. about Stolen Lands. Geography and history of Poland for the half century were treated as the elements of geography and history of three invaders. A generation had to pass to make it possible to print works showing the shape of Polish territory after the period of defeat of uprisings and conspiracies.

The teaching of history and geography took place in a similar way in the Prussian state, and then in the German empire. German publishing companies practically omitted issues of the Polish national identity and Polish land within its borders. Published maps and textbooks presented the boundaries of ethnic Poland along the borderline with the Russian Empire. One of the most popular school historical atlases (F. W. Putzgers, "Historischer Schul - Atlas". Bielefeld und Leipzig 1909, 33 editions to 1909) presents the land inhabited by Poles only as a part of districts of Poznan and Bydgoszcz within the empire with implementing of separate ethnic groups: Kashubian and Mazur. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire they inhabit the foothills and the triangle between the Vistula and the San. What is more, the Ukrainian settlement is developed in the Carpathian Mountains. In the Kingdom the Polish land is limited to a line Suwałki-Białystok-Siedlce-Jarosław, where the ethnic boundary is going west, reaching Jasło. A territory inhabited by Poles was limited in this way to Masovia, the eastern part of Greater Poland and western Lesser Poland.¹

Only in the Austrian partition in the research centers of Lviv and Cracow independence ideas could develop freely. The development of ideas about the formation of the country at that time were used widely disseminated findings geographers German and English in the field of the newly created science - or rather the geopolitics of political geography. At that time, widely promoted discoveries of German and English geographers in the field of the newly created science - of geopolitics or rather political geography - were used for the development of views about the forming of countries. Polish intellectuals, graduated the Western universities, and were confronted with the views of F. Ratzel who in 1882 announced his fundamental "anthropogeography", outlining a new direction in geographical studies. Inspired by his work and discoveries as well as the work of contemporary French geographers (Reclus, Vidal de la Blache, Ancel) Polish scientists put some interesting hypotheses showing the extent of the Polish territory.

¹ If we assume that the Kingdom of Galicia and the Austrian partition Lodomeria are the whole Lesser Poland (Małopolska).

One of the first was Waclaw Nałkowski (1851-1911), who carried out the geographical synthesis of Polish lands and the environmental regionalization (in the sense of geographical environment) in the "Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom" (1887). Nałkowski was also the first geographer, who pointed out and tried to justify scientifically the existence of Poland in Europe, resulting from the functioning of a certain geographical space (Nałkowski, 1913, 1914). He argued that: "Already in the name «Poland» that is «a land of fields», of plains, *campania per excellence*, there is, unfortunately, the concept of something unlimited, and this illimitability is determined by plastic features of relief, which decide about the landscape monotony, and it is enhanced by the geographical location of this "campania" (Nałkowski; 1913: 28). So Poland would be an unrestricted land, with monotonous, boundless territory, without distinct determining the reach spatial and deprived of a clear mark - unless we regard the lack of distinct character of a given territory and borders as the determining feature.² The proponent of the theory of Poland existence - because of the specific land relief - was Eugeniusz Romer (1871-1954), one of the most outstanding Polish geographers, who by examining the river system links on the European Plains came to the conclusion that "Poland" is a notion, not only political or legal, but also the land showing a geographical unit that provides the place in Europe (Romer, 1939:11).

Such conditions of the existence of Poland would point to a necessity of its existence in an every political system, even if this system would not assume the functioning of a legal country, as it was during the partition. F. Ratzel made a similar hypothesis in his work on political geography in the scheme of European countries. He took into account the existence of Poland resulting from the determining influence of geomorphology and the river system that is closely connected with geomorphology. The scheme of a belt system of European countries going east-west and north-south creates a table, which shows, *inter alia*, the need for the existence of Poland according to Ratzel (Ratzel; 1903:258).

² The character of a territory in terms of distinctive physical and geographical features such as: land relief, geology, climate, waters, etc.

A very simplified image of Poland, however covering bigger territory, W. Wakar presented in his work (1926). Glorifying Poland, he does not show linear boundaries, but rather barriers shaping the outline of the country. "Poland - the country is a great one, rich and populous. It is situated on a vast land, called Europe. From the north it reaches the Baltic Sea, to the south it is climbing to the Carpathian Mountains. Behind this sea Swedes live and behind mountains Hungarians are. In the east Poland reaches of extensive swamps and marshes, called Polesie. Behind them Russia exists. From the west Poland borders with Germany. Between the mountains, swamps and the sea, between these nations, Poles live" (Wakar; 1926:3). The above image of Poland combines the kind of ethnic range - pointing to the place inhabited by Polish people with clearly indicated natural borders. The northern and southern boundaries are quite clearly specified ones while the boundaries of lowlands result rather from the range of neighboring nations. Despite E. Romer's indications, the most poorly described boundary is the western border with Germany, where the main criterion is the ethnic range. Determining areas considered to be Polish brings more clarity. These include: Eastern Pomerania, Greater Poland, Opole Silesia, Lesser Poland, Kuyavia, Masovia, Lithuania, the Inflantia, Polesie and Podole (Wakar, 1926:28).

