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EAST PRUSSIA, LITHUANIA AND THE SOVIET UNION AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE FOREIGN STRATEGY OF A GERMAN EXCLAVE DURING THE 1920S¹

This paper deals with the foreign strategy of East Prussia after World War I. Special consideration is given to the ways in which East Prussia tried to overcome the political and economic difficulties that had arisen when it found itself surrounded on all sides by foreign countries during the 1920s. After the World War I, East Prussia aimed to re-establish its previous trade relations with the regions of the former Russian Empire. The intensive struggle for survival in which the local and regional governments of Königsberg and its economic representatives were involved resulted from the fact that the province now formed an exclave – a unique situation not only in the history of Prussia, but also in the history of Germany. Owing to the unsolvable territorial conflicts in Eastern Europe, all attempts to come to terms with the situation and its implications were doomed to have only very limited success.

Keywords: *The First World War, East Prussia, Lithuania, Poland.*

Introduction

The Peace Treaty of Versailles of 1919 forced Germany to renounce a number of its territories [1]. Large stretches of land in the eastern regions of Prussia were ceded to neighbouring countries which had been restored at the end of World War I. A newly created Polish territory (the so-called Polish Corridor) divided Germany into two, so that the province of East Prussia was separated from the mainland of Germany and formed an exclave. East Prussia now bordered Poland towards the south-west, Lithuania towards the north-east, the Free City of Danzig administered by the League of Nations towards the west, and the Territory of Memel placed under the control of the major Allied Powers towards the north. This situation was regarded by Germans in the region as creating an unprecedented state of distress (“beispiellose Notlage”) [2].

Until the outbreak of the First World War, the province of East Prussia as a German borderland – particularly its capital Königsberg – had disseminated various important resources between the German Reich and the Russian Empire, especially in terms of trade goods, culture, and knowledge. Throughout its history, a close relationship with its neighbours towards the east had been regarded as a vital foundation for East Prussia. Thus, in order to overcome the political and economic crisis arising from its situation as an exclave, the province, after the war, tried to restore its connections with the neighbouring countries. It is therefore important to

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clarify in what ways the local authorities of East Prussia and also the local economic representatives such as the Königsberg Chamber of Industry and Commerce stated their interests during the negotiations between the German Government and neighbouring foreign states. In this paper, Germany's contractual relationships with Lithuania and the Soviet Union in the 1920s are investigated on the basis of archival sources [3]. Particular attention is given to the German-Lithuanian agreement concerning the waterway-traffic signed in 1923 (see Section 2) and the German-Soviet railway-agreement signed in the framework of the commercial treaty of 1925 (see Section 3). Both agreements aimed at restoring communications between East Prussia and the former Russian areas which had been interrupted by Poland after the war.

I. East Prussia, Poland and mainland Germany

The Versailles Treaty granted Poland its independence as well as direct access to the sea via the Free City of Danzig. According to Article 89, Poland was compelled to accord freedom of transit to persons, goods and all means of transportation between East Prussia and the rest of Germany via Polish territory. Even after the conclusion of the so-called Corridor convention signed by Poland, the Free City of Danzig and Germany on 21 April 1921 at Paris [4], German transit traffic through this area was hampered by various transport policy measures introduced by Poland [5, p. 438-472]. As a result, the transfer of goods between East Prussia and the rest of Germany, especially by rail, declined strongly after World War I [6, p. 23-29]. Furthermore, the waterway regulations on the Vistula River, in connection with the demarcation of the border between Poland and East Prussia, had disastrous consequences for German (inter-)waterway transport. Following the referendums held in the south-western areas of East Prussia and the remaining part of the former province of West Prussia, the border between Poland and East Prussia was demarcated along the right bank of the Vistula (cf. Article 94). Although on 11 July 1920 an overwhelming majority of both regions voted in favour of remaining German, the inhabitants of five villages along the Vistula in the region of Marienwerder expressed their preference for Polish rule [7, p. 93-111]. This led the Allied Powers to decide in 1922 that the administration of those villages (The five villages in question were Johannisdorf, Außendeich, Neuliebenau, Kramershof, and Kleinfelde), including the river port Kurzebrack, had to be handed over to Poland. Consequently, the western border of East Prussia was drawn to run to the east of the five villages [8]. Thus, East Prussia was territorially as well as administratively separated from the Vistula River whose waterway-administration in the Free City of Danzig was also under Polish control (Article 104). Problems of this kind had been anticipated in the Treaty of Versailles [9, p. 331], where in Article 331 the great rivers of Central Europe (the Elbe, the Oder, the Niemen and the Danube) had been declared to be international. However, no such reference had been made to the status of the Vistula, thus treating it as a Polish national river [10, p. 57].

