

## Nationality issues on Polish maps prepared for the Paris Peace Conference 1919–1920

**Abstract.** The military and political outcome of World War I, and the deliberations of the Paris Peace Conference, offered a real chance for the rebirth of Polish statehood. A key issue was the justification of Poland's future territorial shape, in which ethnic issues played a significant role alongside historical, economic and strategic criteria.

The aim of this paper is to show and discuss selected archival nationality maps, often of an expert nature, produced by Polish scholars for the purpose of negotiating the territorial extent of Poland during the Paris Peace Conference. To what extent were they an attempt at an objective representation of the national reality of the Polish territory, and to what a subjective perception and experience of space by the authors of the maps? What were the aims and ideas of their creators, what did they want to achieve? To what extent did the political reality of the time determine their behaviour?

**Keywords:** nationality maps, ethnic cartography, distribution of Polish population, Paris Peace Conference

### 1. Introduction

The new political division of Europe agreed at the Paris Peace Conference was, in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, a unique issue. This is because it concerned the dismantling of multinational empires and the formation of national borders for peoples completely deprived of their own states, having for generations operated in a state of subordination and political dependence. Therefore, the issue of the shape and territorial extent of future states, the criteria for their establishment and justification, the nationality structure of the population, the political, economic and social viability came to the fore. One of the conditions for the delimitation of future states was to be the principle of “self-determination of peoples”, i.e., a move away from multinational empires towards nation states. This made nationality issues a fundamental criterion for determining the new political-territorial division of Europe (Juchnowski, 2018).

This was reflected, among other things, in the peace programme presented by the President of the United States Thomas Woodrow Wilson in his address to the Congress on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1918. In it, he postulated to undertake actions to ensure a fairer world after the World War I and to maintain lasting peace. Among the 14 points, one (13<sup>th</sup>) related directly to Poland: “An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant” (President Woodrow Wilson's Message to Congress, 1918). He brought to the fore the role of nationality factors in shaping the future borders of independent Poland. In the emerging new political realities, Polish independence activists had to take into account the primacy of ethnic criteria over historical ones.

The view, common in Polish society and in Polish political and scientific circles, postulating the rebirth of Poland within the pre-partition borders, was by the beginning of the twentieth century no longer so obvious or realistic. The main reason for this was the development of a sense of national identity among the non-Polish communities living in the eastern part of the historical Polish territory and, consequently, a clear ethnic polarisation of the eastern borderlands. From a purely territorial point of view, the notion of "Poland" was becoming increasingly difficult to define, and the shaping of new political borders, satisfying the representatives of all the nations inhabiting the historic Polish lands, became an insoluble problem. The differences between the ethnic borders of the Polish nation and the historical borders of the Republic, especially its eastern borders, were becoming increasingly significant and pronounced. At the same time, attention began to be paid to the Polish population living in Silesia, Pomerania and Masuria, i.e., areas outside the western and northern borders of the then Poland before the Partitions (Eberhardt, 1999, 2004, 2015).

The Polish delegation to the Paris Peace Conference was faced with the very difficult task of justifying and documenting, including cartographically, Polish territorial claims on the basis of, *inter alia*, ethnic criteria and, in particular, convincing the delegates of Western countries (especially France, the United Kingdom and the United States) of the validity and legitimacy of granting Poland the claimed territories. It was much more evocative and effective to argue using the universal language of maps rather than multi-page textual analyses.

Most cartographic studies of the time prove that their authors did not postulate the recreation of Poland's historical borders in the east, considering it unrealistic in national and political terms. At the same time, they did not accept a relatively small ethnic Poland. They drew boundaries that went far beyond the area in the east where Poles dominated; they allowed only the furthest Tsarist governorates to be given up. In addition to ethnic criteria, they also referred to linguistic, religious, economic and strategic ones. They sought to form the territory of the Polish state within boundaries that ensured cohesiveness, security and adequate political and economic strength (Konopska, 2016; Ko-

nopska & Barwiński, 2021; Konopska et al., 2023).

## 2. Research materials

The basis for discussing with this subject are the results of searches made in Polish and foreign archives as part of a research grant on the formation of the borders of independent Poland after the World War I. The subject of the search was cartographic studies with accompanying textual documentation. *In situ* searches were carried out in the archives of Warsaw, Cracow, Wrocław, Prague, Paris, New York and Washington. From the very abundant and varied cartographic material found, several types of nationality maps were extracted to show the ways and methods of graphically representing the size and distribution of the Polish population by cartographers involved in justifying Polish territorial claims at the Paris Peace Conference.

The maps in question were drawn in specific historical and political circumstances, in which, after 123 years of Poland's political and territorial absence, there was a real chance of its revival. To what extent were they an attempt at an objective representation of the national reality of the Polish territory, and to what a subjective perception and experience of space by the authors of the maps? What were the aims and ideas of their creators, what did they want to achieve? To what extent did the political reality of the time determine their behaviour?

## 3. Maps of Polish lands

Polish politicians and academics concerned with Poland's future borders had to solve a difficult dilemma. They naturally referred to the borders of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from before 1772 (the so-called historical borders), while being aware of the scale of ethnic, social and cultural changes that occurred during the Partitions. On the one hand, they were aware of the dominance of the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian populations in the former eastern lands of the Commonwealth (i.e. the incompatibility of historical and ethnic borders); on the other hand, they did not want to leave outside the new territory of the state, the Polish borderland population, very dispersed

but numerous, and culturally and economically important (Eberhardt, 2004, 2015).

In addition to the political and administrative division of the historic Polish lands, the map shows the “linguistic areas” – Polish, Ruthenian (Ukrainian), Belarusian and Lithuanian (Figure 1). In the first decades of the twentieth century, the language spoken by people living in an area was considered the most important element for determining its ethnic structure, more important than the sense of national

identity. The map does not detail areas with a predominantly German-speaking population, which was certainly a deliberate action. In addition, with regard to the population of speakers of Ruthenian (Ukrainian), Belarusian and Lithuanian languages, only areas where they accounted for more than 50% of the total population were marked. A different method was used to show the distribution of the Polish-speaking population, highlighting in pink the area of its numerical dominance, but also



Figure 1. The political subdivision of the Polish territory before the war and its linguistic areas (n.d., Archive of New Files in Warsaw, sign. 2/100/0/4.23/884, k.65)



depicting hatched areas of minority share, in three percentage ranges (25–50%, 10–25%, less than 10%). This made it possible to show the presence of a Polish-speaking population over a very wide territory, definitely going beyond the “Polish ethnic area”, especially in the east, but also in the west and south, where in many regions it went beyond the pre-partition borders (Spiš, Orava, Duchy of Cieszyn, Upper Silesia, Pomerania, Masuria).

