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ROLE OF THE COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS AND PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATION OF GERMANY, POLAND AND SO-CALLED “SMALL COUNTRIES” IN THE PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT PEACE TREATY WITH GERMANY

Abstract: The end of the Second World War necessitated making arrangements as to the future of Germany. The decisions were to be made by the allied countries – winners of the war. In the end, the decisions of the so-called “big four” states were of arbitrary nature, and German officials were not permitted to participate in talks about the future of their country. The years 1945-1947 have brought numerous important resolutions and final settlements, but were also a period of growing disagreement within the victorious coalition. True end of their collaboration came about in 1947, and the matter of Germany became a bargaining chip in the Cold War conflict. The aim of this study is, above all, to present the role of the most important decision-making institution after the war: the Council of Foreign Ministers. The paper also presents the respective positions of the four great powers as to the participation of Germany, Poland and so-called “small countries” in determining the future of Germany.

Keywords: Council of Foreign Ministers; Germany; Poland; peace treaty with Germany.

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1. INTRODUCTION

After the end of World War II, the decisions on the future of Germany were to be taken by the four great victorious powers: the United States of America, United Kingdom, France and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. They were to engage in talks, negotiate and ultimately determine the territory, political system and future position of the new German state in the international arena. In order to achieve this objective, a special body consisting of representatives of the four powers, whose task would be to resolve contentious issues concerning not only Germany but also its wartime allies: Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland, was to be established.

At the conference in Yalta, held between 4-11 February 1945, the parties decided to create a permanent body, enabling regular meeting and consultations of the respective foreign affairs ministers of the US, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Stipulations on the subject were presented in the eighth chapter of the Yalta Agreement. According to these provisions, foreign ministers were to meet every three-to-four months, in turn in each of the state capitals. London was selected as the first location for such a conference that was supposed to be held just after the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, which took place between 25 April-26 June 1945 (Kocot, Wolfke, 1987, p. 63; Klafkowski, 1953, p. 129).

2. COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

Organizational principles of functioning of this new body, known henceforth as the Council of Foreign Ministers were, however, only determined at the conference in Potsdam, held from 17 July to 2 August 1945. The proposal to create such a Council was submitted to Stalin and Churchill by the US President Harry Truman, and the principles of its functioning were developed by the American delegation to the conference (Mołotow, 1950, p. 66). According to the draft resolution on its establishment, the Council was to be made up of foreign ministers of the five major powers: Britain, USSR, China, France and the USA. Both Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin contested the participation of China in talks on purely European issues. In fact, Stalin was not a supporter of establishing the Council at all. W. Churchill in his war memoirs recalls their conversation on this subject, and explains that Stalin had doubts about the participation of China in the council of foreign ministers. Why would China be involved in making decisions on matters concerning only European states? Stalin also believed that such a new collegial body was not needed, especially since the European Advisory Commission had been established already. During the Yalta conference it had been also agreed that the three key foreign ministers would meet regularly – hence Stalin argued that setting up another organ would only complicate matters and hinder their quick resolution (Churchill, 1996, p. 325). According to Truman, on the other hand, China was to have a say in European matters because the state was a member of the UN Security Council. Ultimately, however, it was established that China was only to be involved in decisions on matters related to the Far East and the so-called “global issues”. Stalin also raised objections to French participation in the talks. Eventually however, it was agreed that France would take part only in the portion of debate concerning Italy and Germany (Zięba, 1981, p. 37). Moreover, as per the American proposition, London became the seat

of the joint secretariat of this new organ. Each minister of foreign affairs could be accompanied during Council deliberations by a deputy and a small group of experts. The first ministerial meeting was to take place no later than on 1 September 1945. The chief tasks of the Council were to be: conducting preparatory work in connection with conclusion of peace treaties, preparation and presentation to the United Nations of draft peace treaties with the former allies of the Third Reich during World War II, making decisions as to the future of Germany in the times of peace and presentation of draft peaceful resolutions of territorial conflicts in Europe (Makowski, 1946a, pp. 5-7, Klafkowski, 1953, pp. 130-131).

