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Oskar Halecki – the advocate of Central and Eastern European countries in the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations (1922-1925)

Outline: This article discusses the activities of Oskar Halecki, a professor of the University of Warsaw, in the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations. He sought to win support for the further development of intellectual life in the economically ruined countries of Central and Eastern Europe between 1922-1925. This paper focuses on the concepts and motives that drove this eminent expert in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, and the effects of the methods he employed in seeking to establish and consolidate intellectual cooperation between CEE and western countries.

Keywords: League of Nations, Central and Eastern Europe, International Intellectual Cooperation

Oskar Halecki, one of Poland's most prominent and internationally known 20th century historians, was secretary and later expert adviser of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) of the League of Nations between 1922-1925. At that time he acted for the reconstruction and development of intellectual life in the newly established or reborn Central and Eastern European countries. This sketch of his activities in that role is based on materials from the League of Nations Archives in Geneva, the UNESCO Archives in Paris, the Department of Manuscripts of Warsaw University Library and Halecki's own articles.

In the Committee, consisting of twelve people and appointed by the Council of the League of Nations in mid-May 1922, Halecki was undoubtedly the finest expert on national and religious relations in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)¹. He supplied more information on this subject as the expert of the Polish delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919². In the summer of 1921, Inazo Nitobe,

1 See A. M. Brzeziński, *Oskar Halecki – sekretarz Komisji Międzynarodowej Współpracy Intelktualnej Ligi Narodów (1922-1924)*, "Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki", R. 55: 2010, no. 1, pp. 7-35.

2 S. Kutrzeba, *Kongres, Traktat i Polska*, Warsaw (1919), pp. 55, 57, 139-140.

the Under-Secretary General of the League of Nations and former professor of the Imperial Universities of Kyoto and Tokyo, an economist and political scientist, offered this Polish historian employment in the International Offices Section (IOS) of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. The thirty-one year old Halecki was already by then a professor and head of the Department of History of Eastern Europe at the University of Warsaw³.

Halecki's experience gained at home, i.e. his early contact with different cultures (his father was an Austro-Hungarian general, his mother – the daughter of a Croatian *zhupan* (a local official in the kingdom of Hungary-Croatia)) and the family genealogy, influenced his perception of the complicated history of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and their current post-war problems. Representatives of “almost all CEE nations”⁴ were among his ancestors from both his father's and his mother's side. Halecki was a polyglot which gave him an advantage in conducting research into this region's history, in that he could read source documents in their original languages. He could speak and write not only German, French and English “with almost equal ease”, but he could also read texts in Romanian, and Slavonic and Scandinavian languages, not to mention Latin and Greek⁵.

In the autumn of 1922, the ICIC took steps to conduct surveys aimed at gathering information on intellectual life in various countries, especially in the newly established or reborn CEE countries. Halecki, being professionally and linguistically well-qualified for the task, was chosen to conduct and draw up a survey. The Polish historian, as secretary of the ICIC, was the only person who provided a link between the Committee and CEE centres of scholarship; this provided some counter-balance to West European scholars who were predominantly chosen to sit on the Committee, which was the effect of the political complexion of the Council of the League of Nations. Due to Halecki's efforts and with the support of French diplomacy, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, a professor of physics at the Sorbonne and honorary professor of the University of Warsaw, joined the ICIC as a representative of Polish science⁶. The first chairman of the ICIC was the philosopher Henri Bergson,

3 For more on Halecki's academic career see: *Halecki Oskar*, [in:] *Biogramy uczonych polskich, part 1: Social sciences, part 1, z. 1: A-J*, eds. A. Śródka, P. Szczawiński, Wrocław 1983, pp. 451-455; M. Wierzbicka, *Halecki Oskar*, [in:] *Słownik historyków polskich*, ed. M. Prosińska-Jacki, Warszawa 1994, pp. 173-174; M. Morawiec *Oskar Halecki*, [in:] *Europa-Historiker, ein biographisches Handbuch*, Hg. H. Duchhardt u.a., Bd. 1, Göttingen 2006, pp. 215-239; J. Cisek, *Oskar Halecki. Historyk. Szermierz Wolności*, Warsaw 2009, pp. 7-46.