The creators of this map did not postulate the course of Poland's new borders. Their main objective was to illustrate a clear “Polish presence” in the very vast area of Central and Eastern Europe. Not only on the entire territory of the “historical Poland” from before 1772, but also partly on the lands belonging to Germany, Austria and Hungary until 1914, to which Poland also made territorial claims. It was one of three maps sent by Roman Dmowski to Presi-

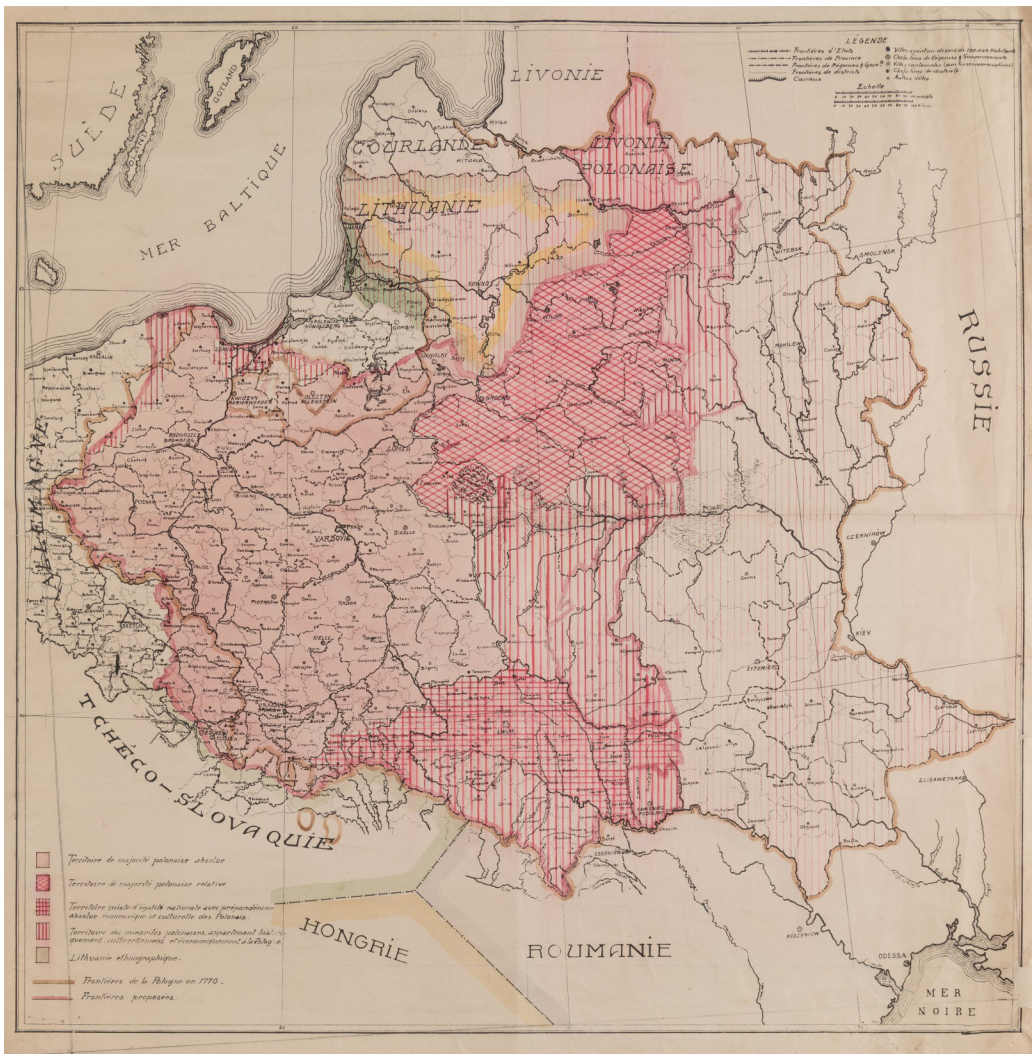


Figure 2. *Distribution of the Polish population and proposals for the course of Poland's future borders* (n.d., Polish Library in Paris, sign. C III THL\_BPP\_III H 85\_CD189\_6387)

dent Thomas Woodrow Wilson in October 1918 (Niklewska, 2016).

The next map (Figure 2) does not show the distribution of the Polish population in a typical way, i.e., within the boundaries of administrative units, with percentages based on census results. In this case, the author, on a map depicting Poland's 1772 borders, marked the distribution of Poles, divided into areas with "absolute domination of the Polish population", "relative domination", "areas of national diversity with absolute economic and cultural predominance of the Polish population" and "areas with a Polish minority, belonging historically, culturally and economically to Poland". The adoption of such a division enabled the delimitation of "proposed borders", which included all regions marked on the map with varying degrees of "Polish dominance" or "belonging to Poland", clearly extending, especially in the east and north, beyond the area where Poles constituted the majority of the population.

The elements included on the map are debatable and controversial, both the naming and listing of the various categories of "areas of Polish dominance" and the assignment of individual regions to them (e.g., placing Podlasie and the Minsk area in the same category, or areas on the eastern bank of the Bug River and a fragment of Livonia). From a contemporary perspective the delimitation of areas "with absolute economic and cultural predominance of the Polish population" (such as eastern Galicia), suggesting that the Polish minority was of greater value there than the Ukrainian majority, is particularly controversial.

However, it must be remembered that in the period when this map was drawn up, the differences in social, professional, educational and wealth positions between the various nationalities inhabiting the eastern part of the historical Polish territory were very pronounced and in fact ran most often along national and confessional divisions. Mainly the nobility and intelligentsia remained the bearer of tradition and national identity, very strongly linked to Polishness and Catholicism. A specific "nation of the nobility" was formed, cultivating the traditions of the Commonwealth, upholding Polish identity, culture and language. The period of partitions did not bring about the decline of the nobility and magnates and did not shake their power, either socially or economically. The

Russian and Austrian authorities confirmed former aristocratic titles and conferred new ones. Both the very territorially extensive magnate latifundia and the smaller estates of the nobility and landed gentry continued to play a key role in the economic, social and administrative life of the former eastern Poland. Living in great dispersion, the Polish population was also numerous among the bourgeoisie, craftsmen and especially the urban intelligentsia. Despite its numerical status as a national minority in the eastern borderlands, it was a nationality with a de facto dominant social, cultural, economic position (Eberhardt, 1998, 2004; Kowalski, 2013).

