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**SPIS TREŚCI**  
**INHALTSVERZEICHNIS**  
**CONTENTS**

RENATA SKOWROŃSKA .....	7
Kronika Polskiej Misji Historycznej	
Chronik der Polnischen Historischen Mission	
The chronicle of the Polish Historical Mission	
RENATA SKOWROŃSKA .....	17
Stypendyści i goście Polskiej Misji Historycznej	
Stipendiaten und Gäste der Polnischen Historischen Mission	
Fellows and guests of the Polish Historical Mission's scholarships	
 <b>STUDIA I MATERIAŁY / STUDIEN UND MATERIALIEN / STUDIES AND MATERIALS</b>	
PRZEMYSŁAW WOJCIECHOWSKI .....	27
<i>Collegia mulierum. Prywatne stowarzyszenia kobiece w okresie wczesnego cesarstwa (I–III w. n.e.)</i>	
<i>Collegia mulierum. Private Frauenvereine in der frühen Kaiserzeit (1.–3. Jh. n.Chr.)</i>	
<i>Collegia mulierum: Private women's societies in the Early Empire (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD)</i>	
MARTA KUC-CZEREP .....	39
Warszawa i jej niemieckojęzyczni mieszkańcy w XVIII wieku	
Warschau und seine deutschsprachigen Einwohner im 18. Jahrhundert	
Warsaw and its German-speaking inhabitants in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century	
URSZULA KOSIŃSKA .....	69
Rosja wobec Polski i Saksonii w czasach Piotra Wielkiego, Katarzyny I i Anny Iwanowny (prace polskich historyków i postulaty badawcze)	
Russlands Verhältnis zu Polen und Sachsen unter Peter dem Großen, Katharina I. und Anna Iwanowna (Werke polnischer Historiker und Forschungsdesiderate)	
Russia towards Poland and Saxony in the times of Peter the Great, Catherine I and Anna Ivanovna (works of Polish historians and research postulates)	

TOMASZ SZWACIŃSKI .....	93
Rosja za Iwana VI, Elżbiety i Piotra III wobec Polski i Saksonii (prace historyków polskich i postulaty badawcze)	
Russland unter Iwan VI., Elisabeth und Peter III. und sein Verhältnis zu Polen und Sachsen (Werke polnischer Historiker und Forschungsdesiderate)	
Russia during the period of the reign Ivan VI, Elizabeth I and Peter III towards the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Saxony (works by Polish historians and research postulates)	
WOLFGANG WÜST .....	111
Pracownicy sezonowi oraz zatrudniani przy zbiorach w niemieckim rolnictwie. Status i problemy historycznych migracji zarobkowych w „długim” XIX wieku w zwierciadle wczesnych doniesień prasowych	
Wanderarbeiter und Erntehelper in der deutschen Landwirtschaft. Status und Probleme historischer Arbeitsmigration im „langen“ 19. Jahrhundert im Spiegel früher Presseberichte	
Migrant workers and harvest helpers in German agriculture: Status and problems of historical labour migration in the “long” 19 <sup>th</sup> century in the mirror of early press reports	
WITOLD MATWIEJCZYK .....	141
Działania państwowne w celu kontroli polskiej imigracji w Zagłębiu Ruhry w latach 1871–1914	
Staatliche Maßnahmen zur Überwachung der polnischen Einwanderung im Ruhrgebiet 1871–1914	
State actions to control Polish immigration in the Ruhr area in the years 1871–1914	
HADRIAN CIECHANOWSKI .....	185
Królestwo Prus wobec migracji Polaków na przełomie XIX i XX wieku	
Das Königreich Preußen und die Polenwanderung an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert	
The Kingdom of Prussia and the migration of Poles at the turn of the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries	
DANIEL BENEDIKT STIENEN .....	195
Królewska Komisja Osadnicza dla Prus Zachodnich i Poznania (1886–1924). Organizacja – pola działania – dyskusja badawcza	
Die Königliche Ansiedlungskommission für Westpreußen und Posen (1886–1924). Organisation – Handlungsfelder – Forschungsdiskussion	
Royal Settlement Commission for West Prussia and Poznań (1886–1924): Organization – fields of activity – research discussion	