4 J. Kłoczowski, *Oskar Halecki i jego walka o miejsce Polski w Europie*, [in:] *Z dziejów polityki i dyplomacji polskiej. Studia poświęcone pamięci Edwarda hr. Raczyńskiego, Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na wychodźstwie*, ed. H. Bułhak, Warsaw 1994, p. 397.

5 League of Nations, Archives United Nations, Geneva (LNA), SDN. S.787. Section 33/16202/16202, Nitobe's writings on December 14, 1922.

6 It should be mentioned that Quai d'Orsay accepted M. Skłodowska-Curie's candidacy assuming that the scholar in the international forum would be associated more with France than with Poland. See A. M. Brzeziński, *Z działalności Marii Skłodowskiej-Curie w Komisji Międzynarodowej Współpracy Intelktualnej Ligii Narodów (1922-1934)*, “Przegląd Nauk Historycznych”, Łódź 2006, R. V, no. 2 (10),

a professor at the Collège de France and a member of the French Academy, and his deputy was Gillbert Murray, a classicist and professor at Oxford. The Committee's rapporteur was Gonzague de Reynold, a Swiss intellectual and professor of French literature at the University of Bern⁷.

In assuming his duties as the ICIC Secretary, Halecki expressed the view that "countries, which came into existence between Germany and Russia and on the territory of the former Austro-Hungary and Turkey"⁸, should be quickly incorporated into the international intellectual cooperation of the League of Nations in order to gain indispensable help to revive and develop academic life. He felt he had a particular duty to serve the interests of Polish scholarship⁹. Halecki also claimed that the scale and form of help for the CEE countries, particularly affected by the aftermath of the war, as well as the will and readiness of the international community to undertake this initiative, were of equal importance. He wrote that "this help in research scholarship initiated by the League of Nations would not be superfluous if it was limited to providing several dozen or several hundred volumes of professional literature, or to facilitating researchers' visits to other countries. It represented a call for international solidarity in culture at critical moments in post-war international relations, and created new bodies to facilitate cultural relations between nations"¹⁰.

Halecki's involvement in initiatives supporting intellectual life in CEE countries was a consequence of his scholarly interests in the history of the region. His involvement was linked to his thesis on the crucial importance of CEE which he put forward on the basis of research carried out during World War I. He also sought to prove that Central and Eastern Europe (excluding Russia) is a historical community despite its existing cultural and religious differences. He focused his thoughts on the need for harmonious coexistence of nations of this part of Europe, between Germany and Russia, in some form of federation, guaranteeing their national and cultural identities. According to Halecki, the complete realization of the federal principle

p. 144; J. Piskurewicz, *Między nauką a polityką. Maria Skłodowska-Curie w laboratorium i w Lidze Narodów*, Lublin 2007, pp. 90-94.

7 The remaining members of the ICIC were: Kristine Bonnevie (Norway), Jules Destrée (Belgium), Albert Einstein (Germany), Francesco Ruffini (Italy), Leonardo de Torrès-Quevedo (Spain), Aloysio de Castro (Brazil). George Ellory Hale represented the USA belonging to the League of Nations, Robert A. Millian was his deputy. Dilip N. Bannerjea, a professor of political economics (University in Calcutta) was chosen as a representative of Indian culture. I. Nitobe who was appointed ex officio to the Committee as the first chairman of the IOS was supposed to represent the civilisations of the Far East. William Martin, a Swiss journalist, was a representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO). see the characteristic of ICIC members presented by Halecki, *Komisja Współpracy Umysłowej* (1), "Przegląd Współczesny", 1923, no. 9-10, pp. 37-53.

8 O. Halecki, *Liga Narodów a organizacja współpracy umysłowej*, [in:] *Liga Narodów. Siedem odczytów ogłoszonych na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim w roku akademickim 1924/1925 poprzedzonych wstępem Dr Aleksandra Skrzyńskiego ministra spraw zagranicznych*, Warsaw 1925, p. 120.