The main task of the Council of Foreign Ministers was the implementation of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements in terms of establishment of a common position on the future post-war order in the world. All individual issues, before they found their way to the peace conference table, had to first be discussed by the Council. Contentious issues could not be submitted by the Council for consideration during the peace conferences. The compromise decisions, taken by the Council on behalf of the great powers, were described by the Soviet delegation to the Paris Conference as a "minimum of justice", which was to be handed out to all enemy states of the Allies during World War II (Klafkowski, 1953, pp. 130).

The Council was also obliged by the leaders of the victorious powers to invite representatives of every country to participate in the talks in question whenever issues directly related to or of interest to that state were to be discussed. Moreover, it had at its disposal a number of subsidiary bodies and groups of specialists and experts, mainly in law, who were entrusted with preparation of reports on particular issues or elements thereof (Makowski, 1946a, pp. 5-7).

After returning home, US President Harry Truman stated that Germany also suffered during the World War II – especially its civilian population, and now the country bore the consequences of her past crimes. He declared that the German people were beginning to atone for the crimes of the gangsters whom they had placed in power, and whom they had wholeheartedly approved and obediently followed (Makowski, 1946b, p. 254). Truman further stressed that the Council established in Potsdam was going to be the continuous meeting ground of the five principal governments, on which they were to reach common understanding regarding the peace settlements. He strongly emphasized that the five governments were not going to try to dictate to, or dominate, other nations. He continued, identifying the main duty of the Council – to apply, so far as possible, the fundamental principles of justice underlying the Charter of the United National adopted at the San Francisco conference. The work undertaken by the Council was intended to make possible speedier, more orderly, more efficient, and more cooperative peace settlements. Next, President Truman stressed that the matter of Italy was to be settled first, as it was the first country to break away from the Axis. Italy, in his opinion, contributed to the final defeat of Germany, and joined the allied forces in the war against Japan. He reasoned that a peace treaty with the Italian government would make it possible for Italy to become a member of the United Nations at a rapid pace. The American President further argued that the next objective for the Council of Foreign Ministers was to start the preparatory work for German peace settlements. However, its final acceptance – in his words – would have to wait until Germany has developed a government with which a peace treaty could be made. Until that time, pursuant to the specific political and economic principles laid down at the conference of Berlin, Germany was to be governed by the occupying powers. The main objective of all these actions was, according to Truman, to eliminate Nazism in Germany, to fully de-

militarize the country and introduce true democracy. German industry was to be re-focused on agriculture and “peaceful industry”, so as to make “concentration of economic power in cartels and monopolies” impossible. Furthermore, he summarized, the five powers did not intend again to make the mistake of exacting reparations in money, and then having to lend Germany the monies with which to pay them. Reparations this time were to be paid in physical assets, leaving the German nation only with those resources not required for its peaceful existence (Makowski, 1946b, pp. 259-263).

Comments on the functioning of the Council were made not only by representatives of the Western powers, but also those of the Soviet Union, mainly in reaction to the increasing tension and disagreements between the previously allied countries on the matter of Germany. In 1948, in a note sent on 3 October 1948 by the Soviet Union to the United States, Britain and France, the Soviet power reminded the Western states of the preceding common agreements as to the tasks of the Council, notably including the discussion of all outstanding matters relating to Berlin and all other pending issues regarding Germany as a whole (Makowski, 1948, pp. 834-835).

Work of the Council of Foreign Ministers was usually preceded by preparatory conferences of deputy ministers, who set the agenda, agreed on the order of topics to be discussed and drew up preliminary draft resolutions.