Therefore, the use of this type of categorisation, appealing beyond ethnic issues, also to historical, cultural, economic arguments, allowed the author of the map to highlight the category of nationality, one of the most important for the decision-makers of the Paris Conference, and to depict it in a maximalist way. The use of French, both in the legend and in the content of the map, leaves no doubt as to its addressees, i.e., the French delegates to the Peace Conference, to whom the map was intended to provide arguments as to the rightness of granting Poland territory in this form.

A similar effect was obtained using a different method to represent the distribution of the Polish population (Figure 3). The proportion of Poles is shown in six different ranges with hatching: Polish majority, minority (implicitly Polish) above 33%, 20–33%, 5–20%, below 5% and minority outside the borders of the proposed Polish state. The author of the map is not given, but comparing it with other cartographic studies, we can be sure that it was Teofil Szumański, a prominent Polish cartographer, one of the experts of the Polish delegation to the Peace Conference.

The content of the map suggests reference, in the delimitation of Poland's borders, to nationality and historical criteria, but these were not always applied consistently. The proposed territory of Poland included regions that included all areas marked on the map with a majority and minority Polish population share among the total population, including a small share of only 5%, and even northern Warmia, where Poles accounted for less than 5% of the population. It is clear that for documenting Polish territorial demands with ethnic criteria, it was



Figure 3. *Pologne et Pays Limitrophes* (in English: *Poland and neighbouring countries*) by Szumański (1919, Archive of New Files in Warsaw, sign. 2/39/0/11/1860, k. 179)

not the numerical dominance of the Poles that was important, but the mere presence of the Polish population, even to a negligible degree, as long as this was simultaneously supported by historical, economic or strategic arguments (e.g., access to the sea).

Despite the use of different “categorisations” of the Polish population on the two maps (Figure 2 and 3), qualitative and quantitative, two important similarities between the two cartographic studies are notable. The addressee – French decision-makers, and possibly also the French media and public opinion; and the effect – a similar territorial extent of the Polish population and consequently a similar course of the postulated Polish borders, favourable to Polish political, economic, demographic and historical interests.

Determining the ethnic, linguistic and religious scopes of the various nationalities inhabiting the historical Polish lands at the beginning of the twentieth century was a difficult but feasible task, owing mainly to the spread of statistical

surveys, especially censuses, which became the basis of ethnic cartography.

In the Austrian and Prussian partitions, modern censuses were carried out every 10 years, starting in 1870. In the Russian partition, the first (and only before World War I) census was conducted in 1897. In all censuses at the time, there was no question on nationality, and the ethnic structure was determined by answers to the question on native language. The different censuses differed in their methodology, organisation and working technique, as well as in the type of questions asked (e.g., some asked about the native language, others about the most used language, still others allowed several languages to be declared). Also, the census results themselves were not fully reliable. Manipulations were made, there were deliberate or accidental errors, on more than one occasion census officials intimidated representatives of national minorities and underestimated their numbers (Gawryszewski, 2005; Górny, 2017).



On the other hand, it must be remembered that all nationality statistics deal with very sensitive, subjective and difficult-to-measure issues, and will therefore always be subject to errors, will not provide “ideal” results, will not represent the real nationality structure, and their results will arouse greater or lesser emotions and controversies and require careful interpretation. Moreover, their reliability is often a product of the nationality policy of the state during the census period and current socio-political conditions, which directly affect the declarations of respondents who are forced to speak

on such personal and subjective issues as religion or native language.

In addition, during and immediately after World War I, statistics from the German and Austrian censuses of 1900 and 1910 were used. When conducting censuses at the beginning of the twentieth century and compiling their results in the following years, no one in the Second German Reich and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy could have imagined that after 1918, there would be a need for a statistical and demographic justification of German, Austrian or Hungarian rights to their own territory. The