ELŻBIETA ALABRUDZIŃSKA .....	269
Stosunki austriacko-niemieckie a bezpieczeństwo narodowe Polski w latach 1926–1933	
Die österreichisch-deutschen Beziehungen und die polnische nationale Sicherheit in den Jahren 1926–1933	
Austrian-German relations and the national security of Poland in the years 1926–1933	
MARTA BARANOWSKA / PAWEŁ FIKTUS .....	289
Emigracja oczyma prawnika. Leopold Caro o prawnych aspektach sezonowej emigracji zarobkowej polskich robotników rolnych do Niemiec na początek XX wieku	
Auswanderung aus der Sicht eines Juristen. Leopold Caro über die rechtlichen Aspekte der saisonalen Wirtschaftswanderung polnischer Landarbeiter nach Deutschland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts	
Emigration seen through the eyes of a lawyer: Leopold Caro on the legal aspects of the seasonal labour emigration of Polish agricultural workers to Germany in the early twentieth century	
HANS-MARTIN BEHRISCH .....	311
Ucieczka żydowskich Polek i Polaków do Saksonii w czasie oraz bezpośrednio po I wojnie światowej	
Die Flucht jüdischer Polinnen und Polen nach Sachsen während und unmittelbar nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg	
Escape of Jewish Polish women and men to Saxony during and immediately after World War I	
KRZYSZTOF OKOŃSKI .....	335
„Turek, którego z miejsca nazwałem ‘Kebab’”. Obraz tureckich imigrantów w zachodnioberlińskich czasopismach polskiej emigracji <i>Pogłd</i> i <i>Archipelag</i> (przed rokiem 1989)	
„Ein Türke, den ich gleich ‚Kebab‘ nannte“. Zum Bild türkischer Einwanderer in den Westberliner Zeitschriften der polnischen Emigration <i>Pogłd</i> und <i>Archipelag</i> (vor 1989)	
“The Turk Whom I Called ‘Kebab’”: The image of Turkish immigrants in the West Berlin periodicals of the Polish emigration <i>Pogłd</i> and <i>Archipelag</i> (prior to 1989)	

**OMÓWIENIA / BUCHBESCHREIBUNGEN / BOOK DESCRIPTIONS**

CHRISTIAN MÜHLING .....	357
Kulturowo-historyczne rozważania o stosunkach zagranicznych	
Brandenburgii-Prus w latach 1648–1740	
Eine kultурgeschichtliche Betrachtung der auswärtigen Beziehungen	
Brandenburg-Preußens zwischen 1648 und 1740	
A cultural-historical consideration of Brandenburg-Prussia's foreign relations	
between 1648 and 1740	
DAMIAN SZYMCZAK .....	361
Strategie oporu polskich chłopów z nowej perspektywy. Kilka uwag o książce	
Michała Rauszera <i>Bękarty pańszczyzny</i>	
Die Widerstandstrategien der polnischen Bauern aus neuer Perspektive. Einige	
Bemerkungen zu dem Buch von Michał Rauszer <i>Békarty pańszczyzny</i>	
The resistance strategies of Polish peasants from a new perspective: Some	
remarks on the book <i>Békarty pańszczyzny</i> by Michał Rauszer	

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## AUSTRIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF POLAND IN THE YEARS 1926–1933

### INTRODUCTION

One of the less known effects of the fall of the two great European dynasties, the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns, in November of 1918 was the almost immediate re-emergence of the concept of Greater Germany. The implementation of this idea – which also sought to include Austria in one unified German state and had been circulating in the German-speaking world since the Springtime of the Peoples – was impeded by the interests of German dynasties, especially the two greatest ones. The legal act accompanying the creation of two new republics – Germany and Austria – was the resolution adopted on 12 November 1918 by the Provisional National Assembly in Vienna on the readiness of uniting the republic of Austria with the German state.<sup>1</sup> Such a swift and decisive action by Austria was motivated by the conviction that it was a state unable to exist independently.

Austria's pursuit of unification with Germany was prevented by the provisions of the peace treaties, primarily of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye of 10 November 1919, which emphasised the inalienability of Austria's independence, which could be changed solely by a decision of the League of Nations. Under the auspices of the League of Nations, Austria received

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<sup>1</sup> Kozeński: *Sprawa przyłączenia Austrii*, pp. 31–33; Idem: *Austria 1918–1968*, pp. 28–30.

economic help in the form of a loan granted by Great Britain, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia, in accordance with the protocols signed in October 1922 in Geneva – an action which was also supposed to prevent Austria's 'Anschluss' (unification with Germany). In those protocols, Austria agreed not to give up its independence in any form. Yet as economic problems mounted, in 1925, the concept of unification with Germany gained popularity. An ardent supporter of Anschluss was also the foreign minister of the Weimar Republic: Gustav Stresemann. On his list of priorities for German foreign policy, 'Anschluss' was located just below the revision of the border with Poland.<sup>2</sup>

The Polish diplomatic service carefully followed the development of Austrian-German relations, considering them to be one of the factors important for the security of the Polish state, and worked towards maintaining Austria's independence. Up to 1923, the Polish authorities perceived the threat of 'Anschluss' as a danger to the system established by the Treaty of Versailles, whose inviolability was a priority in the security policy of the Republic of Poland. The transit of arms and armament through the Austrian territory to Poland was considered an issue that directly impacted Polish military security. Since 1924, as the international position of Poland was worsening, the perception of the Austrian-German contacts by Polish authorities was also evolving. The Locarno Treaties of 1925 radically changed the geopolitical situation of the Republic of Poland. They also significantly diminished the trust of Polish diplomatic service in peace treaties and led to the weakening of the Polish-French alliance. The possible unification of Austria with Germany was now perceived as a direct threat to Polish national security.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this article is to determine the significance of Austrian-German relations for Polish national security in the years 1926–1933. It will analyse the attitude of Polish diplomacy to the issue of a possible unification of Austria and Germany. The first date refers to the May Coup carried out by Józef Piłsudski, which marked a turning point in Polish foreign policy.