Throughout the period of its existence in the years 1945-1949, the Council of Foreign Ministers met up six times:

- London, 11 September-2 October 1945 – discussion covered the issue of peace treaties with the former allies of the Third Reich during World War II;
- Paris, 25 April-16 May 1946 and 15 June-12 July 1946 – as in the case of the first conference, the agenda included drawing up draft provisions and demands to be included in the respective peace treaties with Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland; also some issues related to Germany were raised;
- New York, 4 November-12 December 1946 – the future of the disputed territory of Trieste was discussed;
- Moscow, 10 March-24 April 1947 – conference devoted to resolution of the situation in Germany;
- London 25 November-15 December 1947 – the problem of a peace treaty with Germany was raised. Both the Moscow and the London conferences were unsuccessful due to the growing conflict between the Western powers and the Soviet Union;
- Paris 23 May-20 June 1949 – the last conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers – was in fact a purely formal meeting. In view of the absence of a real agreement between the former allies, the core issues – mainly the German problem – were not touched upon during the conference (Skibiński, 1987, p. 92).

The Council of Foreign Ministers of the great powers was primarily established to monitor the implementation of provisions of the Potsdam Agreement. The peace treaties for the former allies of the Third Reich: Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland were prepared pursuant to these provisions. The treaty with Japan, signed in 1951, was prepared outside the Council structures – and it was not signed by, among others, the Soviet Union. As the main reason for this decision was considered “going behind the back” of the Council, itself intended as a body developing proposals of treaties with all countries-members of the Axis during the War. Also some of preparatory work for a peace treaty with Austria took place outside the Council of Foreign Ministers – however, all in all, the provisions

of the Potsdam agreement were in fact implemented in the Austrian State Treaty, which was finally signed on 15 May 1955. The matter of drafting peace settlements for Germany belonged to the core competences of the Council. None of the Council member states ever questioned that stipulation, and discussions on the issue were in fact present through all the sessions of the Council (Klaffkowski, 1953, pp. 131-132; Klaffkowski, 1960, p. 544).

The most basic, foundation-level principle of functioning of the Council of Foreign Ministers was unanimity. It was believed, namely, that preservation of peace was possible only on the basis of work and effort of all countries, regardless of their size. However, the large and powerful countries were burdened with the greatest responsibility because they had greater capabilities than others (Makowski, 1951, pp. 22-23). Furthermore, already in 1944 at the conference at Dumbarton Oaks, Joseph Stalin declared that the organization which in the future would be tasked with perpetuation of peace in the world – that is, the later United Nations – could only be effective if the great powers, which had carried the main burden of war against Germany, were to work also in the future in the spirit of consensus and consent. It would not be effective if this condition was to be breached in any manner (Makowski, 1951, p. 149).

The demands for a peace treaty with Germany were also the focus of other institutions, such as the Allied Control Council, working in parallel with the Council of Foreign Ministers. The most important and effective, however, proved to be the efforts of deputy foreign ministers of the great powers, which took place in the framework of regular meetings, conferences or sessions. One of the most important events in the entire course of work on the matter of Germany turned out to be conference of deputy ministers in London, held in January and February 1947. In addition, the issue of Germany was also discussed during some bilateral or multi-lateral meetings, such as conferences of socialist countries or Polish-Czechoslovak conferences as well as so-called summits between the leaders or chiefs of government of the victorious powers – signatories of the Potsdam Agreement (Klaffkowski, 1960, p. 512).

3. PARTICIPATION OF GERMANY, POLAND AND SO-CALLED “SMALL COUNTRIES”

Agendas of meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers were to a large extent consumed by procedural issues. Oftentimes, the crucial problems were becoming secondary because the representatives of the powers present at meetings could not agree on formal issues. The main issue dividing the debaters were voting rules and the involvement of other countries in the preparation of peace treaties.

