Railway Diplomacy Concept and its Place in Central European International Relations

In the contemporary era of international relations, many countries have begun to employ non-traditional types of diplomacy to improve their relations with other countries, generate goodwill, gain economic access, and other objectives. An interesting version of this non-traditional diplomacy is railway diplomacy, or a country forging relations with another by establishing a vast network of railroads, in the process stimulating mutual economic gain and currying favour with the host country[1]. While much younger aviation diplomacy has already been co-defined and defined[2], the railway has undoubtedly included a much broader conceptual range than its aviation counterpart has not yet been thoroughly developed. The purpose of this article is to try to pre-conceptualise and to identify the most important challenges facing it in Central Europe in the current political situation.

Keywords: *Poland, Middle Europe, railway diplomacy, Rail Baltica*

Introduction

Nowadays, the concept of railway diplomacy seems inextricably linked to Chinese economic expansion. This is derived from the economic expansion model adopted by the Chinese decision-makers, related to the export of their own rail services – the construction of virtually any type of railway; from the project phase to its operation under the concession regime. First of all, these projects are aimed at developing countries that need extensive, and very costly investments in their own often very worn out rail network. Of course, the Chinese do not stop at expanding in African countries in this case, because European countries cannot present projects that are competitively priced with the Chinese offer. In general, after internet research, one can get the impression that in the case of railway diplomacy, everything is now orbiting around China, as one of the main players in our field of interest, with insignificant participation of other countries, including European ones.

The reality, however, is slightly different; after a deeper study of the subject, it turns out that transportation and diplomacy have always been inextricably linked. Already in ancient times, the diplomats of the various empires tried to impress their interlocutors and the public opinion of the host country with the magnificence and splendor of their own transport. Likewise, maritime countries have sought to emphasise their power by building suitable ceremonial ships, such as the "forty" (thessakonter) of Ptolemaios IV, or the

[1]https://southasianvoices.org/railway-diplomacy-china-versus-india/

[2]Review of literature and concepts on aviation diplomacy see: M. M. Kobierecki, Aviation diplomacy: a conceptual framework for analysing the relationship between aviation and international relations, "Place Branding and Public Diplomacy" https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-020-00172-5, (accesed: 23.05.2021).

magnificent ceremonial ships of the Venetian Republic (bucentaur/bucintoro), whose role in building the prestige of the Venetian state was somewhat perversely spotted by Napoleon ordering its destruction after the conquest of Venice in 1798.

With the developement of railroading and international connections, the railways have become an increasingly important factor in diplomacy, through, for example construction of suitable saloon cars often used as a place for diplomatic talks. Perhaps the best example of this would be the salon wagon, where the ceasefire in Compiegne on 11 November 1918 was signed, and later, in a sense, of "disenchant" the symbol - of the French surrender in June 1940. Moreover, the fate of this symbolic car was similar to that of the Venetian *bucentaur* – and it was finally destroyed in the final phase of World War II. The possibility of travel by rail also determined, for example, places of important meetings of a diplomatic nature – an example is the meeting of three emperors (Russian, Austrian and German) in Skierniewice (located between Łódź and Warsaw), chosen because of the ease of access on the standard gauge.

It was precisely the issue of choosing the right gauge for the main lines that was one of the first topics to be decided at the diplomatic level at the dawn of the railways. We can see the separation of Europe in at least three or even four economic areas, whose borders will be not only political, but also determined by the gauge of railways. This is a significant barrier both for the invader's troops but also for the smooth transport of goods. And so we can distinguish in Europe the area where the standard gauge (1453 mm) reigns (Western Europe, Central Europe, Scandinavia, Balkans), broad gauge [Russian] area – 1520/1524 mm - countries of the former USSR and Finland, broad gauge [Iberian] area– 1668 mm - Spain and Portugal and the United Kingdom, which although while using the standard gauge, however is using other loading gauge preventing entry to most British lines European cars. Each gauge has its advantages and disadvantages, and often many political myths have often arisen around a choice other than a standard rail spacing. For this study, they can be briefly presented, while a full discussion of the issue requires a separate study. The most common explanation for such a decision are strategic considerations – the enemy rolling stock will not be able to enter my own territory – of course it is a two-edged weapon, what if situation allows for a counteroffensive? It would also have to significantly slow down its momentum once it reaches the enemy's limit. Such arguments were made primarily with regard to the example of Russia (fear of invasion from the West) and the Iberian Peninsula (fear of France). Nevertheless, the explanation seems to be much simpler – in Russia it was the result of the import of American technical thought in the 1840s. Construction of the St. Petersburg-Moscow line was overseen by an American engineer George Washington Whistler, who was familiar with this gauge (1524 mm – 5 ft) then actually dominant in the northern part of the USA. In the case of Spain and Portugal, however, this resulted from missed calculations involving the possibility of introducing stronger locomotives onto the broader gauge, unfortunately at the expense of