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<sup>2</sup> Piétri: *L'œuvre d'un organisme technique*, pp. 319–341; Nathan: *Austrian reconstruction*, pp. 105–112; idem: *Austria, the League of Nations*, pp. 137–142; Batowski: *Austria i Sudety*, pp. 69–73; Kozeński: *Austria 1918–1968*, pp. 33–69.

<sup>3</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych (further: AAN): *Ambasada RP w Londynie*, sign. 305, k. 1–3; AAN: *Ambasada RP w Paryżu*, sign. 102, k. 51–52. More in Alabrudzińska: *Austria w polskiej polityce*, pp. 5–16.

It was also the year when the international position of Germany improved rapidly. The end date reflects Adolf Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, which began an entirely new period in Austrian-German relations.

The text was based on the currently available source literature and archival materials. The latter come from the Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw (primarily from the collections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Diplomatic Mission to Vienna) and from Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik in Vienna (the collection Neues Politisches Archiv), as well as from printed sources. In contrast to other published works on Polish-Austrian relations during the discussed period, the article focuses on Poland's attitude towards the relations between Austria and Germany, analysed as an element of Polish security policy. It is a new approach to the subject, and therefore the text will not discuss the other directions in Austria's foreign policy, nor will it analyse other issues connected with Polish-Austrian relations.

The article interchangeably uses the concept of 'national security', with its multilateral meaning, and of 'state security', in the sense of 'ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state'.<sup>4</sup> The article adopts the definition of national security as "one of the basic domains of state's functioning, which ensures the possibilities of survival as well as development and freedom of pursuing national interests in a specific security environment, by meeting challenges, making use of chances, reducing risk and counteracting all kinds of threats".<sup>5</sup> National security "is not only the protection of nation and territory against a physical attack but also the protection – with the use of various means – of vital political and economic interests the loss of whose would threaten the vitality and fundamental values of the state".<sup>6</sup>

For the purpose of analysis, this study uses the external aspect of national security, understood as lack of threat from other subjects. The following types of national security are primarily taken into consideration: political security, military security and, to a lesser extent, economic security.<sup>7</sup> Thus

<sup>4</sup> Kubiak: *Kulturowe uwarunkowania*, pp. 33–35.

<sup>5</sup> Kamiński: *Prawo bezpieczeństwa*, p. 59. More in Pokruszyński: *Współczesne bezpieczeństwo*, pp. 179–180.

<sup>6</sup> *Słownik terminów*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Kitler: *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, pp. 31–36; Pokruszyński: *Współczesne bezpieczeństwo*.

national security is perceived here in a traditional way, without including other aspects and its non-state subjects. National security is considered both as a state and a process comprising protective and defensive activities aimed at creating suitable conditions for the state's functioning of the state in the international environment. National security understood in this way is the main task of the state's foreign policy.<sup>8</sup>

## 1. GERMANY AND AUSTRIA IN THE CONCEPT OF POLISH SECURITY POLICY

Within several months following the May Coup, Józef Piłsudski formulated the concept of the policy of balance. It assumed maintaining the current alliances with France and Romania, yet the main emphasis was put on normalising the relations with Germany and the Soviet Union. The relations with two large neighbours were considered as a single issue; no strategic alliance with one of those states was considered. According to Marshal Piłsudski, the security of the Polish state was based on normalizing relations with Germany and the Soviet Union, while Poland's geopolitical position necessitated concluding bilateral agreements – Piłsudski perceived multi-lateral ones as lacking real guarantees of security.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, Piłsudski's concept matched the more general tendency visible in European politics after the Locarno Treaties, which involved replacing trust in peace treaties and in the League of Nations with bilateralism.<sup>10</sup> However, in this area, Piłsudski's ideas were not implemented until 1932, due to the entirely different viewpoint held by foreign minister August Zaleski, who made the League of Nations the third pillar of his concept of Polish foreign policy, despite Piłsudski's contemptuous attitude towards this organization.<sup>11</sup>

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wo, pp. 183–184; Kamiński: *Prawo bezpieczeństwa*, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Szyszak et al.: *Wstęp*, pp. 7–8; Olak et al.: *Współczesne rozumienie bezpieczeństwa*, pp. 471–472.

<sup>9</sup> Paruch: *Pilsudczykowska koncepcja*, pp. 197–203.; Kornat: *Polityka równowagi*, pp. 26–32.

<sup>10</sup> Kornat: *Polityka równowagi*, pp. 465–469; Balcerak: *Polityka zagraniczna*, pp. 195–226.

<sup>11</sup> Kania et al. (eds.): Zaleski August: *Wspomnienia*, p. 201–204; Alabrudzińska: *Diplomacja polska*, p. 249.

However, both politicians were not so different in their approach to policy towards Germany. The direction set by Piłsudski was neutrality towards the German state and the program of fullest possible, compromise-based normalisation of relations with Germany. New challenges emerged due to the international situation as Poland's position and security level were diminished not only by the Locarno Treaties, but also by the German-Soviet treaty of April 1926 and the prospect of the Weimar Republic becoming a permanent member of the League of Nations.<sup>12</sup>

The views of Piłsudski's supporters on Polish national security were based on an assessment of the state's geopolitical situation and historical experiences. In the international environment, Poland stood out due to the negative burden of being a neighbour of Germany and the Soviet Union; therefore, its existence was dependent on the situation in Central Europe. Based on the assumption that in the international environment there were two enemies of Poland, that is, the Soviet Union and Germany, Piłsudski's government concluded that the security of the Republic of Poland depended on establishing relations with its two big neighbours.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Austria's importance was related above all to a possible 'Anschluss', and consequently to strengthening Germany.