II. East Prussia, Lithuania, and traffic on the Niemen

Under the harsh regulations of the Peace Treaty, Germany obtained only a limited scope of action vis-à-vis the Allies including Poland. In contrast to Poland, however, Lithuania – the other neighbouring country of East Prussia – which had not signed the Treaty of Versailles was able to provide more political and commercial opportunities for Germany. According to the commercial [11] and traffic clauses [12] in the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was obliged to grant unilaterally – but without reciprocity – the most-favoured-nation status to all Allied nations with regard to trade and traffic relations as well as customs regulations. Those obligations, as a general rule, could cease to have effect five years from the date of their coming into force after the Peace Treaty came into effect on 10 January 1920. Since the Baltic States were not bound by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, they were able to play an intermediary role between Germany and Soviet Russia until 10 January 1925 [13].

One of the most urgent demands of East Prussia, other than grain trade by railway, was to resume international trade, especially floating timber on the Niemen River (Memel). Before the war, tremendous quantities – some 2 million solid cubic meters of round timber per year – amounting to 95% of total timber trade in Königsberg and Memel had been transported on the Niemen River and its tributaries in the Russian Empire, from the regions of Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, via the frontier station Schmalleningken in East Prussia to the Prussian ports on the shore of the Baltic Sea [14]. On this basis timber and woodworking industry were established in the river basin and became one of the biggest industry sectors in East Prussia, a province not rich in those natural resources itself [15]. After the war, however, the floating of timber was completely prevented, because the frontier between Lithuania and Poland along the Territory of Vilna, which the Niemen River crossed, remained closed [16, p. 656-672]. Despite the Polish-Lithuanian armistice agreement of Suwalki negotiated by the League of Nations, the Polish army under General Lucjan Żeligowski invaded Vilna in October 1920 [17]. The Lithuanian Government, forced to move to Kaunas, declared that Lithuania was in a state of war against Poland. Despite Lithuania's protests Vilna was annexed by Poland after an election held there under Polish military control [18, p. 271]. In March 1923, the Ambassadors' Conference in Paris accepted that Vilna would remain Polish, a resolution subsequently confirmed by the League of Nations [19]. While this decision was never accepted by the government in Kaunas, it gladly accepted the resolution taken by the Ambassadors' Conference in February 1923 concerning the future transfer of sovereignty over the Territory of Memel, occupied by armed Lithuanians since January 1923, from the major Allied Powers to Lithuania [20].

When negotiations between Germany and Lithuania on a new commercial agreement began in the autumn of 1922 [21], they encountered many obstacles not only because of the Lithuanian occupation of Memel, but also due to the fact that communications and transit between East Prussia and Lithuania by waterway and by

railway had to be regulated in cooperation with Poland, Latvia and the Soviet Union. In contrast to the navigation on the Vistula River, which was solely under the control of Poland, Germany – as a riparian state – was entitled to participate in the administration of the Niemen River. In the framework of negotiations on the German-Lithuanian commercial treaty, therefore, representatives of the German timber industry, most notably the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Königsberg and Tilsit, demanded freedom of communication and transit on the Niemen in order to re-establish the floating of timber. They also pleaded for open navigation of the river. This would have required each side to grant the other most-favoured nation status as well as equal treatment for nationals and non-nationals in matters of navigation on the river [22]. While showing understanding for East Prussia's demands and the severe economic situation of the province, the Kaunas government nonetheless was unwilling to open Lithuania's borders towards the Territory of Vilna because it wished to clearly express its non-recognition of Polish sovereignty over Vilna. Lithuania also refused to adopt a parity clause for waterway traffic in the commercial treaty [23], which Germany had requested. Kaunas feared that Poland might enjoy equal treatment on the Niemen in Lithuanian areas, in the future case of a conclusion of a Polish-Lithuanian commercial agreement, even if it might only be based on a most-favoured nation treatment, when a parity clause would have been already granted within the German-Lithuanian commercial treaty [24]. Clearly, Lithuania wanted to avoid allowing the right of equal treatment for Poland on the Niemen [25, p. 273].