9 Vd. A. M. Brzeziński, *Sprawy polskie w działalności Oskara Haleckiego – sekretarza Komisji Międzynarodowej Współpracy Intelktualnej Ligi Narodów (1922-1924)*, [in:] *Oskar Halecki i jego wizja Europy*, ed. M. Dąbrowska vol. 1, Warsaw-Łódź 2012, pp. 38-55.

10 O. Halecki, *Liga Narodów*, p. 122.

was “the Jagellonian union” from the 14th and 16th century based on freedom and tolerance; this union comprised Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia as its constant members, and Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia and Romania which sometimes came within its orbit. Halecki looked to this system for solutions for CEE in modern times¹¹. In his opinion, the rebirth and development of intellectual life in CEE countries was probably one of the most important elements favouring mutual understanding and close relations between the CEE nations in the post-war reality.

While preparing discussion materials for the inaugural session of the ICIC in Geneva (August 1-5, 1922), Halecki collected information on the needs of academic and research institutions in the CEE countries in furtherance of their intellectual development¹². During this session, the Committee found the time to discuss the most pressing needs and decided to get acquainted with the situation of the countries whose “intellectual life is particularly threatened”, with the needs of Austria and Poland being identified as priority areas of concern. Gonzague Reynold and Maria Skłodowska-Curie were to prepare reports on this subject. Halecki substantially helped M. Skłodowska-Curie draw up her *Interim report* on the condition of intellectual life in Poland¹³.

The Council of the League of Nations got acquainted with both documents during its sessions on September 13 and October 4, 1922. Being impressed by the information contained in those documents about the difficult financial situation of institutions and scientific circles in Austria and Poland, the Council decided to conduct a survey of the conditions and needs of intellectual life in all countries. “National committees” on intellectual cooperation were also appointed to liaise with the ICIC. The committees’ conclusions concerning various forms of help for research institutions, universities and academic staff, were sent to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, which then examined and evaluated the findings and forwarded them to people or institutions that could help fulfil the ICIC’s recommendations¹⁴.

11 More on this topic: K. Baczkowski, *Oskara Haleckiego jagiellońska wizja dziejów*, [in:] *Oskar Halecki i jego wizja Europy*, pp. 56-77.

12 O. Halecki collected the needed material in Geneva, Vienna, Prague and Berlin. He used official publications and information gained from correspondence with the most important scientific research institutions from different countries (O. Halecki, *Komisja... (I)*, pp. 33-34).

13 On the basis of Halecki’s “outline”, Maria Skłodowska-Curie drew up an *Interim report on the condition of intellectual life in Poland*, in which she drew attention to the negative effects of the partitions of Poland on Polish people, especially the policies of Russification and Germanization that the Poles had been subjected to. She stressed that although Poland “was almost completely devastated” during World War I, twenty-six institutions and scientific associations existed in 1920. Nine of them established by “the young country”; there were also five higher institutions and seven hundred and fifty-three high schools. For the text of this memorandum see: Archives du Ministère des Relations Extérieures, Paris, SDN, vol. 1843. SDN.CCI. A.63.1922. XII. *Note Provisoire sur l’état de la vie intellectuelle en Pologne soumise au Conseil par la Commission de Coopération Intellectuelle et approuvée par le Conseil le 13 septembre 1922*, pp. 5154. see A. M. Brzeziński, *Z działalności Marii Skłodowskiej Curie*, pp. 149–150.

14 The Council of the League of Nations approved this method of the ICIC’s cooperation with individual countries during the session of January 30, 1923. It was decided that the Secretariat of the League of Nations would have the right to make an appeal to governments to support actions aiming

As the Secretary of the ICIC, it was mainly Halecki who actioned those decisions. Firstly, he and Reynold undertook the task of drawing up four types of surveys which were then sent separately to governments, universities, scientific societies and “experts”, i.e. scientists, artists, professors and publishers¹⁵. They started sending surveys in December 1922 and the final report was published in French by July 1, 1923, before the planned session of the ICIC. Halecki also edited the covering letter to respondents signed by H. Bergson¹⁶.