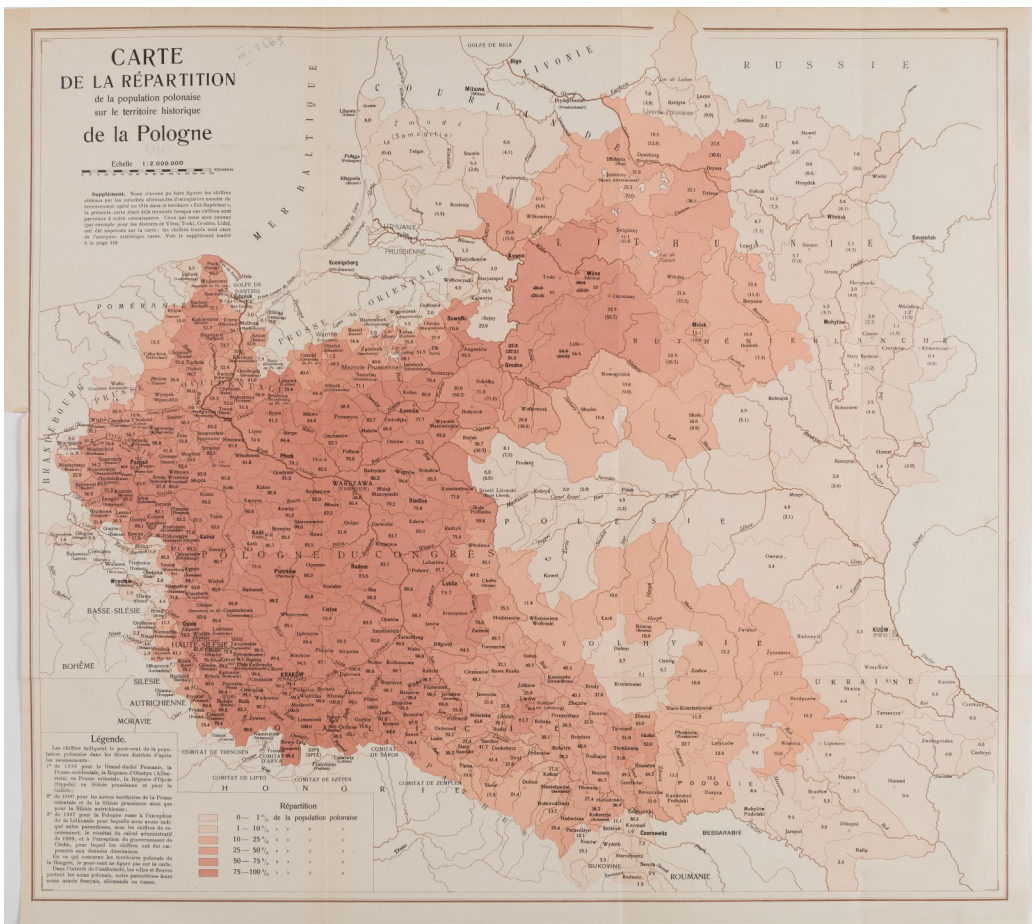


Figure 4. *Carte de la repartition de la population polonaise sur territoire historique de la Pologne* (in English: *Map of the distribution of the Polish population on the historical territory of Poland*, n.d., Polish Library in Paris, sign. C III BPP\_THLP\_III 2569\_CD187\_DSC\_3471)

German and Austrian statistics of the time aimed to establish a reasonably true picture of the nationality structure in the various administrative units of their own state (Górny, 2017).

In spite of all these, often objective conditions, but also because of various types of falsification and manipulations, Polish geographers and demographers in the first decades of the twentieth century were very critical of the statistical data collected and compiled by officials of the partitioned states, largely because they were data collected by the occupying, foreign states. The consequence was, among other things, the imposition of various amendments and adjustments to correct errors and manipulations. Understandably, all these corrections were aimed at increasing the number of Poles. Similar treatments were also used by Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Slovak, Czech and Romanian researchers at the time (Górny, 2017).

The map, made on the basis of statistical data from the censuses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, shows the distribution of the Polish (Polish-speaking) population in the broad historical territory of Poland (Figure 4). In the east and south, the area follows the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before 1772, while in the west (especially in Silesia and Opole) and in East Prussia, it exceeds the former pre-partition borders of Poland.

Drawing up this type of map was complicated and required overcoming a variety of difficulties, mainly related to the fact that these lands belonged to three different countries at the time, the need to use separate statistics for each of the annexations, the varying availability of data and the different administrative divisions.

The distribution of the Polish population is shown within the boundaries of the administrative units in six unequal ranges (0–1%, 1–10%, 10–25%, 25–50%, 50–75%, 75–100%). The use of such ranges, especially the first one, made it possible not only to show the varying proportion of Poles in the various historical regions of the Polish lands, but also to show the Polish population even in the easternmost areas of pre-partition Poland, where its proportion was negligible at the beginning of the twentieth century, while ignoring the presence of other nationalities. In addition, the slight differences in the colours of the different percentage ranges

(especially 25–50% and 50–75%) suggestively show the very extensive and dense area inhabited by the Polish population.

As in all such maps, which use statistical data within administrative units, there is a misrepresentation in that there are clear differences in the nationality structure of neighbouring counties, which is often not true in reality. Despite the faithful representation of the statistics, relating them to administrative borders blurs and distorts the ethnic relations in the area.

The following maps are an example of representing the same phenomenon, on a similar cartographic base, but using different data. Both maps show the percentage of Poles in East Prussia, against the background of the administrative division. On one, published by the Biuro Kartograficzne “Encyklopedii Polskiej” (in English: Cartographical Bureau of the “Polish Encyclopedia”), Prussian census data from 1910 was used (Figure 5). The second, published by the Biuro Kartograficzne Centralnej Agencji Polskiej w Lozannie (in English: Cartographical Bureau of the Polish Central Agency in Lausanne), also uses official statistical data from the Prussian government, but this time from the 1911 school census, showing the percentage of children of Polish nationality among primary school pupils (Figure 6).

The use by Polish institutions, as well as some cartographers (such as Eugeniusz Romer), of data from the Prussian school census, rather than from the general census, to argue for the Polishness of Silesia, Greater Poland, Pomerania, Warmia and Masuria, was justified, *inter alia*, by the fact that nationality was determined on the basis of answers to the question about the mother tongue, and Prussian statistics specified, in addition to Polish, the Kashubian and Masurian languages, which effectively reduced the number of people declaring themselves to be Polish. In addition, in the Prussian census it was possible to declare two languages and some Poles, who also spoke German, declared Polish together with German, which had the effect of counting them as so-called “bilingual persons” and reduced the number of Poles. Therefore, referring to the school census data made it possible to show on the map a larger area with a dominant Polish population. The same purpose was served by using a wide range of 50–100% (Figure 5 and 6). The error of inscribing ethnic data within the boundaries