Moreover, Lithuania considered Poland's participation in the administration of the Niemen, especially in Lithuanian areas, to be absolutely unacceptable [26]. According to Article 331 of the Treaty of Versailles, the Niemen was declared "international" because all its navigable parts provided more than one state with access to the sea. In this clause, it was also established that the Niemen in its lower course from Grodno, now on Polish territory, was indeed navigable. In Article 342, it was laid down that "[o]n a request being made to the League of Nations by any riparian State, the Niemen shall be placed under the administration of an International Commission, which shall comprise one representative of each riparian State, and three representatives of other States specified by the League of Nations" [27]. In the event of Article 342 being applied, Poland's participation as a riparian state in an international commission could not be circumvented. Furthermore, it was assumed that France, Poland's ally, would also join such a commission, representing the League of Nations. According to the conditions set by the major Allied Powers concerning the transfer of sovereignty over the Territory of Memel, Lithuania was obliged to accept the Peace Treaty's provisions concerning waterway traffic regulations (from Article 331 to 345) [28]. Lithuania, therefore, deemed it necessary to avert the application of those provisions (Article 342), not only in the interests of Lithuania itself, but also in that of East Prussia [26]. Germany shared this view and was prepared to support Lithuania's position in this matter. Kaunas suggested that the

regulations for communication and transit on the river should not be dealt with in the commercial treaty but instead in a separate, bilateral convention regulating the waterway traffic between Germany and Lithuania [29]. The German government accepted this proposal and also thought it preferable to resolve traffic matters on the Niemen River exclusively on a bilateral basis. Shortly before the commercial treaty was signed, Berlin suggested to arrange an administrative agreement between the traffic ministries of both countries in which equal treatment in navigation on the river should be granted, thus avoiding this agreement to have repercussions for relations with Poland [30].

The first German-Lithuanian commercial treaty was signed in Berlin on 1 June 1923 [31]. It mainly consisted of provisional regulations for trade and traffic matters. At the same time, the major Allied Powers were negotiating in Paris with Lithuania and Poland about traffic and transit conditions regarding the Territory of Memel in connection with the transfer of sovereignty to Lithuania. In mid-June 1923, in accordance with Article 30 of the German-Lithuanian commercial agreement and its diplomatic notes [32], both parties entered into negotiations in Tilsit/East Prussia about regulations of (inter-)waterway traffic [33]. The German Minister of Traffic (Reichsverkehrsminister) authorized the Oberpräsident of East Prussia not only to talk to Lithuania directly, but also to sign the contract on his behalf [34]. Three months later, on 28 September 1923, the German-Lithuanian convention concerning waterway traffic was signed at Kaunas as an administrative agreement between the German Ministry of Traffic, represented by the Oberpräsident of East Prussia, and the Lithuanian Ministry of Traffic [35]. It is worth noting that since its conclusion in 1923 this agreement had been kept secret until its repeal in 1928 (it was first published only in 1930 in a collection of legal texts edited by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry) [36], because both countries aimed to avoid interference from Poland [25, p. 234].

On Germany's request, in order to fulfil binding obligations under international law, the agreement was ratified on 26 March 1924 by means of an exchange of diplomatic notes between the Foreign Ministry of Germany, represented by the German envoy Franz von Olshausen in Kaunas, and the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Ernestas Galvanauskas [37]. Shortly after the ratification, in early April 1924, the German Minister of Traffic, Rudolf Oeser, informed the German cabinet that "the convention concerning waterway traffic is confidential in order not to put a burden on Lithuania in future negotiations with third countries, especially Poland" [38]. Kaunas sent its diplomatic note to Germany only just after mid-March 1924 when Lithuania had been successful in the negotiations with the major Allied Powers concerning the Territory of Memel, during which Poland's demands for special privileges in the port of Memel had been completely rejected [39, p. 123-129].

The German-Lithuanian agreement, however, largely failed to re-establish timber floating and free navigation on the Niemen, because the frontier between Poland and Lithuania remained closed for transit between East Prussia and the Soviet Union as a result of the irreconcilable conflict over the Territory of Vilna. In the Convention concerning the Territory of Memel signed between Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and Lithuania on 8 May 1924, especially in its provisions concerning transit traffic (Annex III), it was stipulated [40] that Lithuania should grant free transit on the Niemen River, in accordance with the international agreement on the Freedom of Transit, the so-called Barcelona Statute signed on 20 April 1921 [41]. Article 3 of Annex III explicitly stated that Articles 7 and 8 of the Barcelona Statute relating to exceptional cases (in case of emergency and in time of war) could not be applied for the transit traffic “on the ground of the present political relations between Lithuania and Poland” [40]. Those provisions, however, did not in fact have any impact on the matter.

