

**THE RECONSTRUCTION OF POST-HABSBURG EAST CENTRAL
EUROPE, 1918-1921**

AUTHOR(S)	Jakub Beneš
COLLABORATOR(S)	
THEMES	World War I
PERIOD	1918-1921

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THE RECONSTRUCTION OF POST-HABSBURG EAST CENTRAL EUROPE, 1918-1921

ABSTRACT

There was nothing inevitable about the way in which East Central European societies reconstructed themselves after the multinational empires of the region collapsed. At first glance, the consolidation of power was smoother in the territories once ruled by the Habsburgs than in those of their Romanov or Ottoman counterparts. Legality, rationalized bureaucracy, and middle-class capitalist accumulation all had stronger traditions here than in the lands to the east or south. Yet this should not obscure the world-shattering character of the Habsburg imperial collapse. The fraught, contested, and incomplete process of reconstruction in these lands remains a challenge to anyone trying to understand the effects of the First World War.

INTRODUCTION



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This guide introduces several major research issues derived from a survey of important and recent literature on the subject of postwar reconstruction in the former Habsburg territories. It also presents repositories (mostly archives) that may be of use in exploring these and other related issues. Some particularly useful collections or fonds are listed under the names of archives. An annotated list of resources accompanies each introduction of a research issue. A comprehensive list of chosen repositories and the highlighted records within them is to be found below. Many of the archival resources

are drawn from the bibliographies of relevant literature, a selection of which is to be found at the end of the article (preference given to English-language publications when available). Others are drawn from the author's personal research experience.

The guide focuses on the states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland for two reasons. First, these states (unlike Austria, Hungary, Romania or Italy) were new in 1918 - or, in the case of Poland, resurrected after over a century - and thus highlight the challenges of reconstruction with special clarity. Second, the author's linguistic limitations have put sources in Hungarian and Romanian out of reach. The major research issues are transnational in scope, meaning that they hint at processes and dynamics that transcend national or nation-state boundaries. To some extent they also transcend the region of post-Habsburg East Central Europe itself and are relevant to the broader post-imperial territories of Eastern and Southeastern Europe at this time.

Still, the importance of a cohesive transnational Habsburg space is apparent. It may even account for some differences between the experiences of the three successor states in question: for one thing, it is plausible that the incorporation of large non-Habsburg territories in the cases of Yugoslavia and Poland made the social, political, and economic consolidation of these states more challenging than in the case of Czechoslovakia. (For issues surrounding the Polish case, see the ARG on "[Parallel Records and Supplementary Material - Poland](#)"). In other words, the integration of the Czech lands and Slovakia (formerly Upper Hungary) proceeded relatively more smoothly than the integration of the Habsburg south Slav lands with Serbia or the integration of Galicia with Poznan. The shared bureaucratic-administrative and economic structures (in spite of important differences between Austrian and Hungarian halves of the empire) likely played a role in this.

One can, of course, argue that each of the three states constitutes a unique case. The possibility of Poland's return to the map of Europe emerged much earlier than in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Various Polish political groupings unanimously desired Polish independence in some form or another. But the complexities of combining territories belonging to three different empires (Hohenzollern, Romanov, and Habsburg) made this exceedingly difficult to execute in practice. The Polish army as it took shape under Józef Piłsudski's leadership made interwar Poland. This was accomplished by defeating an array of opposing national armies (e.g. Lithuanian, Ukrainian), paramilitary groups, and the Bolshevik Red Army. Although Poland lapsed into dictatorship, the understanding of Polish citizenship as it emerged under Piłsudski was arguably less ethnically exclusive than the blueprints that prevailed in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia by the early 1920s.

An independent Czechoslovakia only became a real possibility in the first half of 1918. Yet it had powerful backers among the western Allies, a strong emigrant lobby in the USA, an increasingly independent tenacious fighting force in the form of the Czechoslovak Legions in Russia, Italy and France, and the moral authority of its preeminent philosopher-politician Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. No other state in east central Europe benefited as much from support from abroad. The Czechs and Slovaks, Czechoslovakia's chief constituent nationalities - in terms of political weight, not numbers (ethnic Germans outnumbered Slovaks in the new state), also voluntarily pooled their strength and desired union in autumn 1918. The 30 October declaration of the Slovak political elite of its intention to unify politically with the Czechs was decisive. Yet despite the democratic constitution of the state, it became increasingly clear that Czechs ruled with Slovaks as a junior partner and Germans and Magyars facing various forms of discrimination.