The concept of policy towards Austria assumed that Austria could not survive as an independent state, while Poland did not have sufficient capabilities of protecting Austria's independent existence. According to Piłsudski, liquidation of Austria could lead to fighting but not to the outbreak of an all-European war. However, by significantly strengthening Germany, this could cause a decrease in Poland's security. Yet it was also likely that Germany's involvement in Austria would lead to changes in German internal and foreign policy, which would be beneficial for Poland. As Waldemar Paruch emphasises, in Polish foreign policy, Austria was considered not as a subject but as an object; he supports this claim by citing the fact that Piłsudski's government attempted to impact the solution of the Austrian issue by influencing other states, not the Austrian government directly.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Leczyk: *Lata polokarneńskie*, pp. 315–321; Paruch: *Pilsudczykowska koncepcja*, pp. 200–207; Alabrudzińska: *Dyplomacja polska*, pp. 243–244; Wiśniewska et al.: *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, pp. 188–189.

<sup>13</sup> Paruch: *Mysł polityczna*, pp. 572–576.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 659.

However, it seems that this assessment cannot be applied to the first years of Zaleski's tenure as foreign minister, which will be discussed further in this article. In any case, the changes in comparison to the pre-1926 attitude of Polish diplomacy to Austrian-German relations were significant.

## 2. POLAND'S OFFICIAL STANCE IN THE YEARS 1926–1927

In his opening address as the head of Polish diplomatic service on 21 July 1926, Zaleski stressed that: "Austria is that state with German population with which Poland maintains the best relations possible, recently strengthened by concluding the Arbitration Agreement.<sup>15</sup> Very active economic relations, based on significant exchange of goods, are progressing well."<sup>16</sup>

Those statements pointed to continuity in foreign policy and followed the direction set by Aleksander Skrzyński. The Polish government's official stance on the issue of Austria did not change despite attacks on Poland in the Austrian press, which intensified after the May Coup. First, social-democratic and pan-German newspapers published articles supporting German revisionist claims towards Polish territory. A Polish envoy to Vienna, Karol Bader, intervened multiple times in those matters.<sup>17</sup> It is also worth noting that the social-democratic and pan-German political movements in Austria also were in favour of the unification of Austria and Germany.

The importance attached by the Polish government to the Austrian question can be confirmed by Minister Zaleski's visit to Vienna, where he stopped on 4 March 1927 *en route* to Geneva to meet with Chancellor Ignaz Seipel. Their talk lasted for an hour and a half and focused on the issue of the German minority in Poland, Polish-German and Polish-Soviet relations as well as economic relations between Poland and Austria. There are no traces of any mention of Austrian-German relations. Zaleski gave

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<sup>15</sup> The arbitration agreement was signed by the then prime minister and foreign minister Aleksander Skrzyński in Vienna in April 1926.

<sup>16</sup> *Exposé wygłoszone 21 lipca 1926*, p. 13. The opening address was also published in Jędruszcza et al. (eds.): *Dokumenty z dziejów polskiej polityki*, pp. 362–372. Cf. Kania et al. (eds.): Zaleski August: *Wspomnienia*, p. 215. [Translator's note: All quotations from sources in Polish were translated for the purpose of this article].

<sup>17</sup> Essen: *Problem Anschlussu w polityce polskiej*, p. 120; Przegiętka: *Karol Bader*, p. 140.

an interview to the *Neues Wiener Journal* about the peaceful character of Polish foreign policy, particularly towards Germany and the USSR.<sup>18</sup>

However, eight months later, it was Austrian-German relations that became the focus of Polish diplomacy as a result of the Chancellor of Germany Wilhelm Marx and Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann visiting Vienna in November 1927. According to Nicolaus Post, the Austrian envoy to Warsaw, Minister Zaleski did not consider this visit as having anything to do with unification of Austria and Germany; however, Polish papers were concerned, interpreting the event as a ‘silent Anschluss’.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. DIFFERENTIATION OF OPINIONS REGARDING ANSCHLUSS AMONG POLISH DIPLOMATS IN THE YEARS 1929–1930

The opinions of Polish diplomats regarding ‘Anschluss’ were becoming increasingly varied. One of the first signs of a change in approach was the memorandum of Polish envoy to Berlin, Kazimierz Olszowski, of 16 December 1926. Olszowski, an expert on international law and an excellent negotiator, had at that time considerable influence on the perception of Polish-German issues. In his memorandum, he stressed that the problem of ‘Anschluss’ is a current issue in German foreign policy, as it is Gustav Stresemann’s ‘object of ambition’. From the point of view of the Polish state, it has certain negative effects as well as some ‘positive sides’:

- 1) Germany would then share a border with Italy [...], 2) the policy of Czechia would be forced to hold on to us with both hands, 3) the number of Catholics in Germany would significantly increase, which has always been desirable for us [...].<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Minister Zalewski’s visit to Vienna was omitted in the majority of works on Polish-Austrian relations. It is mentioned in Suppan: *Polska i Austria*, pp. 279–280 and Barski: *Die österreichisch-polnischen Beziehungen*, p. 66. It was also included in Szczepanik et al. (eds.): *Stosunki dyplomatyczne*, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Pilch: *Stosunki polsko-austriackie*, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> Olszowski: *Kilka uwag o stosunku Niemiec do Polski*, quoted after: Krasuski: *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie*, p. 270.