In the following years, the League of Nations repeatedly attempted to remedy the situation and tried to remove the obstacles which insured the rights of third parties, especially the interests of the neighbouring countries, on trade and transit traffic over the Territory of Vilna [42, p. 315-319]. In September 1930, the League’s Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit took the view that freedom of communication and transit on the Niemen had been interrupted not by Lithuania, but predominately by Poland [43, p. 33]. The Committee reported that “[a]s regards the floating of timber in transit, [...] these obstacles are mainly due to the fact that Poland will not allow the floating in transit of timber coming from places situated in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” [43, p. 33]. However, with regard to railway communications, it was suggested that the obstacles were caused by the fact that Lithuania had “not consented to traffic being resumed on the Landwarów-Kaisiadorys line” [43, p. 33]. Before the war, this line as the only railway connection between Vilna and Kaunas had played a most important role for transit traffic between East Prussia, especially the port of Königsberg, and Moscow via Vilna. It was destroyed by Lithuania after the capture of Vilna by Żeligowski’s forces in 1920 [43, p. 47]. In October 1931, at the request of the Council of the League of Nations, the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague under its Japanese President, Mineichiro Adachi, gave an advisory opinion favourable to Lithuania’s position [44, p. 749-761]. The Court took the view that “the international engagements in force do not oblige Lithuania in the present circumstances to take the necessary steps to open for traffic or for certain categories of traffic [on] the Landwarów-Kaisiadorys railway sector.” [25, p. 467; 44, p. 760].

III. The port of Königsberg and the Soviet Union

The capital of East Prussia, the city of Königsberg, founded in 1255 by the Teutonic Order, was known as one of the most enlightened places in Prussia [45]. Königsberg, and especially its Universitas Albertina, established in 1544 as the world's second protestant academy, imparted not only Western thinking and advanced knowledge into north-eastern Europe, but also played a role of cultural transmission between East and West [46]. The development of Königsberg into a cosmopolitan metropolis was not only based on its cultural exchanges, but depended also on its commercial and traffic advantages.

The port of Königsberg as a trade center on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea relied on both waterway and railway traffic. International railway connections between East Prussia and major cities of the Russian Empire constructed in the second half of the 19th century significantly promoted trade and cultural exchanges between the eastern and western parts of Europe. Königsberg was connected via Riga to St. Petersburg, via Vilna, Smolensk and Minsk to Moscow, and also via Brest to Kiev, Kharkiv and Odessa [47, p. 4-10]. The direct railway connection with the Ukraine – the granary of Europe – via Prostken (East Prussia) and Grajewo (Russian Poland) constructed in 1873 enabled trains to carry a large number of agricultural products to the port of Königsberg which until then had merely depended upon transport from its East Prussian hinterland. The rise of Königsberg as a trade center for Russian and Ukrainian grain and legumes was further supported by several contractual agreements between Germany and Russia in connection with German custom policy measures.

The German-Russian commercial and navigation treaty of 1894 [48], in particular its final protocol to Article 19, granted special advantages for railway transport from the Russian Empire to three Prussian ports in the Baltic Sea. The ports of Danzig, Königsberg and Memel, on the one hand, and the Russian ports of Liepaja (Libau) and Riga, on the other, were henceforth to be treated equally in terms of freight rate by railway for the shipment of agricultural products, especially grain, legumes, linen, and hemp from the Russian Empire. The treaty brought an end to fierce competition between those five trade ports. The crucial clause – the final protocol to Article 19 – had been inserted into the commercial treaty at the instigation of the Königsberg Chamber of Commerce [49, p. 56]. The transport of grain and legumes into the port of Königsberg reached its highest level in 1912 (circa 773,000 tonnes), of which more than two thirds were of Russian and Ukrainian origin (c. 558,000 tonnes), while only one third (c. 215,000 tonnes) came from East Prussia [50, p. 19]. In addition, the grain market in Königsberg specialized in the trade of lentils [51, p. 63]. Before 1914 Russia transported c. 90% of its lentils exports to Königsberg alone because of geographical, commercial, and technological advantages which the German port offered [52, p. 1].