Likely the most tenuous state-building project occurred in Yugoslavia. The disparity between intellectuals' vision of south Slavic brotherhood based on shared (or very similar) language and realities on the ground was sobering. By 1918 it was clear that any south Slav ('Yugoslav') political union would be an agreement between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the concerns of Bosniaks, Macedonians, and non-Slavic Albanians (who were numerous in some Slav-controlled territories) more or less ignored. While Croat, Slovene and even some Habsburg Serb political elites expected a federalist settlement with a degree of ethnic national autonomy, many politicians from the Kingdom of Serbia essentially expected an expansion of Serb power, the wily Nikola Pašić not least. Social revolutionism among the Croat and Serb peasantry of the Croatia-Slavonia and Syrmia caught all of

them off guard. But Belgrade was the winner in this situation. The hardened Serb army imposed order on former Habsburg territories, spelling the end of the short-lived State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia (officially of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes until 1929) was declared on 1 December 1918. Its 1921 constitution sealed the defeat of federalism.

In spite of these differing trajectories, this Archival Research Guide contends that it makes sense not only to compare the dynamics of reconstruction among the three cases, but also to discern common tendencies and patterns. The major research issues are thus conceived in such a manner as to facilitate a transnational view. Perhaps the most important shared aspect of this post-Habsburg space - a direct legacy of the multinational empire itself - was the lack of a clearly preponderant national grouping. The spaces left by other collapsed dynastic empires were still in the orbit of German, Russian, or Turkish power (political, cultural and economic), however weakened these had become. The same cannot be said of 'Austrian' or 'Hungarian' might.

Note of the Author

As with all CENDARI Archival Research Guides, users may add material to this document. Users may, for example, consider that a relevant major research issue is missing and choose to add it. In that case, the user ought to ensure that the new research issue is properly framed, contains ample primary source material, and, if necessary, is logically divided into sub-sections. If a user regards a current existing research issue to be in need of significant reframing or revision, this should only be done in consultation with the original author. Alternately, a user may find that relevant/important resources from a library or archive are missing and choose to add them. In all instances, the source material highlighted in this document should have corresponding entries in the Archival Directory AtOM and links should connect this document with entries in that repository. The user should ensure that any additional source material appears in the 'Resources' section and, if possible, under a Major Resource Issue.

MAJOR RESEARCH ISSUES

Nationalist Elites and the International System

Though often exaggerated, especially in national narratives of the First World War (see the [related ARG](#)), the national independence movements of Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, and South Slavs had powerful friends in the ruling circles of the Western Allies. But the outlines and character of the states that emerged in 1918 won international backing only very late in the conflict. The history of the collusion between various nationalist lobbies and the governments of France, Britain, and the USA is well known. It is likely the best-studied aspect of postwar reconstruction because the nationally inflected histories of the interwar period presented it as a major breakthrough in historical narratives of (supposedly) inevitable national liberation. Nevertheless, the process of nationalist elites negotiating the imperial collapse still asks many questions. Reconceptualizing it in transnational perspective or as a story of crystallizing international norms and dynamics in law, political economy, and state building may open new horizons.

Nationalist Leaders

Archiv akademie věd ČR (Archive of the Czech Academy of Sciences), Prague

- [Beneš Edvard](#)
- [Masaryk Garrigue Tomáš](#)

Archiv Národního muzea (Archive of the National Museum), Prague

- [PAULOVÁ Milada - Maffie](#)
- [BENEŠ Edvard](#)
- [VOSKA Emanuel Victor](#)

Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives), Bratislava

- [Milan Rastislav Štefánik - osobný fond](#)
- [Andrej Hlinka - osobný fond](#)
- [Fedor Houdek - osobný fond](#)
- [Vavro Šrobár - osobný fond](#)

Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), Warsaw

- [Akta Józefa Hallera, 1915-1939](#)
- [Akta Tadeusza Dwernickiego, 1914-1935](#)
- [Akta Władysława Sikorskiego 1894-1940](#)

Hoover Institution Archives

- [Ignace Jan Paderewski](#)
- [Henry Bancroft Smith Papers, 1919-1928](#)

Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Ameryce

Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Londynie

The National Archives, Kew, UK

- [Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966](#)
- [Foreign Office: Registers of General Correspondence](#)

Anti-imperial Organizations and Institutions

Vojenský historický ústav České Republiky (Military historical institute of the Czech Republic), Prague

- Československá národní rada v Paříži

Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Prague

- Pařížský archiv (Materials on the Paris Peace Conference)

Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), Warsaw

- Komitet Narodowy Polski w Paryżu
- Delegacja Polska na Konferencję Pokojową w Paryżu (Materials on the Paris Peace Conference)

The National Archives, Kew, UK

- Foreign Office: Embassy, Poland: General Correspondence
- Foreign Office: Peace Conference of 1919 to 1920: Handbooks

Provisional Governments

Národní Archiv (National Archives), Prague

- Národní výbor 1918, Praha

Moravský zemský archiv v Brně (Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno), Brno

- Národní výbor 1918

Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archives), Zagreb

- Narodno vijeće Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba (This is an indispensable record group for understanding the transition from Habsburg rule to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia - proclaimed 1 December 1918 - in the former Habsburg South Slav lands. It contains a wealth of documentation on political, military, and social upheaval and covers international as well as domestic relations.)

Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives), Bratislava

- Slovenská národná rada

The Wars After the War

A particularly neglected topic in the historiography of the post-Habsburg lands is the extensive warfare that was involved in securing the boundaries of the new states and disciplining their often recalcitrant citizenries. Poland fought well-known wars to secure its eastern borders, but also fought a less studied war against Czechoslovakia in southeast Silesia. Czechoslovakia fought wars against Poland and Hungary. Yugoslavia was wracked by armed irredentist or separatist uprisings in the 'southern regions' of Montenegro, Me-tohia, Kosovo, and Macedonia and faced Austrian paramilitaries and Italian occupation in the north and northwest. Armed resistance to new state structures by ethnic minorities, radicalized peasants, and (on a far smaller scale) Bolshevized workers created internal instability. Examining the extent to which reconstruction meant a continuation of hostilities after the November 1918 ceasefire is a major research agenda for historians.

Military Operations

Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (Central Military Archives), Warsaw

- Dowództwa Okręgów Etapowych
- Dowództwo Frontu Galicyjskiego
- Dowództwo Frontu Galicyjsko-Wołyńskiego
- Armia generała Hallera
- Oddział II Sztabu Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych 1918-1921

Vojenský historický ústav České Republiky (Military historical institute of the Czech Republic), Prague

- Vrchní velitelství čs. vojsk na Slovensku (Wars against Poland and Béla Kun's Hungary, internal turmoil in Slovakia)

Disputed Territories

Österreichisches Staatsarchiv - Archiv der Republik

- Deutschböhmisches Landesregierung (Essential materials on the abortive attempt to establish German autonomy in the ethnic German regions of Bohemia)
- Volkswehr, 1918-1921 (Contains especially valuable sources on the conflict over the Styrian border with Yugoslavia)

Vojenský historický ústav České Republiky (Military historical institute of the Czech Republic), Prague

- Vrchní velitelství čs. vojsk na Slovensku

Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (Central Military Archives), Warsaw

- Dowództwo Żandarmerii 1918-1939

The Meanings of New Citizenship

The First World War changed the relationship between state and society in a number of ways. Women entered the industrial workforce in larger numbers than ever, becoming breadwinners and blurring or recasting gender roles. States moved to unprecedented regulation of their citizens' economic, social, and political lives. Hard-edged cultures of violence emerged with new imagined enemies. While these transformations left an indelible mark on European society everywhere, the added conjuncture of imperial collapse and the emergence of new states in East Central Europe magnified their possible effects and introduced new factors. Universal suffrage for men and women, workers' protection legislation, and agrarian reform were high on political agendas in the new states. But once achieved, what did these things mean for the people concerned? Would social and cultural life be radically different while many state institutions showed less change than expected? What did reconstruction mean at the level of everyday life? Historians are only beginning to answer such questions.

Ego Documents of Ordinary Citizens

[Archiv hlavního města Prahy \(Archive of the capital city Prague\)](#), Prague

- [Berger Vojtěch](#) (Vojtěch Berger was a Czech socialist carpenter who lived and worked in Vienna until the First World War, served as a sapper in the Austro-Hungarian Army, became a communist after the war and continued to work in carpentry in Czechoslovakia . He kept a detailed and acerbic diary for most of his adult life.)

[Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, Universität Wien, Vienna](#) (in particular, see the diary of Heinrich Graf and the memoirs of Alexander Hahn, Anton Hanausek, Hans Fuchs, and Karl Schovanez)

Consolidating State Gains, Managing Losses

[Hrvatski državni arhiv \(Croatian State Archives\)](#), Zagreb

- [Narodno vijeće Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba](#)
- [Zemaljska vlada. Odjel za unutarnje poslove](#)

[Arhiv Republike Slovenije \(Archive of the Republic of Slovenia\)](#), Ljubljana

- [Deželna vlada v Ljubljani](#)
- [Pokrajinska uprava za Slovenijo. Predsedstvo, 1918-1924](#)
- [Pokrajinska uprava za Slovenijo, Oddelek za pravosodje 1913-1924](#)
- [Pokrajinska uprava za Slovenijo, Oddelek za notranje zadeve, 1919-1924](#)