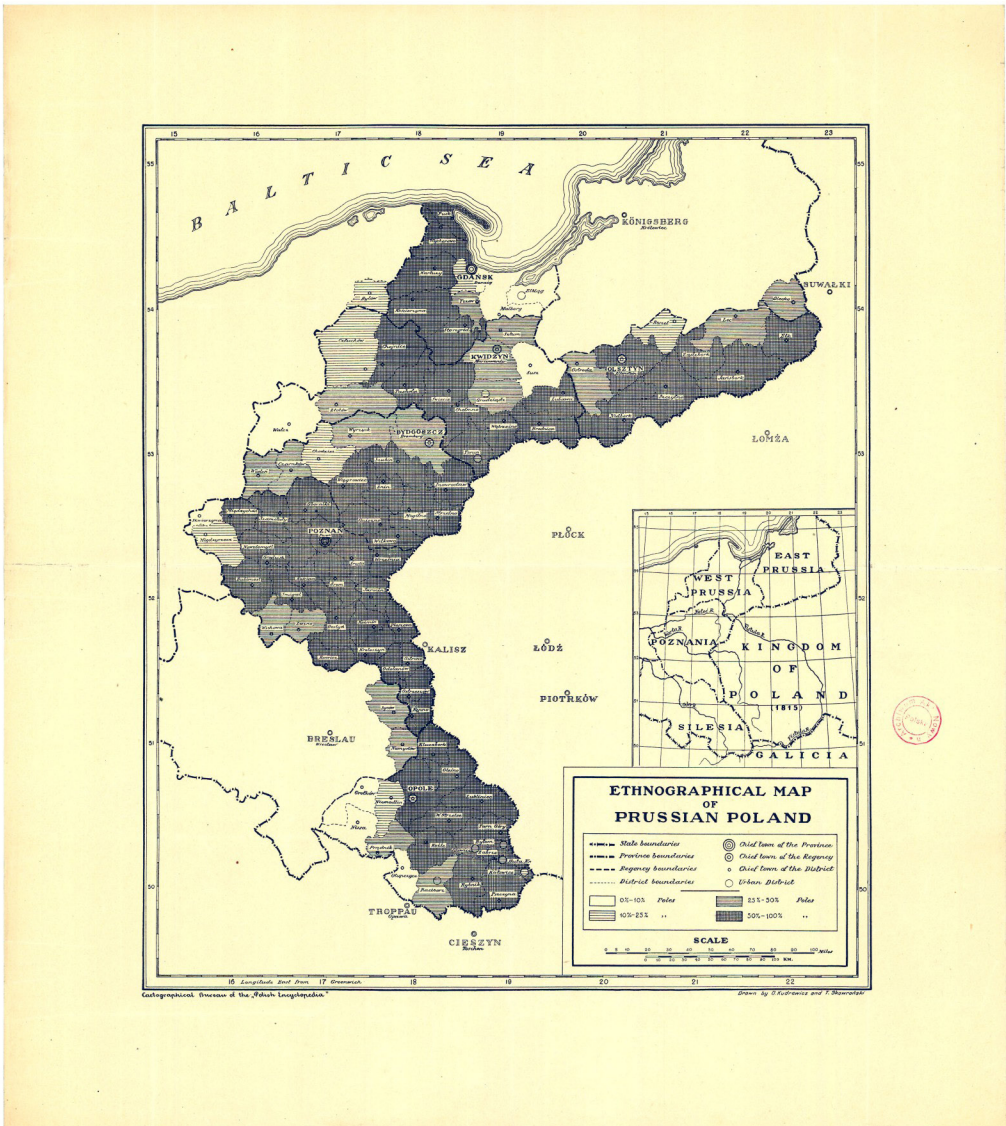


Figure 5. *Ethnographical map of Prussian Poland* by Kudrewicz and Skowroński (1919, Archive of New Files in Warsaw, sign. 2/100/0/4.25/896, k. 7)

of administrative units continued to be reproduced on these maps, which distorted the true picture of the nationality structure.

The best known comprehensive cartographic study from this period is the one prepared by Romer in 1916, the *Geograficzno-statystyczny atlas Polski* (in English: *Geographical*

*and Statistical Atlas of Poland*). The author included a cartographic picture of the historical Polish lands (within the 1772 borders) in terms of physiography, politics, nationality, culture, society, economy and communication. Using statistical documentation, he illustrated, among other things, the extent of the settlement of the

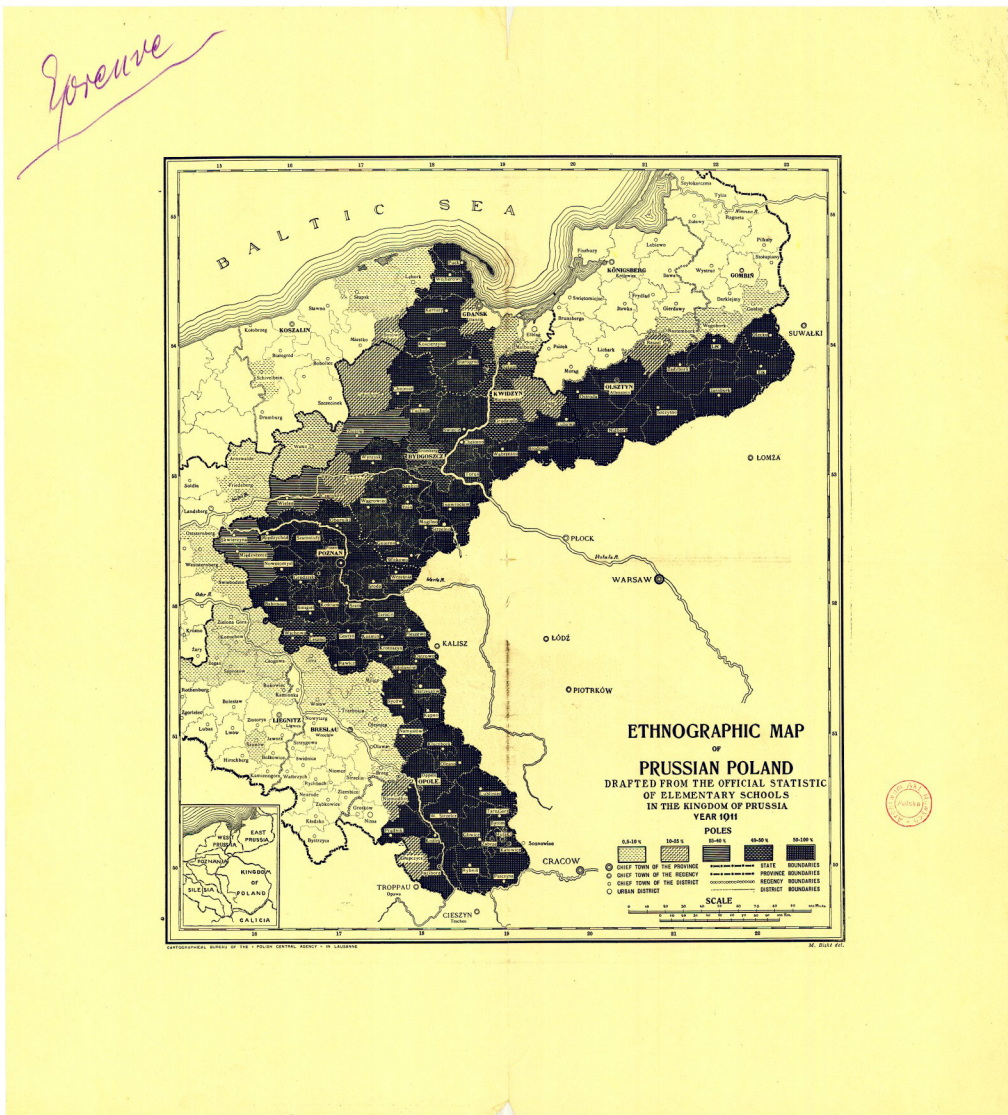


Figure 6. *Ethnographic map of Prussian Poland drafted from official statistics of elementary schools in the Kingdom of Prussia year 1911 by Bisce (circa 1918–1919, Archive of New Files in Warsaw, sign. 2/100/0/4.25/896, k. 3)*