After the outbreak of the World War I, trade relations between Germany and Russia were severed, and this strongly affected the economy of East Prussia. Shortly after the agreements of Brest-Litovsk, the Königsberg Chamber of Commerce urged the German government to re-establish trade relations especially with Ukraine, calling this “a vital question for Königsberg”. The Königsberg Chamber of Commerce wrote: “die Wiedereinschaltung Königsbergs für das Geschäft mit der Ukraine ist für die weitere Entwicklung unseres Handelsplatzes geradezu eine Lebensfrage” [53]. Even after the end of the war, however, the situation stayed the same, and international transshipment in the port of Königsberg hardly recovered. The collapse of the Central Powers in November 1918 then resulted in the annulment of both Brest-Litovsk treaties, the one signed on 9 February 1918 with the Ukrainian National Republic [54, p. 1010] and the other one signed on 3 March 1918 with the Bolshevich government of Russia [55, p. 654]. This put an end to Germany’s attempts to facilitate its economic recovery through war contributions from the Ukraine as well as by the annexation of the Russian Baltic provinces [56]. In 1924, the transport of grains and legumes in the port of Königsberg from areas of the former Russian Empire amounted to only 81,159 tonnes, which meant a more than 85% decrease in comparison with the volume in 1912 (c. 558,000 tonnes). The Königsberg Chamber of Commerce reported in 1924 that “before the war, vast quantities of products from the Russian Empire – up to an amount of 500 railway wagons a day – had arrived in Königsberg, but after the war, the transit transport has been completely decimated” [57, p. 13].

The German-Russian railway agreement of 1894, repealed in 1914, had given priority to the port of Königsberg. After the war had ended, its provisions regarding transshipment competition between the Prussian and Russian ports on the Baltic Sea went out of effect, and trade competition between those five ports was intensified again. The former Russian ports of Liepaja (Libau) and Riga became Latvian commercial ports. Under the control of the major Allied Powers, the former Prussian port of Memel contributed to transshipment to and from Lithuania. The formerly Prussian port of Danzig, now administered by the League of Nations, principally served as a commercial port of Poland for the Polish trade. Königsberg’s direct railway connections with Russia were interrupted by the newly created countries located between East Prussia and Russia – Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. After the war, Soviet Russia and also the Ukraine were largely unable to export agricultural products due to the hunger crises occurring in their own countries [58, p. 157]. In particular, the railway lines between Königsberg and the Ukraine via Prostken/Grajewo to Brest, Kiev and Odessa, which had played a principal role in the transport of grain, were now blocked as a result of measures taken by Poland against transit traffic between East Prussia on one side and Soviet Russia and the Ukraine on the other [6, p. 23-29], each of which nations was in conflict with Poland in the early post-war period [59, p. 502]. In addition, the former principal railway lines from

Königsberg to St Petersburg and Moscow via Vilna were also interrupted after the war due to the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over the Territory of Vilna.

The economic decline of Königsberg, resulting from the trade crisis with Russia, caused severe damage to the economy of East Prussia as a whole which was still predominantly agrarian and therefore substantially depended upon transfers from the capital of the province. The city of Königsberg with its mainly industrial and commercial sectors contributed more than 30% of the local tax revenue for East Prussia [60, p. 71]. Moreover, 58% of trade tax revenue was collected in the district of the Königsberg Chamber of Industry and Commerce [61], even though only 12,5% of the total population in the province lived in its capital. In 1925, Königsberg had about 280,000 inhabitants and the province of East Prussia about 2,233,000. It has to be pointed out that, for example, in 1929 approximately 85% of total turnover in the province was made by the non-agricultural sectors, most of it in the city of Königsberg itself, while some 45% of the total population of East Prussia were employed in the primary (agricultural) sector [62, p. 68]. Taking these facts into account, both regional and local politicians, especially the Oberpräsident, Ernst Ludwig Siehr – the highest authority of the province – and the Lord Mayor of Königsberg, Hans Lohmeyer, considered the re-establishment of trade relations with Russia as their most vital task [63, p. 7]. In addition, it was necessary to come to a consensus with the Baltic States and Poland over German-Soviet transit through their territories, which was far from simple, because those so-called “buffer” states pursued very different strategies towards Germany and the Soviet Union.