increased expenditure on the construction of a wider line profile. Later, a possible line conversion became too expensive. Today, the problem of choosing proper gauge is also sometimes an important part of railway diplomacy – as one of the last examples of this may be considered the choice of a standard gauge for the *Rail Baltica* line, which can be considered a success of Polish and European railway diplomacy towards the Baltic States. Similarly, the Chinese commitment to Ethiopia and Kenya in the construction of new railways using standard gauge, not previous metre gauge, can be considered similarly. The reason, moreover, was similar to the construction of the original lines – a large part of the engineering staff and rolling stock was to be brought this time from China.

Literature Review and Methodology

Despite the growing importance and scale of international civil aviation, its significance in international relations, or diplomacy, is a somewhat neglected subject of study. As this is rather a new area of research, there is a lack of a completely theoretical approach to the subject. Certain defining analogies can be found in work devoted to the aforementioned and related issue of aviation diplomacy, which was examined, for example, by Michał Kobierecki in the article *Aviation diplomacy: a conceptual framework for analysing the relationship between aviation and international relations*[3]. This article represents a review of the definition proposals examined so far relating to aviation diplomacy, and to some extent, also applicable in the research of railway diplomacy on an analogy basis. Unfortunately, an important source base only barely mentioned in this article will undoubtedly include archives concerning the negotiation of individual trade and political agreements, which were the implementation of Polish railway diplomacy. In the context of the study of the current applications of this diplomacy, it is crucial to analyse the current "professional" press, including, above all, the monthly “Rynek kolejowy” [Railway Market]. Here important analysis are very often published, which allows outlining the current whereabouts of Polish railway diplomacy. This article will provide a brief overview of certain aspects of railway cooperation in central Europe, especially after World War II, in the historical context of the functioning of the Comecon and the modern context, the construction of the *Rail Baltica* transport corridor, in which, as in the lens, virtually all aspects specific to the issue under consideration are applied.

[3]M. Kobierecki, op. cit.

Definition and Main Issues

Railway diplomacy can be defined as: actively supporting the economic priorities of the state [in this case, above all, the railway component] within its foreign policy and through appropriate elections of the broader internal policy.

Trade of rolling stock as a visible part of railway diplomacy

Exporting rolling stock is perhaps the most visible element of railway diplomacy in the broader world and one that we can easily observe when we are at train stations.

Therefore, this should be combined primarily with the export and import of technical thought and, in this particular case, rolling stock, including locomotives, as the most visible export/import component to the ordinary customer. Thus an essential element of railway diplomacy is the sale of the product abroad (or to another economic area) and obtaining the necessary operating permits there. Here – an example could be the very limited availability on the European (EU) market, e.g. railway products originating in China – here the firewall is not the price, which is very competitive, but rather the European safety standards, adaptation to which very seriously changes the final price of the product, making it less attractive to the customer – moreover, it is a situation analogous to the automotive market.

The first attempts to export products of the Polish railway industry are dated to the end of the 1920'ies when Polish companies tried to win contracts on the Romanian market, which could not be finally obtained due to several factors. First of all, the Polish offer was in no way competitive with the German offer since the products offered were German licenced products (so they clearly compared the final price to be paid for locomotive). In addition, Polish factories were then unable to meet additional requirements related, for example, to the broader offset. It is worth mentioning that the Polish companies fared much better in the interwar period in cases of obtaining of smaller but oriented rather towards more specialised orders, such as those coming from Bulgaria, Morocco, Latvia and even China[4].