Secondly, Halecki was tasked with conducting and drafting the surveys regarding twelve CEE member countries of the League of Nations – Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (KSHS), Albania and Greece¹⁷. The Polish historian had to examine the condition of intellectual life and its needs in countries which were new arrivals on the political map of post-war Europe – “from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea”¹⁸. Halecki used the expression “Countries of Central and Eastern Europe” in reference to this region in his official writings and documents relating to League of Nations affairs¹⁹.

Soviet Russia did not participate in these surveys because of the hostile attitude of the Bolshevik authorities towards the League of Nations; as Halecki wrote, they created “direct insurmountable difficulties” in conducting surveys. It was obvious that the situation of intellectual life in that country was “more dramatic”, and many Russian scholars went abroad²⁰.

at creating “national committees”. See A. M. Brzeziński, *Polska w systemie międzynarodowej współpracy intelektualnej Ligi Narodów (1922-1939)*, “Dzieje Najnowsze”, R. XXXIV, 2002, no. 2, p. 4.

15 “For many less known countries – as Halecki stressed – which did not have good international relations, this survey, sent to all parts of the world, was the only source of information allowing them to state their demands and needs publicly” (O. Halecki, *Liga Narodów*, p. 122).

16 The Warsaw University Library, the Department of Manuscripts, K. Lutostanski’s materials, no. akc. 160, vol. 31. A copy of the ICIC survey. *vid. S. W. Pycior, Poland’s Intellectual Institutions after the First World War: Contemporary Inquiries and Reports*, “The Polish Review”, vol. 46, no. 3, 2001, p. 347.

17 Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were founder members of the League of Nations; Albania, Austria, Bulgaria and Finland joined the organization in mid-December 1920; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became members on August 22, 1921, and Hungary – on December 18, 1922 (S. Sierpowski, *Narodziny Ligi Narodów, Powstanie, organizacja i zasady działania*, Poznań 1984, pp. 258-259).

18 *League of Nations. Intellectual Co-Operation Organisation. National Committees on Intellectual Co-Operation*, Geneva 1937, p. 6.

19 In this period, Halecki also used the term “new middle Europe” in his articles (*Liga Narodów*, p. 123). The term “East-Central Europe”, used by Halecki later on, was the result of his deliberations on the need to distinguish the area between the East and the West of Europe. His final concept on this subject was formed during World War II and after the imposition of spheres of influences in Europe by the “Big Three.” Halecki presented the “Big Three” [in:] *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, London-New York 1950 (Polish version: *Historia Europy – jej granice i podziały*, translated by J. M. Kłocowski, Lublin 1994) and *Bordenlands of Western Civilisation. A History of East Central Europe*, Fordham University 1952.

20 O. Halecki, *Komisja Współpracy Umysłowej (II)*, “Przegląd Współczesny”, 1923, no. 12, p. 34.

Gonzague de Reynold obliged himself to draw up a report on the situation of Russian émigré intellectuals²¹.

Due to the unusual, catastrophic economic and financial situation of Austria, the Council of the League of Nations decided to carry out a more detailed survey in that country. Alfons Dopsch, a professor of medieval history at the University of Vienna and member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, whom the Council of the League of Nations appointed as a permanent correspondent of the ICIC, undertook this task²². Besides, the Council turned to the ICIC to organize immediate international help for Austrian institutions and intellectual circles. Bergson, Reynold and Halecki wrote an appeal to help Austrian intellectuals and intellectual life as such in Austria, and signed it on behalf of the ICIC. This appeal, dated November 4, 1922, was an official document of the League of Nations addressed to universities, academies and scientific societies of “all countries”²³. Its distribution, in approximately one thousand copies, was an immediate success. Halecki wrote, “a number of French, English, American, Italian, Spanish and even Indian institutions informed the Committee about the resolutions they had taken in response to this appeal”²⁴.