However, in accordance with the provisions of the Potsdam Agreement (chap. II, art. 3, sec. 1 and 2), the task of preparation of peace settlements for Germany and its former allies: Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland fell to these members of the Council whose governments previously had signed acts of surrender with these respective countries (Makowski, 1946a, p. 5). This provision complemented the general principle that the work on preparation of peace treaties is the responsibility of the Council of Foreign Ministers, consisting of five members: the US, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and China. These principles as concerning the former satellite states of the Third Reich were confirmed by the representatives of the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union during a meeting

in Moscow between 16-26 December 1945 (Skibiński, 1987, p. 93; Klafkowski, 1952, pp. 18-19; Daszkiewicz, 1967, pp. 316-317). Regardless of meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers, a consultative council of foreign ministers of the US, Britain and the Soviet Union, established at Yalta and approved in the Potsdam resolutions, functioned in parallel. Theoretically, establishment of the Council of Foreign Ministers would not be in conflict with the agreements concluded during that conference in the Crimea, stating there should be regular consultation meetings between foreign ministers of the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom (Makowski, 1946a, pp. 7-8). A communiqué informing that the work on peace settlements with Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland would fall to those members of the Council whose countries were signatories of the official acts of surrender with these Axis states was published on 24 December 1945. Preparation of the treaty for Italy was therefore entrusted to representatives of the US, UK, USSR and France, while the treaties for Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary were to be drawn up by the foreign ministers of the US, Britain and the Soviet Union, with – finally – the treaty for Finland to be created only by the USSR and the UK ministers. The above principle according to which the work on peace settlements with the Third Reich allies was partitioned is referred to as “formula 4-3-2” of peace – making. It was also decided that all members of the Council would be invited to participate in the peace conference, which was meant to include also China and other member states of the United Nations, whose numerous troops were involved in the war against the Nazi coalition (Skibiński, 1987, pp. 93-94).

Finally, the peace treaties with the German allies were signed on 20 February 1947 in Paris, and their signatories were both the representatives of the anti-fascist coalition and the defeated states. Poland, despite previously taking diplomatic action, was only a signatory to the treaty with Italy. On behalf of the Polish Republic, the treaty was signed by the then Foreign Minister, Zygmunt Modzelewski (Zięba, 1981, p. 176).

The matter of the peace treaty with Germany turned out to be much more complicated. The great powers, and in particular the Soviet Union, would not easily give up the privileges possessed, and share the right to vote on issues important for the future with other parties. In Yalta, during a session break already on the very first day of the conference (i.e. on 4 February 1944), the matter of participation of the so-called “small countries” in decisions concerning the future global order was raised. Stalin stated at the time that some countries had forgotten that the great powers had been forced to shed blood to liberate them. He did not understand – he claimed – how these states could now scold their liberators for not taking into account the rights of “small countries” (Gardner, 1999, p. 260). He also considered ridiculous the fact that Albania would have an equal voice with the great powers participating in the Crimean conference. Despite everything, however, he was ready – for the sake of peace – to take into account the voice of small nations. Roosevelt agreed entirely with Stalin, while Churchill, who was aware of Stalin’s imperial ambitions, expressed certain – if not very vehement – reservations as to such a solution. He said, specifically, that the great powers might set the conditions for peace, but also had to exercise their power with moderation and, above all, with great respect for the smaller countries. At that time, Andrei Vyshinski, Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR commented to Charles Bohlen – diplomat, translator and expert on Soviet matters, and member of the American delegation – that the Soviet Union would never agree to the right of the small nations to judge the acts of the great powers. Bohlen reminded him, however, of the importance in this respect

of the opinion of the American public. Vyshinski replied only that the American people should learn to obey their leaders (Gardner, 1999, p. 261).

In the end, the rules for the participation of other countries in the preparation of the treaty for Germany, contained in the Potsdam Agreement, have been modified and expanded. This change was due to the resolutions agreed upon during the conference of deputy foreign ministers in London in January and February 1947, and conclusions from two meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers in 1947 – in Moscow and London (Klaffkowski, 1953, p. 135).