Another group of restrictions, which are top-down, to a slightly more limited extent in aviation diplomacy, where at one time the most serious barrier was access to foreign exchange is an attempt at top-down control of the "common market" – a situation we observed during the period of the Comecon. The centrally planned economy system assumed a central purchasing model and a relatively narrow specialisation of the various components of the system. While Poland was building a rather short series of steam engines on foreign order before World War II, in 1949 a huge request was received from the USSR for 895 E-series locomotives. However, the most exotic one resulted from Polish railway diplomacy in India, was an order for the Indian Railways

[4]B. Pokropiński, Parowozy normalnotorowe produkcji polskiej, Warszawa 2007, s. 212-229.

placed in 1957, just after it was decided in the Comecon to stop building steam locomotives for the internal market. The order was quite complicated and required some investment in a machine park and the construction of a special experimental track with a gauge of 1676 mm. They can also be seen as a kind of compensation for India's failure to execute the contract for 4000 cargo wagons – despite the Polish side winning the tender[5].

Joint management of rolling stock production in the Comecon was most evident in the context of the diesel locomotive market, where the vast majority of eastern bloc countries were doomed to acquire Soviet-produced locomotives at the expense of their own industry development or import opportunities from other countries. This was clear aftermath of the 1957 decision to stop producing steam locomotives – until this point, virtually every country in the bloc except Bulgaria and Albania produced its own locomotives. Around this aspect of railway diplomacy, many myths and doubts have arisen, they need to be further clarified and analysed. In the Polish case, this mainly concerned import from Romania of the ST43 locomotive – Romanian type 060DA, when the import was stopped after receiving 422 copies and PKP continued to order only the Soviet ST44[6] . Nevertheless, in this case, it is worth noting that, although such a circular opinion actually lingers, in fact, the two locomotives have different traction characteristics, so the decision to cease import was not entirely due to political considerations. ST 44 has a much greater traction power and modernisation potential than the ST43, while both in the basic configuration are not very suitable for passenger traffic – both were not allowed to run trains in winter due to the lack of a boiler for heating passenger cars. In the case of Soviet production, the huge fuel consumption of this locomotive was an additional element.

A fairly effective example of conducting "negative" railway diplomacy was the fate of another Polish project – the SP47 locomotive, produced in only 2 copies by H. Cegielski's plant in Poznań in 1974-1975[7]. These were high-power locomotives – in passenger traffic, they could develop speeds of up to 140 km/h. However, their characteristics were finally "overshot" – the rapid pace of electrification of the main lines decided that there was no demand for this type (properly strengthened to 3000 HP version of the SU46), an additional element was Moscow's decision about an obligation to buy high-power locomotives in the USSR – that is, the M62 type, but with different characteristics than the SP47[8] . On the other hand, despite the restrictions imposed by Comecon, it was possible to export few SU45 diesel locomotives in 1977 to Lebanon, where they were operated as CEL 301-303[9]. In 1985 there was also an opportunity to export Polish locomotives to Greece, unfortunately,

[5]Archiwum MSZ (Warszawa), Z. 12 w. 9 t 221, f. 23.
[6]P. Opriş, Licenţe srtrăine pentru produse civile şi militare fabricate în România, Bucureşti 2018, s. 131.
[7]B. Pokropiński, Lokomotywy spalinowe produkcji polskiej, Warszawa 2009, s. 121-122.
[8]B. Pokropiński, Lokomotywy spalinowe produkcji polskiej, Warszawa 2009, s. 122.
[9]Ibidem, s. 120

the proposed locomotive type 308D OSE did not accept, choosing then probably a more attractive offer from ..., the Greeks were then looking for another supplier of locomotives probably a bit displeased by the not very successful purchase in Romania of the A-551 series with a 4000 HP engines, unfortunately, the construction was not very successful, and as a result the locomotives were withdrawn in 1998 only after 16 years of operation[10].

Construction of Broad Gauge Metallurgy Line (BGML) as part of railway diplomacy of the Polish People's Republic and the USSR

Rail transport played a dominant role in rail transport during CAER, with rail generating 53% of the total volume of cargo and two-thirds of passenger transport in communication between block countries during the 1980s[11].