These concepts of territorial lands, which can be considered as Polish, lead to the conclusion that neither ethnic nor historical boundaries are not able to clearly indicate the extent of the country, which can be called Poland. Language, religion, national identity cannot clearly identify the lands belonging. However, the historical boundaries, as shown in the first part of this study, are ranging from Lusatia to the Dniester and Dnieper. It is extremely difficult therefore to indicate territory assigned to Poland. W. Nałkowski and E. Romer tried to solve this problem at the beginning the 20th century, causing the current until today dispute.

Polish state and territory in the W.Nałkowski and E.Romer geopolitical concepts

The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was a period of the strongest growth of national and nationalist movements. It

is considered to be a period of the formation of national consciousness by many new social groups - residents of the former multinational states. Each of them, both those that already existed in the state history, as well as those which have come into existence for the first time, were looking for its identity, trying to define themselves, also territorially. "Having natural territory, territory that predisposes its inhabitants to be one community, is the demand of national ideology, resulting from the assumption that the nation is a community with natural and predisposed ties. In addition, the natural territory has one more value seen from the point of view of the national ideology, which strongly acts on members of the community, it is easier to imagine it as a complete whole, and this idea has an impact on the image of the community associated with this area, adding its individuality to these members. A patriot is then willing to look at own national territory as a territory separated in a natural way, or he easily aspirations for such an extension of national territory to be based on natural boundaries" (Ossowski; 1984:50). If, as claimed by S. Ossowski, striving to extract the spatial shape of a state in the geographical region is an inherent feature of the community, having in mind the danger to determine the extent of territory resulting from the national point of view, we will analyze hypothesis related to the shape of Polish space until the time of independence. Especially since they had a significant effect on the real shape of Poland after 1918. E. Romer was an expert of the Polish side during the negotiations in Paris (1919) and Riga (1921), and his "Geographical-Statistical Atlas of Poland" of 1916 played an important role in determining the boundaries (Romer, 1989: 262-266).

W. Nałkowski considered Poland within its pre-partition borders to be the area of Polish country. The theory of "transition" assumed that the Polish territory is characterized by interpenetration and transition of typical for Western Europe geographical environment to elements characteristic for Eastern Europe (Russia), or even Asia. The arguments for being Poland as "transitional" country - which would make it a distinguish feature from neighboring areas - should be: watershed going through Poland, which divides the catchment area of the Baltic and Black seas, as well as a longitudinally going isoamplitude 23°C - widely regarded by geographers as

the conventional boundary between influences of marine and continental climates. Among other elements of the natural environment also the longitudinally going western boundary of the beech tree affects the transitional character of Poland (beech tree is considered to be the tree of Atlantic climate), as well as the range of destructive locusts appearances occurring on the outskirts of eastern Poland, which proves its eastern character (Nałkowski, 1913).

This transitional character of geographical features was also observed in the historical and ethnic aspects, which is also visible to this day. W. Nałkowski in their work presented an attempt to motivate the course of history by the influence of the environment. The wide belt of European lowlands decisively facilitated the formation of large countries and the absorption of smaller states by them. The expansion of plains across a wide arc from Szczecin-Sudeten line to the east, would lead to the settlement phenomenon of "aspiration of the East" (Nałkowski, 1913:44). In his works Nałkowski emphasized the transient in the latitudinal as well as longitudinal directions, which resulted in crossing of transport routes in Poland and affected the formation of "the ethnic medley". "The confrontation of two political worlds, the West and the East, causes the need for «a buffer country» with flexible boundaries. Location at the gate of a continental part of Europe and the steppe, barbarian Asia - a phenomenon of the bulwark, military borderlands, all this (as well as a lot other «contact phenomena» is more than enough to make this border belt of an independent land with outstanding individuality" (Nałkowski, 1913:45-46).