We can assume, following Marian Leczyk, that Olszowski was indirectly suggesting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it should not work against the inclusion of Austria into Germany.<sup>21</sup>

An interesting multi-aspect analysis of the possible ‘Anschluss’ was shown in an extensive analysis, presented in August 1927, by Tadeusz Romer, the head of the Western Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He prepared an overview of the international situation of Austria and the stances of European powers as well as invested states on the unification of Austria and Germany. A particular focus of the document was the analysis of ‘Anschluss’ from the perspective of Polish security. This led Romer to a conclusion that all consequences of ‘Anschluss’ that were considered as positive for Poland (he mentioned for example directing German expansion southwards as well as the effects listed in Olszewski’s letter) would be transient in character and thus could not be the basis for the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland. In contrast, Romer thought that the negative results of this unification would be long-term. He included in this category such effects as the strengthening of Germany’s international position, a precedence for revision of treaties, increased German influence in Hungary, cutting the Austrian route for military transit to Poland, as well as economic consequences, dangerous for the Polish economy. Therefore, Poland should actively counteract ‘Anschluss’, and the only price for agreeing to it could be international guarantees for the Polish western border.<sup>22</sup>

In consideration of Romer’s arguments, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began preparations for reaching an agreement with France and Czechoslovakia on the choice of methods to prevent ‘Anschluss’. Those plans were not implemented due to lack of interest on the side of the Czechoslovak diplomatic force.<sup>23</sup>

Those activities of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs were influenced by the events in Austria, where, on 15 July 1927, bloody skirmishes took place between a paramilitary organization called ‘Heimwehr’ and armed groups of the Social Democratic Workers’ Party called ‘Schutzbund’. This

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<sup>21</sup> Leczyk: *Lata polokarneńskie*, p. 322.

<sup>22</sup> Essen: *Problem Anschlussu w polityce polskiej*, pp. 120–122; Paruch: *Myśl polityczna*, p. 660.

<sup>23</sup> Essen: *Problem Anschlussu w polityce polskiej*, p. 122. For more on the stance of Czechoslovak diplomatic force to Anschluss, see Essen: *Polityka Czechosłowacji*, pp. 144–149.

armed internal conflict was assessed by the Polish diplomatic service as an expression of Austria's weakness and increased the doubts regarding the durability of its sovereign existence.<sup>24</sup>

In the years 1928–1929, the economic relations between Poland and Austria worsened. The situation was not improved by the Polish-Austrian negotiations on the revision of a trade treaty, which took place in January 1929. The Polish authorities suspected – as soon it turned out, correctly – that the increasingly inflexible stance of Austria was due to its talks with Germany on establishing closer economic ties.<sup>25</sup> The visit of Chancellor Johann Schober to Poland, planned for 1929–1930, did not happen; therefore, Minister Zaleski abandoned his intention of visiting Austria on his return from Geneva.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made other studies of the 'Anschluss' question. In February 1930, the Southern Division of the Ministry prepared a document containing a detailed analysis of the political reports sent by the Legation of the Republic of Poland in Vienna since October 1929. The analysis stated that "the post-war Austria is a weak state, deprived of spine, balance and sufficient sense of unity. Therefore, it has become an object of intersecting moves of the neighbouring states."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the Polish diplomatic service should carry out 'the action of observation' of the policies of powers towards the four potential solutions of the Austrian question. The solutions included: partition of Austria by the neighbouring states; 'Anschluss'; maintaining the *status quo*; and different forms of Danubian Federation. The assessment of the information activity of the Polish Legation in Vienna was critical.<sup>28</sup>

In his letter to the foreign minister, dated 17 February 1930, the head of the Southern Division, Władysław Günther, emphasised that: "for several months, Austria has become again one of the current and more important

<sup>24</sup> Pelinka: *Die gescheiterte Republik*, pp. 127–128; Zöllner: *Geschichte Österreichs*, pp. 506–507; Balcerak: *Polska – Austria*, p. 110; Kochnowski: *Państwo stanowe*, pp. 130–134.

<sup>25</sup> *Exposé wygłoszone 18 maja 1928*, p. 142. The opening address was also published in Jędruszcza et al. (eds.): *Dokumenty z dziejów polskiej polityki*, pp. 387–404. Cf. Szczepanik et al. (eds.): *Stosunki dyplomatyczne*, p. 24; Pilch: *Stosunki polsko-austriackie*, p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> AAN: *Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych* (further: MSZ), sign. 3459, k. 11–12, 15, 20–22, 28–29.