Due to its geographical location, Poland played an important role in internal transport – where transit between Comecon countries accounted for 67% of the total transport weight of transit through the country. The difference in treatment between passenger and freight transport can be seen, for example, by analysing the number of border crossings with the USSR. While passengers could do so in up to 3 places, the goods were transported through 11 border points[12].

A characteristic element, which undoubtedly fell within the scope of railway diplomacy, was the construction of the BGML during the years: 1976-1979 – this allowed the import of Soviet goods into Poland without the need for time-consuming transhipment at the border. In the context of Romania, it was also expected to use this line to export coal of one million tonnes per year – this would undoubtedly facilitate the supply of coal to this country[13]. In this case, the decision to build the railway line was secondary to the earlier decision to build a large foundry- Huta Katowice in Katowice, already distant from the iron ore mines, the needs of which was set at 16 million tonnes per year[14]. The ore was to come from the Ukrainian Basin in the Kryvyi Rih, necessary problem that had to be solved, also on the diplomatic level was: how to transport by rail this amount of ore to the Polish foundry. Three options were considered, two involving the use of a slightly modernised, hitherto existing railway infrastructure and a third option involving the construction of a completely new railway line, which, admittedly, runs in certain places (border) following the path of the line existing until 1944 and refers in its course to the plans presented in the first programme for the expansion of railway lines in reborn Poland in 1919. It was decided to use a Soviet gauge mainly for

[10]http://www.locopage.net/ose-craiova.htm (access: 24.05.2021).
[11]J. Ptaszek, Współpraca PRL z krajami RWPG w sferze produkcji materialnej, Warszawa 1987, s. 200
[12]Ibidem, s. 203
[13]Ibidem, s. 205.
[14]A. Mazur, 25 lat LHS, ”Świat Kolei” nr 5/2005, s. 14.

economic reasons – it was not necessary to block a large number of wagons (about 6000) for transhipment on the Polish side, it was ultimately supposed to give savings of 176 million zlotys (1971)[15]. The issue of having the proper amount of wagons has always been significant throughout the Eastern Bloc. The final variant was characteristic for a kind of *gigantomania* of the Edward Gierek era in Poland and was part of the plan to build new transport arteries. A similar railway investment was the Central Railway started and not completed to this day (of which section Zawiercie – Grodzisk Mazowiecki was completed), while the plan to extend it to Gdańsk because of savings.

The construction of the BGML may, moreover, be considered following socialist tradition in the basics of soviet diplomacy – the key date associated with the construction referred directly to the great Soviet holidays – so the official start of construction took place on 4 November 1975, the anniversary of the outbreak of the October Revolution, similarly, the line was put into operation at the beginning of November 1979, also on the anniversary of the revolution[16] . Surprisingly, the line was scheduled to be inaugurated in November 1979, while the first train travelled the entire route in December 1979. Another diplomatic element was the obtaining of assistance from the USSR under the agreement of 27 May 1976. According to it, USSR promised to provide materials and construction equipment and build a bridge on the border river Bug[17]. The entire route was designed according to Soviet regulations for first-class lines. Interestingly only locomotives belonging to the Polish carrier were intended to be used, while the wagons came from the Soviet Railways. It is not surprising that BGML also envisaged a strategic role, as evidenced by the arrangement of bypasses, magazines and similar equipment necessary for the operation of the railways under war conditions located especially at many contact points with standard gauge lines. Interestingly, this line also attempted to carry out passenger transport between 1990 and 1994. However, the whole project was doomed to fail due to the unattractive location of the stations on the Polish side, where the line was designed exclusively for freight traffic and therefore bypassed larger cities.

Another element highlighting the links with the USSR and its railway network was the operation on this line only locomotives of Soviet provenance, ST44 (M62) and SM48 (TEM-2), this of course simplified their operation – it was not necessary to convert Polish built locomotives to a broad gauge (1520 mm), while Polish maintenance crew knew these machines anyway because they were still used by PKP on their normal network, and if necessary, the conversion from one gauge to another lasted several hours.