Polish population, showed its dominant cultural, economic and organisational strength, as well as regions where they remained a minority. Romer's main goal was to separate and show to the public and politicians, the so-called "areas of Polish national interests", which, under

favourable political conditions, should be included in the future Polish state. At the end of 1918, Romer went to Paris, where he worked as an expert on geographical matters at the Polish delegation to the Paris Peace Conference until mid-October of the following year



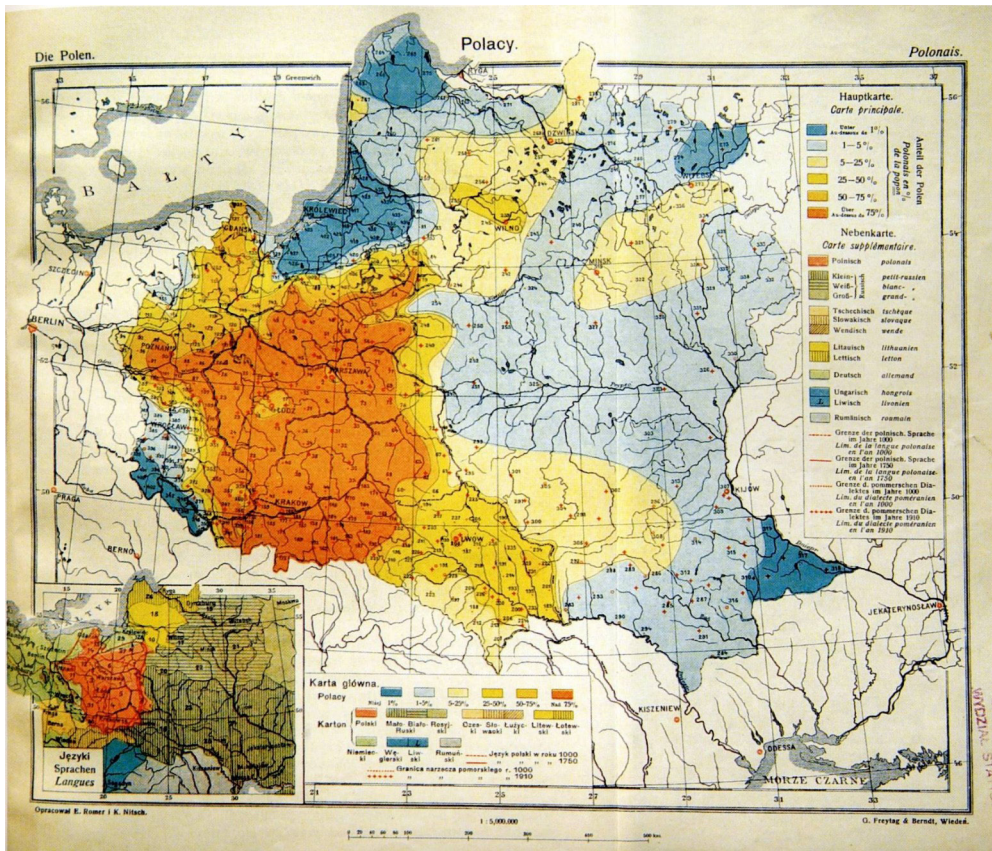


Figure 7. Distribution of the Polish population according to Romer's and Nitsch (Geographical and Statistical Atlas of Poland, 1916, Tab. IX, National Library, ZZK 0.1 404)

(Eberhardt, 1999, 2004; Leszczycki, 1979).

In terms of the cartographic methods used, Romer's atlas was an innovative work, not least because of the transfer of statistical data to maps by means of interpolation and, consequently, the unusual use of isarithms on maps showing, among other things, ethnic structure and population density, which resulted in values closer to the real ones (although still not true) and avoided duplicating administrative boundaries in the case of phenomena that had no connection with them (Figure 7). However, apart from its strictly methodological, factual and cartographic value, the atlas was of great political and propaganda significance. It played a significant role, mainly promotional, during the negotiations on Poland's future borders. It

provided valuable information about Poland and Poles, especially to politicians and experts from the United States and Western European countries who were previously unfamiliar with them or from occupying states, often belittling the ethnic range and importance of Poles in particular regions (Górny, 2017).

#### 4. Regional maps

In the case of national, linguistic or confessional maps of particular regions, the point symbols was used more often than the area method. Particularly in disputed areas where territorial claims were also made by other states, and where other nationalities or religions were

numerous alongside Poles, such as in Galicia, Pomerania or Silesia. Maps of this type, based on the official results of the Austrian or Prussian census, were produced by, among others Szumański, using similar cartographic methods and identical signatures. However, he used different criteria to demonstrate the Polish population. In the case of Galicia, it was the religious criterion, rightly considered the most effective in distinguishing between Poles, Ukrainians and Jews living in the region (Figure 8), while in Silesia or Pomerania, it was the linguistic criterion, strongly distinguishing the Polish population from the Germans.

The statistics are presented in the form of a point symbols with an indication of the proportion of people declaring Roman Catholic denomination in each city and municipality. Four percentage ranges were used, with only the smallest range (less than 25%) marked in blue, all others in red. This was certainly a deliberate move, used by Szumański on many different maps. Red, perceived as the dominant colour, was commonly used to mark Poles on maps. In addition, the use of red in most of the numerical ranges used, makes it difficult to unambiguously identify areas with a dominant Polish (Roman Catholic) population, as it does not everywhere imply a share of Poles exceeding 50%. On the other hand, in the viewer of the map, certainly in accordance with the Author's intentions, it effectively creates an image of the region, which, apart from the Carpathians, is dominated by the Polish (Roman Catholic) population and confirms the validity of the postulates regarding the inclusion of these lands within the borders of the newly formed Polish state (Figure 8).