In November 1946, it was decided that the debate on the treaty for Germany would also be joined by – in addition to the great powers – countries which participated actively in the fight against Germany as well as neighbors of the German state belonging to the Allied coalition (Skibiński, 1987, p. 94). At the end of 1946, it was announced that the Council of Foreign Ministers had sent out invitations to the meeting of deputy foreign ministers in London in January 1947 – these invitations were received by 18 countries: Australia, Belgium, Belarus, Brazil, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, India, Yugoslavia, Canada, Luxembourg, Norway, New Zealand, Ukraine, the Union of South Africa and Poland.¹ These states were offered the opportunity to present their position to the debating four great powers. Originally, it was supposed to take the form of submission of written memoranda. However, due to the wide-spread discontent with the conference procedure expressed by the invited states, the rules were changed, and individual delegations were allowed to present their position both orally and in writing.²

The year 1947 brought a significant cooling in the relations between the formally allied powers – it was a time of clear deterioration in the relationship between the former war allies. Churchill's famous speech given in 1946 in Fulton launched the "cold war". Two distinct spheres of influence emerged: the American and the Soviet one, separated by the "iron curtain". Significant differences of opinion on most of the issues raised became clear, including also the plans for the future of Germany.

Despite the apparent differences by then, the great powers for some time yet continued to declare a common position especially concerning the German question. In practice, however, their actions increasingly often only perpetuated the existing divisions. The year 1947 is recognized in historiography as the year when the cooperation between the UK, USA and France and the Soviet Union de facto ended. Germany, meanwhile, has become a bargaining chip used by individual states in the Cold War conflict. None of the great powers wanted to "surrender" to the will of another, and – and let alone – to give up their right to co-decide about the German affairs. So when on 9 June 1946, the US Secretary of State James Byrnes confirmed in his speech in Stuttgart that the English and American zones of influence will be economically unified, and announced an attempt at re-unifying Germany, the final dissolution of the former anti-Hitler coalition became clear to all (Charłamow, Siemionow, 1980, p. 88). In a way, this was an announcement of the end

¹ *Polska zaproszona do Londynu na konferencję w sprawie traktatu pokojowego z Niemcami (Poland invited to London for a conference on the peace treaty with Germany). Rzeczpospolita. 3.01.1947.*

² *Wyjazd delegacji Rządu Polskiego na konferencję w sprawach niemieckich do Londynu (Departure of the Polish government delegation to the conference devoted to German issues in London). Rzeczpospolita. 11.01.1947.*

of cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union, defining the borderline between the global zones of influence of the US and the USSR for the decades to come.

The above situation was mirrored in the Council of Foreign Ministers. No established rules on participation of other countries in the discussions on Germany paralyzed the Council deliberations and made decision-making, even on core matters, impossible.

It also seems that in 1947, the interest of both the United States and Great Britain in rapid preparation of a peace treaty with Germany has waned somewhat. Under the terms of the Potsdam Agreement, such a treaty would have to concern Germany as a whole, and participation of the Soviet Union in its drafting would be inevitable. Thus preparation of such a treaty would necessitate administrative and economic integration of the entire German state, and above all – creation of a central German government. Logically, also the opinion of the USSR would have to be taken into account as the Soviet Union would hold a share in control over the new state. Meanwhile, the United States wanted to create a separate German state, independent of Soviet influence (Skibiński, 1987, pp. 94-95).

Finally, the United States changed its stance on participation of other countries in the preparatory works on a peace treaty with Germany. At both conferences of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Moscow and London, the US argued for the list of countries participating in treaty works to be expanded to include also countries that were formally in a state of war with Germany, but did not take an active part in hostilities. Such a solution would mean presence of three groups of countries in the discussions:

1. A group consisting of the four great powers, which would be responsible for development of the final draft of the peace treaty;
2. A group made up of the allied states – neighbors of Germany, whose troops took active part in the war against the Germans. They would participate in the peace conference and cooperate with representatives of the major powers in key treaty sub-committees;
3. A group of countries not participating in hostilities, but remaining in a state of war with the Third Reich. This group would be a consulting body, but it was unclear what impact on the final decisions would the opinions of the consulted countries have (Skibiński, 1987, pp. 95-96).