[15]T. Ciemnoczułowski, Szerokim torem LHS, Łódź 2009, s. 19.
[16]A. Mazur, 25 lat LHS, s. 15.
[17]T. Ciemnoczułowski, op. cit., s. 30.

***Rail Baltica* – A Modern Example of railway diplomacy in Central Europe**

An important element of railway diplomacy in the Central European region is also *the Rail Baltica* project, which is intended to connect Poland with the Baltic states with a normal gauge line –thus excluding the need to change bogies at the Polish-Lithuanian border, so it is project of "reversed BGML", introducing the normal track [back] into the Baltic states. Of particular interest to this project is Lithuania, which, if successful, will host the crossroads of the line leading from Moscow to Kalinigrad (and also from China) and *Rail Baltica*, which would open up big transit opportunities[18].

Although on the lower level, an essential element of railway diplomacy is the sale of rolling stock. However, in the case of Polish even more sales generates exports of freight wagons - the largest plant of its kind is Wagons Świdnica, which is part of the American group Greenbrier. Despite its complex ownership structure, the sale of wagons under the brand name of the Polish manufacturer is undoubtedly an essential element promoting the Polish industry on the international stage, especially since its products reach countries so exotic in the railway sense as Saudi Arabia[19].

The important player in the field of railway diplomacy in central Europe is also Russia pushing for solutions competing, e.g. against *Rail Baltica*. Such an action was, for example, the announcement of a project to extend the broad-gauge line from Košice in Slovakia through Bratislava to Vienna, this would also constitute significant competition for BGML. There was also the question of the possible scale of Russia's participation in this project – whether it would finance this project. The open question would be the choice of the entity managing the project – also related to the security of the admission of a Russian company into the EU. Nevertheless, Russia has quite a lot of experience in managing foreign projects, implementing its railway concessions in Armenia and Mongolia and being also involved in the modernisation of the railways of Serbia, Iran or Cuba[20]. The problem with the East is for Polish, but also for Romania, for example, the problem of transhipments. Many interested parties clearly point to problems on the Polish side, related to the low capacity of Polish transhipment points (so-called Dry Ports) – including the Malaszewicze-Brest double, which is causing the search for alternative opportunities to reach Western Europe[21]. Another issue is the lack of alternative lines, which, despite the complicated political situation, allow the opportunity to bypass the congestion, namely Małaszewicze. This would be possible with Czeremcha-Vysokaje (Wysokie Litewskie) railway line, built in 1873 and open for freight traffic until 2009 and for passenger traffic up to 2011. Unfortunately, now it is not used at all for this purpose. Alternative

[18]Rokas Masiulis, Z Warszawy do Wilna w cztery godziny, „Rynek kolejowy", 7/2019, s. 60.
[19]M. Szymajda, Wagony Świdnica największym eksporterem taboru w Polsce, „Rynek kolejowy", 3/2019, s. 53 (52-53).
[20]RŻD: Nie możemy polegać na Brześciu, „Rynek kolejowy" 5/2019, s. 19 (17-19).
[21]J. Madrjas, Co z tymi Małaszewiczami, Rynek kolejowy 6/2019, s 24-25.

diversions are being prepared for this purpose, but they nevertheless lengthen the potential route of the transport[22]. This redirects traffic to the ports of Kaliningrad and Piraeus[23]. Mentioned border crossing is well connected with alternative routes and lies closest to the transhipment station in Brest. An additional advantage is the standard gauge on the line so that goods can be loaded in Brest and exported already on the standard track to the West. Relevant arrangements were made with the Belarusian side as recently as 2018, with cost of PLN 28 million (about 6.6 million Euro) the route on the Polish side was rehabilitated, unfortunately the services were not resumed to the annoyance of the carriers and also the Belarusian partner, who also invested its funds in the modernisation of a much longer section of the line. This is due to a problem created by the National Revenue Administration (KSA) and is related to the lack of sufficient control infrastructure on the border, which is also an EU border. However, that argument is only partly regarded by experts as true since the infrastructure requested does not function at some other border crossings. However, because of the current state of Polish-Belarusian relations, a rapid resumption of traffic on this crossing is not to be expected, although this undoubtedly generates some losses, especially in the context of the Silk Road project, for which Poland is a natural transit point.