## 5. Borderland maps

As a sense of national identity and distinctiveness developed among the peasant population in the former Commonwealth, and as a consequence of the cultural and assimilation processes that had been going on since the nineteenth century, wide borderland zones were created, inhabited by a population with a differentiated or incompletely formed national identity, especially where religious diversity did not coincide with national and linguistic diversity. Furthermore, ethnic borderlands were formed quite differently depending on the linguis-

tic differences between neighbouring peoples. When linguistic proximity was supplemented by a lack of religious differences, it was difficult to separate the two related communities. Such was the situation in the Polish-Slovak and Polish-Czech borderlands, with Cieszyn Silesia, Čadca, Orava and Spiš becoming the main disputed regions (Figure 9).

Polish claims to these regions were further hampered by the fact that they were outside the boundaries of the "historical Poland" from before 1772. Moreover, another newly emerging state in Central Europe, namely Czechoslovakia, had its claims to the territory. Therefore, justifying and documenting Polish aspirations required extensive scientific research and reliable analytical and cartographic studies. They were authored by Kazimierz Nitsch, a Polish linguist and Slavist, one of the experts of the Polish delegation to the Peace Conference. Based on his own research, he produced a manuscript map of the Polish-Czech-Slovak borderland (available in the archives), on which he delineated the linguistic boundaries together with an extensive zone of transitional dialects.

Based on this manuscript study, a printed map was prepared by historian Władysław Semkowicz and attached to a detailed study in French on the history and linguistic, ethnic and economic issues of Spiš, Orava and Čadca, prepared in 1919 by the Polska Komisja Prac Przygotowawczych do Konferencji Pokojowej, (in English: Polish Preparatory Work Commission for the Peace Conference, Figure 9). The main elements of the map are the areas of distribution of Poles "in a compact mass" (in red, of course), Slovaks (green) and Poles "scattered among other nationalities", as well as the population speaking transitional dialects, implicitly Polish-Slovak. The map shows that the three main disputed regions of the Polish-Czechoslovak borderlands after the end of World War I, i.e., Cieszyn Silesia, Orava and the northern Spiš region, mostly belong to the Polish linguistic area, or are in the zone of transitional dialects. On the nationality-linguistic map prepared in this way, the "southern border relevant to Poland" was delineated, which in many places, especially in Orava and Spiš, reached clearly south of the area marked as "Poles in a compact mass". In many sections, it was delineated in isolation not only from the ethno-linguistic criteria presented on the map,



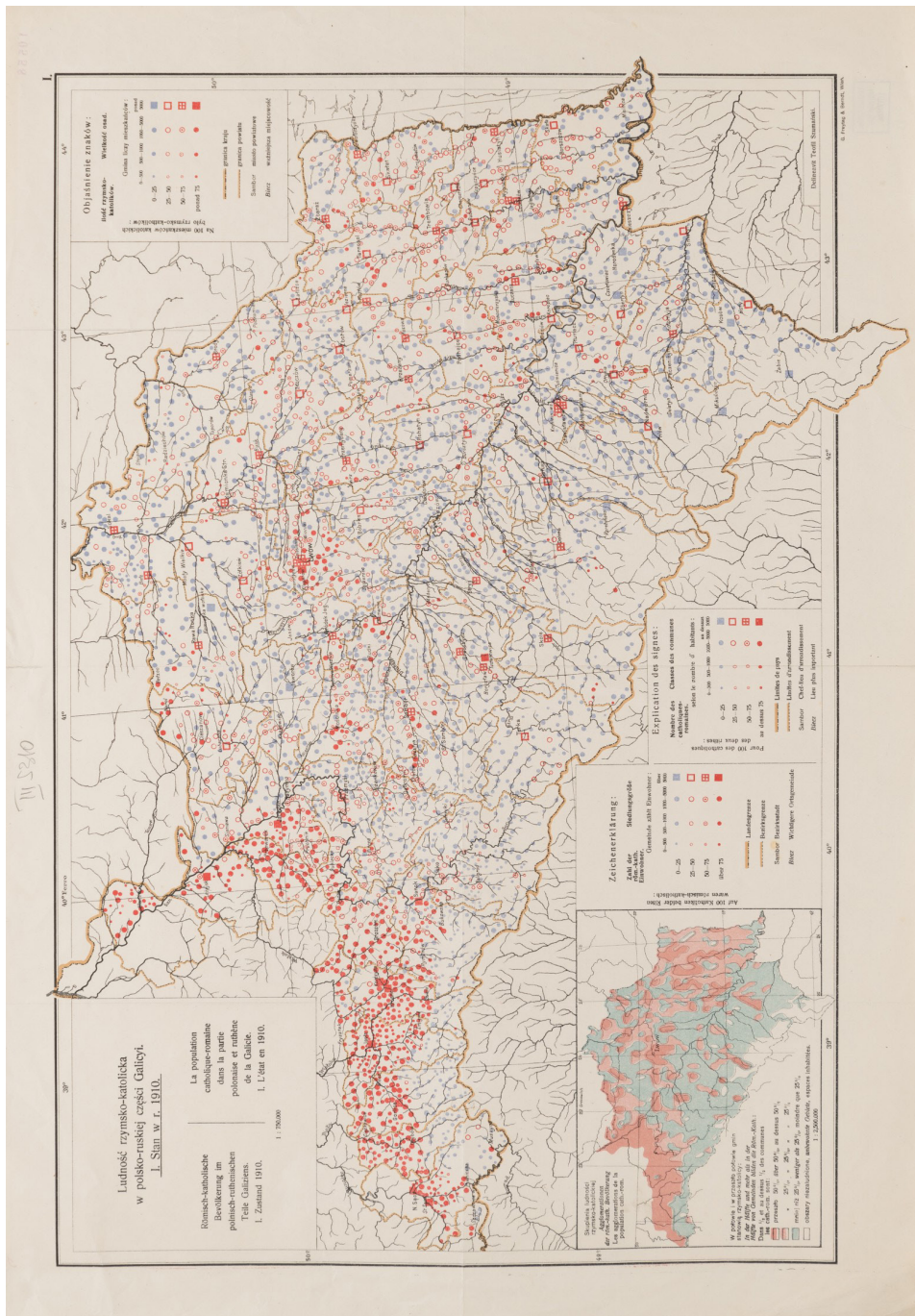


Figure 8. Roman Catholic population in the Polish-Ruthenian part of Galicia (as of 1910) by Szumanski (n.d., Polish Library in Paris, sign. THL\_BPP\_III S 310\_CD189\_6411)