The transitional feature of the territory was also claimed by geomorphology – the belt occurring of physical-geographical regions of Poland (Nałkowski, 1913:41). However, at the belt-shaped presentation of Poland, Nałkowski is able to indicate quite clearly boundaries that extend to the Oder and the Lusatia Neisse in the west (Nałkowski, 1913:30), and to the Dnieper in the east, reaching natural boundaries in the north and south - the sea and mountains. This too deterministic image of Poland encountered polemics quite quickly from the outstanding Polish geographer E. Romer, beginning a great career, who introduced a similar territorially but differently

argued hypothesis of the spatial separation of Poland (Romer, 1939).

Based on the geographical assumptions of geopolitics E. Romer believed that “or Poland does not have a physical justification in the environment of Europe, and then its long-lived existence could be only the result of some political and cultural assumptions and conditions, and in this case the matter of Poland is solely dependent on the return of similar historical-political constellations. Or Poland resides in Europe as one of its organic elements of the physical structure, and in that case an independence of Poland is much closer problem, because to put the human will into practice, not a nature, but the only other human will can prevent” (Romer; 1912: 3-4). Assuming that the area of Poland forms the strongly connected river system connecting the Baltic Sea with the Black Sea, he acknowledged that Poland is a kind of bridge between these two reservoirs. One of characteristic features distinguishing Poland from neighbors, especially from Russia, the geological and geomorphologic structures of European lowlands were supposed to be. Based on the research on river systems Romer concluded that any expansion of nations always aspires beyond valleys lines towards watersheds. Thus, a continuous area of the river basin could become naturally limited the territory of a nation, a country. Moreover, Romer based his studies on the research of F. Ratzel (1903:271), who believed that Poland, in order to exist, has to have the access to the sea, otherwise it will be completely dependent on neighboring countries and deprived of the possibility of the economic and political development.

According to E. Romer, determined in this way Poland is a Baltic-Pontic country including the narrowing land of Europe to the east, the areas between the Atlantic Europe and the Black Sea Europe, between the line of the Pomeranian Bay and the Sudetes, and the Gulf of Riga and the Crimean Peninsula. Such a location is not only determining the need for a Polish existence in Europe, but it involves some challenges and creates history by combining two separate political, social and cultural systems, but also by the attempt to survive, despite the pressure of neighbors.

Summary

Stanisław Pawłowski (1928) in the group publication "Contemporary Poland" shows the hypothesis similar to W. Nałkowski in a part devoted to political geography of Poland. He demonstrated the transitional character of physical-geographical regions and pointed to the dominant role of rivers in creating historical regions. He also paid attention to the decentralization of the economic and cultural life, emphasizing the importance of the borderlands. "However, the central regions of Poland, excluding Warsaw as the capital city, are not major the main place of economic and cultural life in Poland. In this respect, there is a very interesting geographical-political phenomenon in Poland. Here in the economic and even political Polish life the borderland regions play a very important role. Greater Poland with Poznań, Vilnius Region with Vilnius, Czerwiensk Region with Lviv, Krakow and Silesia regions. In the near future the Pomeranian land with Gdansk will undoubtedly come to the great importance" (Pawłowski et al., 1928:17). Indicating the borderland lands simultaneously determines the territorial range of Polish territory. In the work of Stanisław Pawłowski borders from 1923 had a strong influence for determining a territory. He also shares the views of E. Romer and R. Umiastowski related to "the peninsulas" of Polish colonization towards Vilnius and Lviv, underlining effects of the strong Polonization process, especially among the Germans and the Jews. In the mid-thirties it is possible to notice, in addition to copying views of E. Romer and W. Nałkowski about the need to distinguish a natural territory, thesis about the forming an individuality resulting from political activity, economic unification and the development of Polonization processes. The lack of natural boundaries between different parts of Poland facilitated the merging the country into one political and economic complex, but this lack, except for southern frontiers, formed the Polish territory exposed to the expansion of neighbors.

In presented concepts of the spatial extent of the Polish state or rather the Polish territory, it is possible to notice two distinct keynotes. To the time of regaining independence there was the domination of ideas of the territorial range from the period before the partitions. But it was so if people thought

that an independent Polish country should come into existence, or the extent of the territory covered only a relatively narrow ethnic area, moved to the east or west depending on whether the possible part of Polish country would be created under the patronage of Russia or Germany. The second prevailing trend was caused by the formation of a country in 1918 and by the establishment of its boundaries, what should be justified geopolitically. Thus, views related to the Polish character of a bridge area often "fit" to the real range of the country. In later works (1935-1939) there is a lack of a greater emphasis on the eastern borderlands, which were becoming less attractive than the western borderland.

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