The *Rail Baltica* construction programme was initiated in 2008 in addition to the parallel Via Baltica project. Formally, it is implemented jointly by four countries: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Its task is to properly recreate the possibility of one track width from Polish to Estonia. Historically, such a possibility existed until the First World War, when all these lands were part of the Russian Empire, later (in the interwar period, such a possibility disappeared, because the wide track was brought to Riga (the line from Berlin via Lithuania) and to Daugavpils (line from Warsaw), further to continue the journey to Tallinn or in a few cases to the USSR one had to change to wide-gauge rolling stock. Currently (2021) it is theoretically possible to get on the standard track to Kaunas, where passengers can change in the direction of Wilno to the broad gauge train. An extension of the normal gauge from Kaunas to Wilno is considered, which will allow direct travel between the two capitals[24]. The *Rail Baltica* project is an example of good railway diplomacy, where European funds have succeeded in reaching an agreement between the four railway managements to build a line connecting countries with a common past. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the most important and also potentially conflicting decisions lie before the line's contractors. Here, the key and probably political choice will be deciding on the choice of rolling stock for

[22]J. Madrjas, Miliony wydane na tory … do zamkniętej granicy, „Rynek Kolejowy", 11/2020, s. 14.

[23]First Container Train Services From Pireás To Central Europe, http://www.railvolution.Net /news/first-container-train-services-from-pireas-to-central-europe (access: 23.05.2021).

[24]This possibility was used at the turn of the millennium, involving the SUW2000 system promoted by PKP. It allowed to smoothly change the gauge during the passage through a special station on the Polish-Lithuanian border, unfortunately after a while this idea was abandoned.

the line. It seems that the Polish side will try to gain here as much as possible by offering products of the Polish railway industry. The possibility of such a solution is indicated by the announcement of adjusting the line parameters to a speed of 250 km/h (maximum for 3000 V DC system, currently used in Poland and Latvia and Estonia - Lithuania uses a competitive 25 kV AC system). Of course, it is possible to use multi-system locomotives, but the cost of acquiring rolling stock will rise. However, it will ensure compatibility of the Polish with other railway lines. It is worth mentioning that Poland has some experience in the exporting of rolling stock to Lithuania – PESA factory already delivered 22 railbuses between 2009 and 2016.

In the recent past, Polish-Lithuanian cooperation in the field of railways has not worked out as well as it does today. An example of quite significant misunderstandings, which also had to be resolved diplomatically, was railway access to the Lithuanian oil refinery. The case did not concern only issues directly related to the transport of goods, since three countries (Poland, Lithuania and Latvia) were directly involved and interested in the case, and indirectly another major player in this part of Europe - Russia.

The oil refinery in Mažeikiai was built in the 1960s. Its importance to the Baltic States results primarily from the fact that it is the only oil processing plant in this part of Europe, so it is crucial for the area's economy. The refinery itself went through various owners, after Lithuania's independence. For some time was controlled by the American capital, the majority share was later sold to the Russian company Yukos associated with the Kremlin-critical Michail Khodorkovsky. Finally, in 2006, the refinery was bought by Polish Orlen, paying $1.49 billion (53.7%) for Russian-owned shares, and $ 852 million for shares belonging to the Lithuanian government (30.7%), in 2011 Orlen became the sole owner of the refinery after the purchase of the remaining shares. Unfortunately, shortly after the acquisition of the plant, there began a series of accidents severely limiting the production capacity. It should be mentioned that the "failure" of the *Drużba* - “Friendship" pipeline supplying oil from Russia, which has still not been repaired despite the 15 years, finally forced Orlen to use the oil supply by sea and then pumping it with an alternative pipeline from Butynge to Mažeikiai, due to this the cost of production had risen and thus called into question the profitability of the entire purchase[25]. In addition, there was a “mysterious” fire in part of the installation, significantly limiting production capacity. To this added diplomatic problems which were the aftermath of the taking power in Poland by the Civic Platform resulting in some changes in Polish Eastern policy calculated for a certain reconciling with Russia. The rail component of the investment, access to the Baltic states' rail network, became the victim of this change. At the beginning of 2008 Orlen, already implementing the policy of the new Polish government, decided to redirect its freight services northwards (to Latvia and Estonia) to the Latvian railway network and announced a wish to change the existing railway carrier