Another important task for Halecki was to establish contacts with new “national committees” on intellectual cooperation. The preparation of the answers to the ICIC survey in December 1922 was a favourable opportunity to get these committees up and running. “National committees” in CEE countries were the first to be established. Intellectuals and scientific societies involved in forming those committees hoped that the League of Nations would help them overcome their existing financial difficulties and develop intellectual life²⁵.

Halecki corresponded with people or institutions that initiated those committees giving them the necessary information and establishing the first official contacts on behalf of the ICIC²⁶. In Czechoslovakia, it was Josef Šusta, a professor of medieval history at Charles University in Prague, a member of the Czech Academy of Art and Science, and the Minister of Education in the years 1920-1921, who was engaged

21 See G. de Reynold, *Les groupes academiques russes. Rapport sur la situation et l'organisation des intellectuels russes hors de Russie, Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel, deuxième série*, no. 34, Genève 1923/24, pp. 1-40.

22 The Council of the League of Nations decided to appoint A. Dopsch on October 4, 1922. Halecki wrote that Dopsch “carried out a more detailed survey than those produced in other countries, and organized a small office at the institute of economic and cultural history at the University of Vienna and gives the Committee noteworthy applications which come in to this office” (O. Halecki, *Komisja... (II)*, p. 35).

23 Text: LNA. SDN.C.731.M.443, Genève 1922, XII, pp. 1-2; H. Bergson, *Écrits et paroles. Textes Rassemblés* par R.-M. Mossé-Bastide, vol. 3, Paris 1959, pp. 520-522.

24 O. Halecki, *Komisja... (II)*, p. 35.

25 *League of Nations. Intellectual Co-Operation Organisation. National Committees on Intellectual Co-Operation*, p. 6 and ff; O. Halecki, *Komisja... (II)*, pp. 36-37.

26 The Warsaw University Library, the Department of Manuscripts, K. Lutostański's materials, no. akc. 160, vol. 31. Halecki's letters to K. Lutostański on February 6 and 8; March 3; August 13, 1923.

in committee work. The Czechoslovak “national committee” consisted of representatives of the Academy of Sciences, the Masaryk Academy of Labour and the Czech Scientific Society. In Hungary, Albert Berzeviczy, a politician, historian and writer, a former Minister of Culture (1903-1905), since 1905 the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was the organizer of a sixteen-person “national committee”. In addition, Dopsch organized the Austrian Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, which began its activity on April 28, 1923. Jovan Cvijič, a professor of geography, a former President of the University of Belgrade, since 1921 the President of the Serbian Royal Academy, played the same role in Yugoslavia. Cvijič “turned to the government in this matter, willing to link this action, more closely than elsewhere, to the Ministry of Education” emphasized Halecki²⁷. Andreas Andreades, a professor of statistics and finance at the University of Athens, established the Greek Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. The Romanian Academy of Sciences in Bucharest organized the committee in Romania. The universities in Kaunas, Tartu, Riga and Sofia did the same in Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Bulgaria. In Helsinki, there was a “mixed committee” composed of Finnish and Swedish scientific societies. In Albania, the public library in Tirana played the same role. The “Committee for the League of Nations” established in January 1923 at the Mianowski Fund performed the role of the Polish “national committee”²⁸. To sum up, by July 1923, “national committees” came into existence in eleven countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. “National committees” were formed in western countries a bit later²⁹.

Halecki had the most laborious task compared with other ICIC members and experts, each of whom was supposed to draw up a survey for one country. Despite these difficulties, he prepared the initial report on the condition and needs of intellectual life of CEE countries. Moreover, Halecki produced three brochures in French about the situation of universities and other higher education institutions in Czechoslovakia and two brochures about the same problems in Hungary, all of which were ready for print in accordance with the ICIC decision on publishing surveys³⁰.

27 O. Halecki, *Komisja... (II)*, p. 37.

28 It complied with M. Skłodowska-Curie’s suggestions that the Mianowski Fund should be nominated to liaison between the Polish community and the ICIC. The term “Polish Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation” was also used in documents and consisted of Professor Louis Sziperl (chairman), an organic chemist and Vice President of the Mianowski Fund, Professor Franciszek Czubalski, a physiologist, and Joseph Ujejski, a historian of Polish literature. More [in:] A. M. Brzeziński, *Polska Komisja Międzynarodowej Współpracy Intelktualnej (1924-1939)*, Łódź 2001, p. 11.