In an attempt to foster direct contacts with the Soviets, a new trade fair, the “Deutsche Ostmesse in Königsberg”, was established in September 1920 by the city of Königsberg in cooperation with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. It aimed to stimulate trade relations between Königsberg and neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe in the hope that Königsberg would once again serve as a bridge between East and West [64]. The city invited foreign statesmen and diplomats as well as officials of the German government to an international soirée held during the fair. Through this initiative, Lohmeyer aimed to create opportunities for his city to establish direct contacts with representatives of the neighbouring countries [65]. The strategy worked, as from 1922 on, the Soviet Union regularly sent the largest delegation of all nations to the Ostmesse. Unlike most of the visitors from abroad, the Soviets came to Königsberg not only as customers of German industry, e. g. in the field of agricultural machinery. They also attended the fair as exhibitors, displaying samples of Russian agricultural products and manufactured goods the kind of which had been channeled mainly via the port of Königsberg before the war. In 1922, the “Wirtschaftsinstitut für Rußland und die Oststaaten e. V. in Königsberg” (the Economic Institute for Russia and the Eastern European States) was founded by the city and its trade-fair office. The Institute was not an academic outfit but rather an agency contributing to liaison between German merchants and foreign authorities,

especially those in the Soviet Union [66]. The Institute created branches in major cities of Eastern Europe and swiftly expanded its network, with branch offices in Berlin and Moscow fulfilling vital tasks alongside its Königsberg headquarters [67]. Lohmeyer, a liberal democrat, steered a course of economic pragmatism and avoided any kind of hostility towards foreigners in general and Soviet Communists in particular. In cooperation with the trade fair office, the economic institute began publishing its own journal *Der Ost-Europa-Markt/Восточно-Европейский Рынок* (The Eastern European Market) in German and Russian [68], where the city council of Königsberg placed advertisements and invitations for the Ostmesse in Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, and Finnish [69]. In the summer of 1923, the Soviet Union reciprocated Königsberg's hospitality and invited the city, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, as well as the Chamber of Agriculture for East Prussia to participate as exhibitors in the Pan-Russian Exhibition in Moscow [70]. There, the city of Königsberg presented information about the traffic and transit system between East Prussia and the Soviet Union, including a detailed model of the modern facilities of the new port of Königsberg [71, p. 8]. The completion of the new port was scheduled for the summer of 1924.

In June 1923, in accordance with the trade agreement signed in May 1921 and the Treaty of Rapallo signed in April 1922, the German Government entered into negotiations in Berlin with the Soviet Union regarding a new commercial treaty. With the intention of promoting its economic relations with Russia, the Königsberg Chamber of Industry and Commerce aimed to regain previous advantages granted in the framework of the commercial treaty of 1894, especially in its final protocol to Article 19 concerning the regulations of railway traffic. After considerable efforts, the city and the Chamber of Commerce succeeded in sending their own representatives to Moscow. They were able to participate in meetings between the German delegation conducted by the German Foreign Office and the German Ministry of Traffic on the one side and Soviet authorities on the other. At the request of the Königsberg Chamber of Industry and Commerce, new regulations concerning competition between the ports as well as an agreement on international railway tariffs for the carriage of goods between the port of Königsberg and Soviet stations were included in the new German-Soviet commercial treaty signed on 12 October 1925 at Moscow, especially Article 4 of its railway agreement [72]. It was prepared at a confidential meeting in December 1924 in Moscow [25, p. 613; 73] and during the final round of negotiations from the end of September to early October 1925 [25, p. 685; 74]. Unlike the provisions in the former treaty of 1894, those bilateral regulations between Germany and the Soviet Union did not bear liabilities for Poland and the Baltic States. It could safely be assumed that these countries would intend to interrupt transit communications between the port of Königsberg and the Soviet Union through their areas, because they were interested in promoting transshipments via their own ports. Taking this into account, a special provision was included in the German-Soviet commercial treaty [25, p. 697, 868; 75]. The confidential note No. 9(2) to Article 4 of

the railway agreement allowed both parties to establish contact if measures had to be taken against the ports of Poland and the Baltic States, in the event that these countries would not agree with the regulation of port competition in transshipment, nor with transit communications between Königsberg and the Soviet Union [76].