[25]M. Lesik, Możejki - ofiara nieudolności polskiej dyplomacji [ANALIZA], https://www.energetyka24.com/mozejki-ofiara-nieudolnosci-polskiej-dyplomacji (access: 23.05.2021).

from the Lithuanian Railways (LG). It was also about the possibility of exporting petroleum products through the port of Liepaia and not through Klaipeda, which would have reduced the cost of transport (about 120 km. vs. about 200 to Klaipeda. Of course, this would reduce LG's revenues, which, by dismantling the tracks, forced Orlen to use the line through Šiauliai, which meant an extension of the route by 130 km. The fact that Orlen has its own railway company in Poland adds additional light to the whole case. Understandably, this would have resulted in a significant drop in LG's revenues, the Lithuanian response was quite drastic – the railway line leading from Mažeikiai towards the Latvian border was dismantled, forcing Orlen to use the Lithuanian network. This finally resulted in a joint Polish-Latvian complaint to the European Commission, which accused Lithuanians of restricting competition on purpose. The European authorities have accepted the Polish-Latvian claim and have fined Lithuania EUR 28 million. This, together with the change of government in Poland, led to the resumption of talks on the reconstruction of this line. Orlen, for its part, announced the continued use of the Lithuanian carrier. Reconstruction began in 2018 and was completed at the end of 2019, interestingly and to some extent highlighting the importance of investment for the Baltic states, the Estonian company carried out the reconstruction[26]. The key question, on the other hand, is the motivation for reconstruction. Was it a desire to improve relations with Poland, or was it the punishment imposed by the EC and the menace of its renewal that ultimately led the Lithuanians to talk?

It seems that the problem should be looked at in a broader perspective since a third partner was interested in the case, namely the Latvian Railways (LDz), in whose interest was also the reconstruction. This line was built in 1873 then securing services on the Glūda-Reņģe route. Mažeikiai were an important railway junction until 1929, enabling the only connection between Riga and the port of Liepaia[27]. Moreover, the town was the subject of Latvia's territorial demands because of its greater importance for Latvian then for Lithuanian transport – it was ultimately granted to Lithuania. However, Latvia was to obtain special transit rights. It had never happened, and Latvians rarely used it until 1929, when the Glūda-Saldus-Liepāja line was put into operation, thus shortening the route and bypassing Lithuanian territory. The section remained in use with varying degrees of intensity until February 2010, when the Latvian government decided to suspend passenger trains on the line, which in turn was part of the saving measures resulting from the economic crisis that

[26]M. Szymajda, Linia kolejowa z rafinerii w Możejkach do Renge odbudowana. PKN Orlen zadowolony, https://www.rynek-kolejowy.pl/mobile/linia-kolejowa-z-rafinerii-w-mozejkach-do-renge-odbudowana-pkn-orlen-zadowolony-94961.html, (access: 23.05.2021).

[27]T. Otocki, Możejki-Reņģe, Reņģe-Ryga. Śladami starej kolei i dawnych posiadłości, https://przegladbaltycki.pl/14214,mozejki-renge-renge-ryga-sladami-starej-kolei-i-dawnych-posiadlosci.html, (access: 23.05.2021).

began in 2008[28]. Freight traffic was also no longer carried out due to the dismantling mentioned above by Lithuanians of the Mažeikiai – Reņģe line under the guise of its poor technical condition. This, in turn, exacerbated another problem of this Latvian border district – traffic exclusion and difficulties with getting to Riga. Similar objections are also highlighted by the inhabitants of Mažeikiai, especially in the context of Riga's airport ambition to concentrate at least part of the regional air traffic in this city. Potentially, it will be easier and faster for residents of northern Lithuania to reach Riga at a distance of 164 km than Wilno, where the distance is 301 km. In addition, Riga, the hub of AirBaltic, offers much greater transfer possibilities than Airport in Wilno. As a result of diplomatic efforts, traffic on the route is expected to be restored in 2022.