[Národní Archiv \(National Archives\)](#), Prague

- [Ministerstvo vnitra I, Praha](#)

[Vojenský historický ústav České Republiky \(Military historical institute of the Czech Republic\)](#), Prague

[Ministerstvo národní obrany](#)

[Moravský zemský archiv v Brně \(Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno\)](#), Brno

- [Zemský úřad Brno](#)

[Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie \(The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw\)](#), Warsaw

- [Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie](#)
- [Kancelaria Cywilna Naczelnika Państwa w Warszawie](#)

[Österreichisches Staatsarchiv - Archiv der Republik](#)

- [Bundeskanzleramt/Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, 1918-1938](#) (Materials on the Paris Peace Conference and managing territorial losses)
- [Staatsratsprotokolle](#) (Crucial materials on the first six months of German Austria's existence)
- [Volkswehr, 1918-1921](#)

[Österreichisches Staatsarchiv - Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv](#)

- [Justizministerium](#)

[Hoover Institution Archives](#)

- [American National Red Cross records](#)
- [Polish Grey Samaritans](#)

RESOURCES

Archival sources (by country and institution)

Austria

Österreichisches Staatsarchiv - Archiv der Republik

- Deutschböhmisches Landesregierung
- Volkswehr, 1918-1921
- Bundeskanzleramt/Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, 1918-1938
- Staatsratsprotokolle

Österreichisches Staatsarchiv - Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv

- Justizministerium

Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, Universität Wien, Vienna

Czech Republic

Národní Archiv (National Archives), Prague

- České místodržitelství Praha - prezídium - tajné
- České místodržitelství Praha - prezídium
- Národní výbor 1918, Praha
- Ministerstvo vnitra I, Praha

Vojenský historický ústav České Republiky (Military historical institute of the Czech Republic), Prague

- Československá národní rada v Paříži
- Maffie
- Odbočka československé národní rady v Londýně
- Odbočka československé národní rady v Rusku
- Odbočka československé národní rady v USA
- Odbočka československé národní rady v Římě
- Sbírka důležitých dokumentů
- Sbírka opisů důležitých dokumentů
- Československá národní rada v Paříži
- Ministerstvo národní obrany
- Vrchní velitelství čs. vojsk na Slovensku

Archiv Národního muzea (Archive of the National Museum), Prague

- PAULOVÁ Milada – Maffie
- BENEŠ Edvard
- VOSKA Emanuel Victor

Archiv akademie věd ČR (Archive of the Czech Academy of Sciences), Prague

- Beneš Edvard
- Masaryk Garrigue Tomáš

Zemský archiv v Opavě

- Zemské četnické velitelství pro Slezsko Opava
- Policejní ředitelství Moravská Ostrava

Moravský zemský archiv v Brně (Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno), Brno

- Moravské místodržitelství - presidium
- Zemský úřad Brno
- Zemské četnické velitelství Brno
- Četnické stanice Brno-město
- Národní výbor 1918

Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Prague

- Pařížský archiv

Archiv hlavního města Prahy (Archive of the capital city Prague), Prague

- Berger Vojtěch

Croatia

Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archives), Zagreb

- Narodno vijeće Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba
- Zemaljska vlada. Odjel za unutarnje poslove

Slovenia

Arhiv Republike Slovenije (Archive of the Republic of Slovenia), Ljubljana

- Deželna vlada v Ljubljani
- Pokrajinska uprava za Slovenijo. Predsedstvo, 1918-1924
- Pokrajinska uprava za Slovenijo, Oddelek za pravosodje 1913-1924
- Pokrajinska uprava za Slovenijo, Oddelek za notranje zadeve, 1919-1924

Slovakia

Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives), Bratislava

- Slovenská národná rada
- Zbierka dokumentov o národnom oslobodení
- Milan Rastislav Štefánik - osobný fond
- Andrej Hlinka - osobný fond
- Fedor Houdek - osobný fond
- Vavro Šrobár - osobný fond

Poland

Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), Warsaw

- Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie
- Kancelaria Cywilna Naczelnika Państwa w Warszawie
- Komitet Narodowy Polski w Paryżu
- Delegacja Polska na Konferencję Pokojową w Paryżu
- Akta Józefa Hallera, 1915-1939
- Akta Tadeusza Dwernickiego, 1914-1935
- Akta Władysława Sikorskiego 1894-1940

Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (Central Military Archives), Warsaw