<sup>27</sup> AAN: MSZ, sign. 3460, k. 14–19.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

elements in the evaluation of political relations in Europe. This has been the result of the activity of Austria itself in relation to its foreign policy and its internal, economic and financial situation, as well as and increased interest in Austria revealed by the Great Powers, first and foremost by Italy".<sup>29</sup>

According to Günther, this was why knowledge of Austria's internal situation, and its international position should be of great importance for the Polish diplomatic service.<sup>30</sup>

The increased interest Poland and other European states took in Austria's situation was caused by the change of priorities in German foreign policy. After Gustav Stresemann died in October 1929 and the former Minister for Economic Affairs Julius Curtius became the leader of the Foreign Ministry, the focus of the activities of German diplomatic service shifted from the eastern to the southern border of the country. As the tide of the Great Depression was rising, in the Weimar Republic, a plan of economic expansion in Danubian states began to take shape. The question of Austria's unification was raised again, and within the following months it became a priority in German foreign policy, ousting the issue of the Polish corridor, until then considered as more significant and urgent.<sup>31</sup>

In Austria, the growing economic difficulties also awoke the striving for 'Anschluss'. Chancellor Johannes Schober and, from September 1930, his successor Carl Vaugoin were still making attempts to save the country's economy with the help of France and the League of Nations. Austria also proposed establishing an economic alliance of Danubian states. At the same time, however, subsequent Austrian governments were holding talks with Berlin aimed at Austrian-German rapprochement.<sup>32</sup>

The Polish diplomatic service observed closely Austria's activities. What caused concern were not only closer Austrian-German relations but also the plans for the alliance of Danubian states, which Poland perceived as

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<sup>29</sup> AAN: MSZ, sign. 3460, k. 3–4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>31</sup> Essen: *Problem Anschlussu w polityce europejskiej*, pp. 105–106; Fiedor: *Austria. Zarys dziejów*, p. 165; Batowski: *Austria i Sudety*, p. 79.

<sup>32</sup> Nathan: *Austrian reconstruction*, pp. 301–304; Schefbeck (ed.): *Österreich 1934*, pp. 44–51; Koźnicki: *Austria 1918–1968*, pp. 94ff; Fiedor: *Austria. Zarys dziejów*, pp. 16–166; Balcerak: *Polska – Austria*, p. 120; Sikorski: *Polska – Austria: gospodarka*, pp. 21–23. Due to French efforts, the overdue reparations owed by Austria were remitted during the second round of the Hague Conference on Reparations in January 1930.

a threat to its economic relations with Austria. From August 1930, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also followed carefully anti-Polish speeches and demonstrations in Austria. They were primarily related to the deterioration of internal situation in the Second Republic of Poland but referred as well to Polish-German relations – and the latter elements were what worried Polish diplomats the most. On 23 September 1930, during a demonstration in Vienna, one of the leaders of Austrian social democrats and former foreign minister Otto Bauer called for changing the Polish-German border, which, as he stressed, was a threat to international security, particularly in Upper Silesia.<sup>33</sup> Several months later, on 10 December 1930, the envoy of the Republic of Poland Karol Bader lodged a protest with Johann Schober, at that time the deputy chancellor and the foreign minister, in relation to a student rally organized in order to protest against the persecution of national minorities in Poland. Bader stated among others that “[...] however, we would not be able to quietly accept a policy that manifests the Austro-German solidarity by creating a common front against Poland”<sup>34</sup>.

#### 4. GERMAN-AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION OF 1931 AND CHANGES IN POLISH POLICY

The talks between Austria and Germany led in 1931 to the decision on establishing a customs union. The protocol on the gradual creation of a customs union of Germany and Austria was signed by the representatives of those two states at the beginning of March 1931 and concerned solely economic matters. Nevertheless, it caused great concern and protests in many European states. In Europe, this agreement was perceived as a document political in character, opening the way to ‘Anschluss’. The strongest reactions came from France, Czechoslovakia and Italy. The Council of the League of Nations referred the issue of the customs union to the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague, which ruled in September 1931, that it was inconsistent with Austria’s international obligations, in particular with

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<sup>33</sup> AAN: MSZ, sign. 3459, k. 39–43, 48. Cf. Kołodziejczyk: *Stosunki polsko-austriackie*, p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> AAN: MSZ, sign. 3459, k. 55–56, 66.

the provisions of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. At the same time, the Council prepared a plan of financial aid for Austria.<sup>35</sup>

Hence, the Austrian-German agreement on customs union did not come to fruition solely due to decisive international reaction. What is surprising in the context of those European protests and endeavours is the much more moderate stance of Poland on the matter of customs union. On 27 March 1931, Deputy Foreign Minister Józef Beck summoned the Austrian envoy to Warsaw, Egon Robert Hein, and expressed his surprise that the Austrian diplomatic service had not informed its Polish counterpart about the agreement that might impact the bilateral relations of Poland and Austria. However, during this and other conversations with Heim, Beck only pointed to the threats posed by the customs union to Polish-Austrian economic relations and to Polish transit through Austria.<sup>36</sup>