Railway management in another country – the effectiveness of its own railway diplomacy

Another manifestation of railway diplomacy is undoubtedly gaining by a particular carrier the possibility of managing rail traffic in another country. In the past, in the days leading up to, for example, the outbreak of World War I, this could be seen, for example, in the context of building railways in developing countries. It is worth mentioning, for example, the German-British conflicts around the intention to build the Baghdad railway, and there were not only these two countries that have pursued their railway diplomacy around the construction of a connection with today's Iraq. In addition to the powers not directly bordering Turkey, we have to mention the interest of the countries neighbouring the Ottoman Empire, in particular Russia, which as is well known, have always been atent regarding the construction of railways, with attention to strategic issues. In the construction of railways in Turkey by foreign investors, the Russians reserved exclusivity for its construction in the provinces neighbouring Russia (possibly only Turkish investment was allowed).

Despite the dissolution of the USSR, the Russians have maintained a dominant role at least on the railway issue in the South Caucasus to this day. It can be seen that in this case similar mechanisms worked in Greece, where the local railway management, threatened by the menace of collapse, was also sold to a stronger partner. In the case of Armenia, this occurred on 13 February 2008, when the concession to the Russian Railways [RŻD] was granted for 30 years, with a possible extension of it for another 10 years. The reasons were similar, the need to modernise a very damaged and worn-out local rail network, which without external investment was simply threatened with technical death. The situation of the Armenian railways was quite critical due to the

[28]T. Otocki, Możejki-Reņģe, Reņģe-Ryga. Śladami starej kolei i dawnych posiadłości, https://przegladbaltycki.pl/14214,mozejki-renge-renge-ryga-sladami-starej-kolei-i-dawnych-posiadlosci.html, (access: 23.05.2021).

geopolitical position of the country. The only functioning international connection operated with Georgia. In contrast, the remaining connections built in the Tsarist and Soviet era were closed due to political considerations, mainly related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Part of the railway diplomacy was also the choice of an investor, as a potential Indian investor also entered into negotiations. However, it nevertheless seems that the Russian offer was unrivalled for the Armenians due to political calculations and potential Russian help, especially in potential contacts with Azerbaijan and Turkey, which have so far not resulted too much. The recent peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in which the railway component plays an important role, offers hope for further revitalisation of the railways in the area. That offer from the Indian company also demonstrated India's interest in this area. On the one hand, on the other hand, in view of the Russians' offer, it was merely symbolic of the much greater possibilities, even intangible, offered by the RŻD. It is worth noting, however, that it was only after the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan that there was an opportunity to increase the role of railways in the region – because of the not very friendly Georgian-Russian relations, taking advantage of the possibility of possible transfer of rolling stock through Azerbaijan with at least a good relationship with Russia could be an important opportunity for Armenia's railways.

A similar situation occurs in Greece, where the Greek railway operator TrainOSE has been owned by Italian railways FS since 2017, with an Italian investment of 45 million. The euro was another such acquisition in the portfolio of Italian state railways after obtaining concessions in the UK, France or the Netherlands. In the case of Greece, too, this is intended to result in the country's network of sparse Pendolino sets being delivered, which is expected to increase the attractiveness of connections between Athens and Thessaloniki in the short term[29].

Summary

In conclusion, it should be acknowledged that railway diplomacy in its various aspects has been noticeable since the dawn of the railways. Its development was connected with the emergence of new ways of travelling in the nineteenth century. In addition to being innovative and revolutionary, railway has very quickly become an object of interest for diplomats, who saw in various aspects of its activities a way to broaden its own influence and importance in Europe and the world[30]. This started a kind of race, for example, for raw materials, which after all, could be exported in an eonomical way by rail. Nevertheless, for its construction or connection to another country's network, it was necessary to obtain a concession, and this became the object of

[29]https://www.fsitaliane.it/content/fsitaliane/en/media/press-releases/2017/9/14/greece--fs-italiane-acquires-full-ownership-of-trainose.html (access: 23.05.2021).

[30]See. eg. E. A. Pratt, Rise of rail power in war and conquest 1833-1914, London 1915, s. 344.

interest of diplomats of particular countries. The exact mechanisms still exist today, as can be seen, for example, in the planning and construction of *Rail Baltica*. Research into the various aspects of railway diplomacy deserves further inquire and analysis.

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