The positive effects of the German-Soviet railway agreement, however, proved to be very limited. In the following years, the transshipment of Russian agricultural goods through the port of Königsberg increased only slightly. By the end of the 1920s, the grain and legumes transport from the Soviet Union had only reached 10% of its pre-war level, even though from 1925 on Königsberg's municipal bank ("Stadtbank") had been granting loans to the Soviet Commercial Agency for its grain trade operation within the port of the city [25, p. 716; 77]. The capacities of Königsberg's commercial port, in the expansion of which the city and the German state had recently invested large sums [78], remained largely unused, with many silos staying empty. The city's officials believed that transport costs from the Soviet Union to the port of Königsberg by rail were simply too high. As a result, Russian products were transported to the ports of the neighbouring countries instead, as well as to Leningrad, which, after the war, was strategically supported by the Soviet Union. Königsberg's assessment was based on the fact that direct rail connections between Königsberg and the Ukraine were interrupted due to the traffic policy measures of Poland. This meant that transport of Ukrainian grain and legumes had to be diverted, thus elevating its cost [79]. In April 1929, the Oberpräsident of East Prussia and the Mayor of Königsberg visited Moscow to meet with high-ranking Soviet politicians with the intention of further promoting trade relations between East Prussia and the Soviet Union [80]. In a confidential meeting at the Foreign Ministry (Narkomindel) in Moscow on 8 April, Oberpräsident Ernst L. Siehr urgently requested the Soviet Government to honour the agreements of the German-Soviet commercial treaty of 1925, especially with regard to its advantages for the port of Königsberg concerning rail transport. In order to resume timber-floating on the Niemen River which had been interrupted by the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilna, Siehr also emphasized the necessity of Soviet political influence exerted over Poland [25, p. 744; 81]. The Narkomindel, represented by Boris S. Stomonjakov, showed great sympathy for the economic situation of East Prussia, but cautiously avoided to give a concrete statement on this matter. Stomonjakov hinted at the fact that Moscow's economic interests were not fully compatible with those of Königsberg [81].

Conclusion

After the First World War, East Prussia aimed to re-establish its previous trade relations with the regions of the former Russian Empire. The intensive struggle for survival in which the local and regional governments of Königsberg and its economic representatives were involved resulted from the fact that the province now formed an exclave – a unique situation not only in the history of Prussia, but also in the history

of Germany. Owing to the unsolvable territorial conflicts in Eastern Europe, all attempts to come to terms with the situation and its implications were doomed to have only very limited success.

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Шиндо Р. Східна Пруссія, Литва і Радянський Союз після Першої світової війни: зовнішня стратегія німецького ексклаву в 1920-і рр.

Автор аналізує зовнішньополітичну стратегію Східної Пруссії. Особлива увага приділяється шляхам та стратегіям, якими Східна Пруссія намагалася подолати політичні та економічні труднощі, які виникли після того, як вона опинилася оточеною з усіх боків іноземними державами упродовж 1920-х рр. Після Першої світової війни, метою Східної Пруссії було відновлення своїх попередніх торговельних відносини з регіонами колишньої Російської імперії. Інтенсивна боротьба за виживання, в якій брали участь місцеві і регіональні органи влади Кенігсберга і його економічні представники призвела до того, що провінція сформувалася як ексклав, що було унікальним не тільки в історії Пруссії, але і в історії Німеччини. Через нерозв'язні територіальні конфлікти у Східній Європі, всі спроби дійти згоди в даній ситуації були не повною мірою успішними.

Ключові слова: Перша світова війна, Східна Пруссія, Польща, Литва.

Шиндо Р. Восточная Пруссия, Литва и Советский Союз после Первой мировой войны: внешняя стратегия немецкого эксклава в 1920-е гг.

Автор анализирует внешнеполитическую стратегию Восточной Пруссии. Особое внимание уделяется путям и стратегиям, с помощью которых Восточная Пруссия старалась преодолеть политические и экономические проблемы, которые возникли после того, как она была полностью окружена иностранными государствами на протяжении 1920-х гг. После Первой мировой войны, целью Восточной Пруссии было вновь восстановить свои предыдущие торговые отношения с регионами бывшей Российской империи. Интенсивная борьба за выживание, в которой принимали участие местные и региональные органы власти Кенигсберга и его экономические представители привела к тому, что провинция сформировалась как эксклав, что было уникальным не только в истории Пруссии, но и в истории Германии. Из-за неразрешенных территориальных конфликтов в Восточной Европе, все попытки прийти к соглашению в данной ситуации были не в полной мере успешными.

Ключевые слова: Первая мировая война, Восточная Пруссия, Польша, Литва.