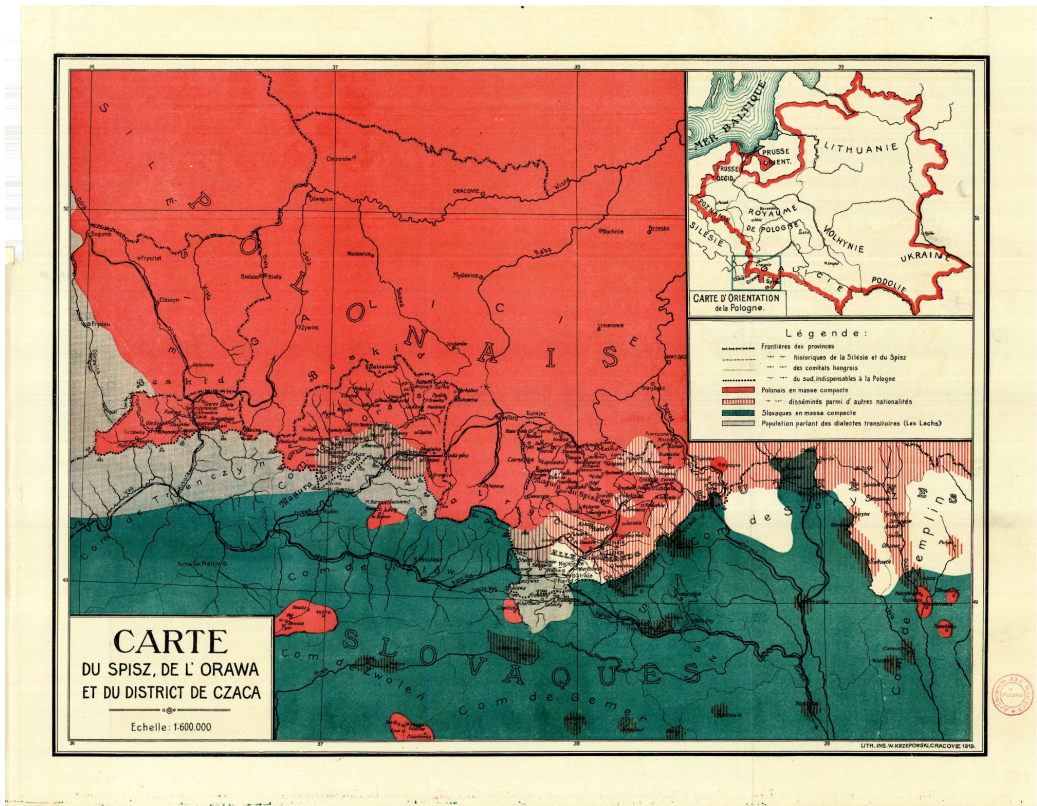


Figure 9. *Carte du Spisz, de l'Orava et du district de Czaca* (in English: *Map of Spiš, Orava and Čadca*) by Semkowicz (1919, Archive of New Files, sign. 2/100/0/4.26/920, k. 113)

but also from historical criteria and political realities.

## 6. Conclusions

Every map, to a bigger or lesser degree, deforms and generalises reality – including surfaces, distances, relief, amount and size of details. Similarly, the symbols, colours, fonts, methods of transferring statistical data onto the map used by the cartographer can have a significant impact on the content of the map, on the depiction by means of the map of a situation more or less different from reality. The attraction of maps is that while they give the appearance and impression of being neutral, objective and conveying complete knowledge, they distort reality and represent it selectively. Not only are maps not an objective represen-

tation of reality, but objective maps do not exist at all. A map is a simplified picture of the world, each highlights something and hides something, each has a purpose, something to suggest to the reader. Often this is related to the technical problems of the cartographer's work – the difficulty of representing most phenomena graphically on a map, the cartographer's need to make simplifications and choice of methods. Maps, if only because they are unable to faithfully represent reality for objective reasons, can be misleading, even without the bad intentions of the creators. However, they can also be used to deliberately mislead, to manipulate, to justify specific political actions (Blacksell, 2008; Górný, 2017).

The nationality maps prepared more than 100 years ago for the Paris Conference tended to be simplified, highly generalised. They ob-

scured the actual ethnic relationships, especially when dividing them into administrative units, even when they faithfully represented the statistical data. To justify Polish territorial demands, they presented the extent of Polishness in a maximalist manner, rarely considering the presence of other nationalities besides Polish. The authors' choice of scale, colours, data sources, numerical ranges, and "dominance" categories also had a strong influence on the perception of the content of the maps. This gave mapmakers a number of opportunities to influence the viewer consciously or subconsciously, to convince them of their ideas, without having to falsify the source data. Percentage ranges and colours, in particular, were manipulated to ensure that the optical impressions of map viewers were in line with Polish political interests, but actual falsifications and errors were very rare. Most authors combined scientific professionalism with patriotic commitment.

It must be remembered that Polish geographers, historians, cartographers, were drawing up nationality maps in the specific situation of the existence of a nation without a state for more than 120 years. One of the main goals was to ethnically justify the necessity of the Polish state, to legitimise it. In the realities of Central and Eastern Europe, this has often meant downplaying the problem of the region's ethnic diversity and ignoring some of the statistical data.

Even though nationality issues were one of the key issues during the negotiations at the

Paris Peace Conference, it was impossible at the beginning of the twentieth century to draw precise ethnic boundaries in Central and Eastern Europe. Mainly because of the overlap of ethnic territories, the ambiguity and transience of the sense of nationality and the existence of numerous national and linguistic border zones. Nor did the Polish delegates to the Peace Conference want such borders, especially for eastern Poland.

Ultimately, Poland came into being within the borders formed on the battlefields and at the bargaining tables of the Paris and Riga conferences. None of the numerous Polish visions of the course of the borders has been fully realised. However, the various concepts, transferred by cartographers onto maps, often provided ideological and substantive inspiration for negotiations, gave the opportunity to impose their own narratives and could potentially strengthen the political position of the Polish delegation. Moreover, they were particularly important for the development of Polish geographical thought and the formation of Polish national consciousness.

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