In his telegram from 27 March 1931 August Zaleski stated that Poland's stance regarding the trade union was negative, both for economic and political reasons. However, due to tactical considerations he decided that the first countries to react should be France and the states of the Little Entente, above all Czechoslovakia. The Polish foreign minister emphasised that in his opinion the economic relations between Poland and Austria could be the only grounds for Polish intervention.<sup>37</sup>

For over two months, Polish diplomats did not oppose the customs union despite the instructions from France, which was trying to create a united front of Central and South-Eastern European states with regard to this issue. The first Polish reactions appeared in May 1931. On 10 May 1931, the union project was criticised in the *Gazeta Polska*, a government newspaper, and, on 19 May 1931, August Zaleski spoke against the customs union at the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations.<sup>38</sup> However, no other initiatives were taken.

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<sup>35</sup> Barker: *Austria 1918–1972*, pp. 64–69; Essen: *Problem Anschlussu w polityce europejskiej*, pp. 106–111; Idem: *Stanowisko Polski*, pp. 103–105; Fiedor: *Austria. Zarys dziejów*, pp. 164–174; Batowski: *Austria i Sudety*, pp. 79ff.

<sup>36</sup> Archiv der Republik (further: AdR): *Neues Politisches Archiv* (further: NPA), box (further: b.) 79, k. 126–127, 130–132, 134; Essen: *Stanowisko Polski*, p. 107; Pilch: *Stosunki polsko-austriackie*, p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> 27 marca, telegram szyfrowy ministra spraw zagranicznych, pp. 230–231.

<sup>38</sup> Wandycz: *Z Piłsudskim i Sikorskim*, p. 109; Essen: *Stanowisko Polski*, pp. 108–113.

Researchers interpret the Polish stance on the issue of customs union in different ways. Arnold Suppan is of the opinion that Poland was not antagonistic towards the Austrian-German accord on the customs union and discusses this question in the context of Austria as an object of German-Polish rapprochement.<sup>39</sup> According to Dariusz Popławski, the customs union was important for Polish-Austrian relations predominantly in terms of economy.<sup>40</sup> In turn, Piotr Wandycz emphasises that the Polish diplomatic service did not want to identify itself with the ‘anti-Anschluss’ policy pursued mainly by France and Czechoslovakia and approached the issue of union with caution. He quotes speeches of August Zaleski, from which a conclusion can be drawn that Poland might have accepted the customs union of Austria and Germany on condition that Germany recognised its border with Poland.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, Andrzej Essen points to the fact that Poland was not interested in acting jointly with France and Czechoslovakia in order to put pressure on Vienna. Warsaw would have become involved if the anti-union, or ‘anti-Anschluss’ action had been focused on Berlin, “which would have opened opportunities to win in matters connected to Polish-German relations”<sup>42</sup>.

The assumptions that the Polish diplomatic service was still hostile towards ‘Anschluss’ seem correct, yet the moderation demonstrated in relation to the customs union clearly made Poland stand out from other interested states for the first time. This was the first internationally visible sign of a change in policies towards the Austrian-German issue.

The realities soon changed anyway as, in May 1932, the office of Austrian chancellor and foreign minister was taken by Engelbert Dollfuß, whose attitude towards ‘Anschluss’ was unequivocally negative. Tellingly, on 5 May 1932, the Austrian legacy to Warsaw noted that, in Poland, the interest in the results of Austrian election was low: “Due to the lesser role that Austria plays in Polish foreign policy, the election result aroused little interest of the local public opinion.”<sup>43</sup> Both the diplomatic service and the press were at

<sup>39</sup> Suppan: *Polska i Austria*, p. 280.

<sup>40</sup> Popławski: *Stosunki bilateralne*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> Wandycz: *Z Piłsudskim i Sikorskim*, pp. 108–110.

<sup>42</sup> Essen: *Stanowisko Polski*, pp. 107–113.

<sup>43</sup> AdR: NPA, b. 79, k. 226, 230, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau an den Herrn Bundeskanzler und Bundesminister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten Dr. Karl Buresch vom 5.05.1932 – “Angesichts der kleineren Rolle, die Österreich in der Auswärtigen Politik

that time focused on the course of elections in Germany and France. What in August 1932 awakened the interest of Polish diplomatic service was the question of German-Austrian trade negotiations.<sup>44</sup>

Building an authoritarian state based on nationalistic ideology, Dollfuß chose strengthening Austria's sovereignty as the main objective of its foreign policy. The premise of this policy was cooperation with Western powers and an alliance with Italy, which was to provide defence against German efforts towards 'Anschluss'. The first move of the new chancellor was pushing through the Austrian Parliament the ratification of the protocol signed in Lausanne, on the basis of which Austria received a loan of 300 million schillings, guaranteed by the League of Nations, and in exchange it committed to maintaining its independence.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, changes were occurring also in Polish foreign policy, albeit not so far-reaching as those in Austria. Piłsudski decided to abandon the minimalist version of the policy of balance; this meant among others non-involvement in preventing German expansion in the south-eastern direction. In November 1932, he entrusted the implementation of this new strategy to Józef Beck, who, after almost two years as deputy foreign minister, replaced August Zaleski at the helm of Polish diplomatic service. Since then, in most instances, Poland only passively observed Austrian-German relations.<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, during the entire period under discussion, the Polish diplomatic service closely watched Austrian-German relations and considered them as

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Polens spielt, hat das Wahlergebnis bei uns nur ein geringeres Interesse in der hiesigen Öffentlichkeit ausgelöst".