- [Dowództwa Okręgów Etapowych](#)
- [Dowództwo Frontu Galicyjskiego](#)
- [Frontu Galicyjsko-Wołyńskiego](#)
- [Dowództwo Żandarmerii 1918-1939](#)
- [Armia generała Hallera](#)
- [Oddział II Sztabu Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych 1918-1921](#)
- [Państwowe w Krakowie \(State Archives of Kraków\), Kraków](#)
- [C.K. Namiestnictwo we Lwowie](#)

United Kingdom**The National Archives, Kew, UK**

- [Foreign Office: Embassy, Poland: General Correspondence](#)
- [Foreign Office: Peace Conference of 1919 to 1920: Handbooks](#)
- [Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966](#)
- [Foreign Office: Registers of General Correspondence](#)

Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Londynie**United States****Hoover Institution Archives**

- [Ignace Jan Paderewski](#)
- [Henry Bancroft Smith Papers, 1919-1928](#)
- [American National Red Cross records](#)
- [Polish Grey Samaritans](#)
- [Poland. Ambasada \(United States\) Records](#)

Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Ameryce**Published sources****Published collections of primary sources**

- [Documents diplomatiques français. Armistices et paix, 1918-1920. Tome I, 27 septembre 1918-17 janvier 1919 \(Brussels, 2014\)](#)
- [Jaroslav César, Milan Otáhal, eds., Hnutí venkovského lidu v českých zemích v letech 1918-1922 \(Prague, 1958\)](#)
- [Ľudovít Holotík, ed., Sociálne a národné hnutie na Slovensku od Októbrovej revolúcie do vzniku československého štátu \(Dokumenty\) \(Bratislava, 1979\)](#)
- [Marek Przeniosło, ed., Narodziny niepodległości w Galicji \(1918–1919\). Wybór tekstów z archiwów lwowskich \(Kielce, 2007\)](#)
- [Ferdo Šišić, ed., Dokumenti o postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, 1914-1919 \(Zagreb, 1920\)](#)

Secondary sources

- [Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia. Origins, History, Politics \(Ithaca and London, 1984\).](#)
- [Omer Bartov, Eric D. Weitz, Shatterzone of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands \(Bloomington IN, 2013\).](#)

- [Juraj Benko, Bolševizmus medzi východom a západom \(1900-1920\) \(Bratislava, 2012\).](#)
- [Mark Biondich, Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization \(Toronto, 2000\).](#)
- [Jochen Böhrer, "Enduring Violence: The Postwar Struggles in East-Central Europe, 1917-21," Journal of Contemporary History 2015, Vol 50 \(1\): 58-77.](#)
- [Norman Davies, White Eagle, Red Star, the Polish-Soviet War, 1919–20 \(London, 2003\).](#)
- [Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War \(Oxford, 2012\).](#)
- [Robert Gerwarth and Mark Edele, "The Limits of Demobilization: Global Perspectives on the Aftermath of the Great War," Journal of Contemporary History 2015, Vol 50 \(1\): 3-14.](#)
- [Hannes Leidinger, Verena Moritz, Gefangenschaft – Revolution – Heimkehr. Die Bedeutung der Kriegsgefangenenproblematik für die Geschichte des Kommunismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1917-1920 \(Vienna, 2003\).](#)
- [John W. Mason, The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918 \(London, 1985\).](#)
- [Mark Mazower, Dark Continent: Europe's twentieth century \(New York, 1998\).](#)
- [Daniel E. Miller, Forging Political Compromise: Antonin Svehla and the Czechoslovak Republican Party, 1918-1933 \(Pittsburgh, 1999\).](#)
- [Brent Mueggenberg, The Czecho-Slovak Struggle for Independence, 1914-1920 \(Jefferson, 2014\).](#)
- [Aviel Roshwald, Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires. Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914-1923 \(London and New York, 2001\).](#)
- [Ivan Šedivý, Češi, České Země, a Velká Válka 1914-1918 \(Prague, 2001\).](#)
- [Piotr Szlanta, "Der lange Abschied der Polen von Österreich," in Geschichte der Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918, Vol. 11 \(Vienna, 2014\).](#)

Extra Material**Relevant articles in 1914-1918 Online****Thematic Survey Articles**

- [The Paris Peace Conference and its Consequences](#)

Regional Thematic Articles

- [Historiography 1918-Today \(Austria-Hungary\)](#)
- [Occupation during and after the War \(East Central Europe\)](#)
- [Post-war Societies \(South East Europe\)](#)
- [Poland](#)

Encyclopedic Entries

- [Beneš, Edvard](#)
- [Czechoslovak Legions \(Russia\)](#)
- [Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue](#)
- [Haller, Józef](#)
- [Paderewski, Ignacy Jan](#)
- [Piłsudski, Józef](#)