This meant, in effect, increasing the number of participating states to 51. This was beneficial for the United States as the new list would include South American states heavily influenced by, and dependent both politically and economically on the US. At a conference in London, the United States presented also an idea of creating an additional fourth group, the only member of which would be Germany. Consequently, Germany would have a voice in preparing a treaty for herself (Skibiński, 1987, pp. 95-96).

The British government did not provide a detailed concept of integration of countries other than the great powers into preparatory work on peace settlements for Germany. The UK believed, however, that the conference could be attended by all countries that were at war with Germany. The British clearly wanted to reconcile the American and the Soviet concepts of the conference. On 3 December 1947, E. Bevin gave an exposé on the subject in London. According to him, all the allied countries – in addition to the big four – should be invited to participate in the peace conference – both the neighbors of Germany and the countries that were engaged militarily in hostilities against the Third Reich. In addition, the states that were in the state of war with Germany and the former Axis countries which in the final phase declared war upon Germany should have the right to present their opinion. However,

the final say on whether these countries would be permitted to participate in the discussion would rest with those countries whose participation in the conference was indisputable (Klaffkowski, 1953, p. 136; Skibiński, 1987, p. 97).

The French government initially argued for the division of participating countries into two groups:

1. A group of countries that have declared war on Germany – for the French, this meant engaging actively in wartime hostilities;
2. A group of countries that only broke off diplomatic relations with Germany (Klaffkowski, 1953, p. 137; Skibiński, 1987, p. 98).

However, under the influence of the US, the French government softened its position. On 3 December 1947, during the London Conference, the French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault stated that participation in the treaty preparation works must in the first place be entrusted to countries that actively participated in the war, and had a vested, direct interest in the future of Germany. A secondary role would belong to those states which only formally remained in a state of war with Germany, but did not get involved militarily. The French thought, moreover, that these countries should also be allowed to participate in the conference itself, and not only in the preparatory work (Klaffkowski, 1953, p. 137; Skibiński, 1987, p. 98).

The USSR did not want to increase the number of countries participating in treaty works. On 26 November 1947, Vyacheslav Molotov commented on the issue during the London session of the Council of Foreign Ministers. He recalled that at the New York conference of the Council, it was decided unanimously what states should be invited to the initial discussions on the preparation of a peace treaty with Germany. Namely, these were the countries neighboring Germany and belonging to the Allied coalition, and other allied countries whose military forces were involved in the war against Germany. He expressed surprise at the sudden emergence of suggested solutions completely contrary to these previous resolutions of the Council of Foreign Ministers in New York. He added that if the powers did not want to undermine what had been agreed between them, they must uphold the decisions made in New York. This would, in his opinion, uncomplicate the issue of participation in meetings on the preparation of peace settlements as well as solve the matter of composition of the conference itself (Molotov, 1950, p. 390). Representatives of the Soviet Union consistently claimed that in addition to the great powers, the work on the treaty for Germany could be possibly, shared also with those countries which actively participated in World War II. This, according to the Soviet Union, ruled out participation of, for example Turkey, which limited itself to formally declaring a state of war with Germany. Apart from this empty gesture, Turkey did not give the allied coalition any support in the war with Germany, and – furthermore – also supported the Germans in their fighting against the Soviet Union. Soviet diplomats prepared their own list of possible participants in the peace conference on Germany, and divided them into two groups:

1. The group of great powers: the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, the US, France and China;
2. A group of allied countries neighboring Germany and of allied countries whose forces were involved in the common struggle against the Germans: Albania, Australia, Belgium, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Greece, India, Luxembourg,

the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Union of South Africa, Yugoslavia (Molotov, 1950, p. 394).