<sup>44</sup> 11 sierpnia, *raport posła w Berlinie*, pp. 478–479.

<sup>45</sup> AAN: *Poselstwo RP w Wiedniu*, sign. 8, k. 111–114; Hiden: *Germany and Europe*, pp. 177–180; Bischof et al. (eds.): *Austrian Foreign Policy*, pp. 91–101; Berger: *The League of Nations*, pp. 82–85; Kozeński: *Austria 1918–1968*, pp. 104–110; Jerabek: *Bundeskanzler Engelbert Dollfuß*, pp. 80–83; Źerko: *Niemiecka polityka zagraniczna*, pp. 78–79; Balcerak: *Anschluss Austrii*, pp. 160–161.

<sup>46</sup> Łossowski: *Dyplomacja polska*, p. 125; Gmurczyk-Wrońska: *Józef Piłsudski*, pp. 72–73; Paruch: *Myśl polityczna*, p. 678; Kornat et al.: *Józef Beck*, pp. 266–273.

one of the factors impacting the security of the Polish state. The possible unification of Austria and Germany was seen as a direct threat to Polish national security, and until 1931, attempts were made to prevent it. However, their activities aimed at maintaining Austria's independence were less vigorous than before 1926, when the priority of the security policy of the Republic of Poland was the inviolability of the Treaty of Versailles.

From 1926, the attitudes of Polish diplomats towards 'Anschluss' were increasingly unclear: some of them thought that, besides negative consequences, it could also bring benefits for Poland. In the international arena, the first sign of changes in Polish policy towards the Austrian-German issue was the stance regarding the customs union in 1931, when Poland decided not to subscribe to the anti-Anschluss policy, pursued mainly by France and Czechoslovakia. Contrastingly, four years earlier it was the Polish diplomatic service that wanted to propose an agreement with France and Czechoslovakia regarding the choice of means to prevent Anschluss. Thus the evolution of Polish security policy towards non-involvement in counteracting German expansion in the south-eastern direction was evident.

A clear watershed in Austrian-German relations was Adolf Hitler's coming to power in 1933. Since then, 'Anschluss' would not mean a voluntary union of sovereign states but rather the annexation of Austria by Germany. By that time, the Polish diplomatic service had been implementing a new strategy of the policy of balance, in which the question of state security was based on normalisation of relations with Germany and the Soviet Union.

Translated by Iza Dąbrowska  
and Anna Mol

## STOSUNKI AUSTRIACKO-NIEMIECKIE A BEZPIECZEŃSTWO NARODOWE POLSKI W LATACH 1926–1933

### STRESZCZENIE

Diplomacja polska traktowała ewentualne połączenie Austrii i Niemiec jako zagrożenie bezpieczeństwa narodowego Polski. Jednak poglądy polskich dyplomatów na temat Anschlussu stawały się coraz bardziej zróżnicowane, część z nich uważała, że może on przynieść również i pozytywne konsekwencje dla państwa polskiego. Pierwszym sygnałem zmian w polityce polskiej było stanowisko w sprawie austriacko-niemieckiej unii celnej.

## DIE ÖSTERREICHISCH-DEUTSCHEN BEZIEHUNGEN UND DIE POLNISCHE NATIONALE SICHERHEIT IN DEN JAHREN 1926–1933

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die polnische Diplomatie behandelte den möglichen Zusammenschluss von Österreich und Deutschland als Bedrohung der nationalen Sicherheit Polens. Die Ansichten polnischer Diplomaten zum Anschluss wurden jedoch immer unterschiedlicher: Einige von ihnen waren der Meinung, dass dies auch positive Folgen für den polnischen Staat haben könnte. Das erste Anzeichen für Veränderungen in der polnischen Politik war die Einstellung gegenüber der deutsch-österreichischen Zollunion.

Übersetzt von Renata Skowrońska

## AUSTRIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF POLAND IN THE YEARS 1926–1933

### SUMMARY

The Polish diplomatic service considered the possible unification of Austria and Germany as a threat to Polish national security. However, the opinions of Polish diplomats on 'Anschluss' were increasingly unclear, and some of them considered that it could also bring benefits for the Polish state. The first sign of changes in Polish policy was the stance on the customs union between Austria and Germany.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE / SCHLAGWORTE / KEYWORDS

- dyplomacja polska 1918–1939; bezpieczeństwo narodowe Polski; bezpieczeństwo państwa; stosunki niemiecko-austriackie; Anschluss Austrii
- polnische Diplomatie 1918–1939; Polens nationale Sicherheit; Staatssicherheit; deutsch-österreichische Beziehungen; Anschluss Österreichs
- Polish diplomacy 1918–1939; national security of Poland; state security; German-Austrian relations; Annexation of Austria

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