The situation was similar in the case of membership of the subsidiary bodies of the Council of Foreign Ministers. To address the specific issues associated with the preparation of the treaty, on 20 March 1947, at the Moscow Conference, four separate committees were established: for political issues and political reorganization of Germany; for territorial issues and related problems; for economic issues including war reparations, disarmament and demilitarization. Ultimately, however, no consensus was reached either in Moscow or in London as to who had the right to participate in the work of these committees – should representatives of only the great powers, or also of other countries be eligible?

For Poland, its participation in the talks on German issues, especially in the conference of deputy foreign ministers in London in January and February 1947 seemed obvious (Kaćka, 2005, pp. 589-602). Poland was, after all, the first country to militarily resist the German aggression, and Polish soldiers fought on almost all fronts of the Second World War not only for the freedom of their country, but also that of other states. This understanding was confirmed in the Potsdam Agreement whose paragraph 2 stated that whenever the Council would be considering a question of direct interest to a state not represented therein, such state should be invited to send representatives who would be able to participate in the discussion and analysis of that matter (Kocot, Wolfke, 1987, p. 16; Charłamow, Siemionow, 1980, p. 87). Guided by these provisions, already on 14 November 1946 the Polish authorities sent a note to the foreign ministers of the US, Britain and France – at the time debating in New York. The note contained the request to allow the Polish side to present their views and participate in the deliberations of the conference of foreign ministers concerning these issues associated with the preparation of a peace treaty with Germany which also impacted Polish interests.³

The above request for admission of the Polish delegation to the the London Conference meetings was received on 14 November 1946 also by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In response, the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Vyacheslav Molotov, expressed enthusiastic support for the participation of Poles in the debate.⁴ The London meeting was, however, the first and also the last opportunity for so many countries to gather together, bringing diverse voices, but all concerned about the future of Germany and establishment of peace in Europe.

At the same time, ever since the meeting of representatives of the great powers at the Yalta conference it was clear that after the possible victory of the Allies, Germany would not be allowed to have a voice in discussions on the future of their country. Decisions on matters concerning Germany were to be thrust upon them by the victorious states. This position of the great four was confirmed again at the Potsdam Conference – hence, for example, the repetitive phrase “a settlement for Germany” appearing in different documents.

³ *Postulat w pełni uzasadniony (A well-justified postulate). Rzeczpospolita*. 18.11.1946.

⁴ Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Gabinet Ministra (Minister's Office). reference 15/230/22, *Pismo Wjaczesława Mołotowa z dnia 23.11.1946 r. (A letter from Vyacheslav Molotov dated 23 November 1946)*.

However, in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement, the possible adoption by Germany of the treaty prepared specially for that state, which meant at least partial restoration of German sovereignty.

The victorious powers met several times to discuss the matter of Germany – mainly in 1947. As the beginning of the official debate on the future of the German state can be regarded the meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the four powers in January 1947 (Stolarczyk, 1989, p. 69; Stolarczyk, 1986, pp. 93-111; Klafkowski, 1952, pp. 21-22).

4. CONCLUSION

The day of 8 May 1945, when the Third Reich signed her unconditional surrender, closed one of the most tragic periods in the history of the twentieth century. The war, which involved all of the most important states on the planet, which claimed millions of victims, brought destruction and created new forms of warfare and new ways of mass extermination of entire peoples ended. The perception of war as a means of resolving disputes and international conflicts has changed irreversibly. This global war forced the leaders of superpowers to reflect on the future of the world, and develop solutions to ensure that such a tragedy would not happen again.

The Second World War also changed Germany. Not only all representatives of the coalition, but also Germany itself, had no doubt that the aggressors must bear the full consequences of their actions. While individual states had different (often substantially) ideas as to what form and shape should these consequences and reparations take, all of them – from the largest to the smallest – wanted to participate in co-deciding about the future of Germany. Among such countries was also Poland. Unfortunately, despite the efforts made, the most important decision remained still in the hands of the representatives of the great powers.

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