29 On J. Destrée’s initiative, the first western European “national committee” on intellectual cooperation was established in Belgium in 1922. Two years later “national committees” were established in France, Norway and Switzerland. (See *League of Nations. Intellectual Co-Operation Organisation. National Committees*, pp. 25, 59, 102).

30 See *Tchécoslovaquie. Les universités. Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel*, no. 33, Genève 1923, p. 11; *Tchécoslovaquie. Les sciences techniques. Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel*, no.

Halecki presented the initial report on the condition of intellectual life in CEE countries during the first day of the II ICIC session (July 26 – August 2, 1923). He stressed that compared with other countries, intellectual life in CEE countries was exposed to the greatest financial difficulties. On the other hand, despite those difficulties, intellectual life was making “remarkable progress” after the restoration of peace in this region. There were new centres of intensive intellectual activity and the number of educationally-orientated institutions and their effectiveness increased. New universities were established, existing ones were reorganized and expanded³¹.

Halecki stated that universities and scientific institutions in the twelve countries put forward similar solutions to their existing difficulties caused mainly by the lack of finances. The Bulgarian authorities asked the League of Nations to establish an international scientist and student exchange programme. Greek professors presented a similar suggestion to form an international publication and scientist exchange programme. The management of the library in Tirana did not have funds to purchase foreign publications. Therefore, it was suggested to start an international book and scientific journal exchange programme. Researchers of the Meteorological Institute in Bucharest could not obtain apparatus to conduct research. Professors from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes asked the League of Nations for funds to buy books and study aids. The government of Estonia informed that scientific observatories were in urgent need of astronomical and meteorological equipment, and the needs of their libraries regarding books and magazines. Scientific societies and libraries in Finland had huge difficulties in purchasing foreign journals because of the Finnish currency’s depreciation. Also in Poland, institutions and scientific societies needed foreign journals and other scientific publications³².

Halecki, in his final speech, proposed solutions to overcome the existing difficulties in intellectual life in CEE countries. In his opinion, the funds provided by the League of Nations or other countries would not solve the problem³³. The needs of CEE countries were too immense and the western European economies were not

39, Genève 1923, p. 9; *Le livre comme instrument de travail et d'éducation. Tchécoslovaquie. Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel*, no. 37, Genève 1923, p. 11; *Hongrie. Situation générale. Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel*, no. 20, Genève 1923, p. 15; *Hongrie. Les universités et les hautes écoles. Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel*, no. 21, Genève 1923, p. 19.

31 Halecki mentioned this issue during the lecture delivered at the University of Warsaw in autumn 1924. He talked about the “revolutions” which took place in academic life after 1918 in Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Bulgaria and Greece (O. Halecki, *Liga Narodów*, pp. 120-121).

32 Archives UNESCO. Paris. SDN.ICIC. Procès-verbaux de la deuxième session, Genève, 26 Juillet-2 Août 1923, Genève, le 1er Septembre 1923. Halecki’s report was in the form of an official document LN: SDN.ICIC. 60, Genève, le 20 Juillet 1923 (ALN, SDN 1919-1927, 13C, R. 1057).

33 Neither the ICIC nor the League of Nations had such funds. Bergson and Skłodowska-Curie thought that the ICIC should have the right to accept subsidies from different institutions. During the Fourth League Assembly Session on September 23, 1923, the President of the ICIC made such an appeal and gained its acceptance (*L'Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle, 1925-1946*, Paris 1946, pp. 21-22).

strong enough to meet them. Instead of financial aid, Halecki suggested taking up other measures such as: the creation of an international loan and credit fund which would help scientific institutions to obtain money for the implementation of specific projects, the free exchange of scientific publications and an international teacher and student exchange programme. The low price of tickets, free passports and visas for scientists and students, could help. He also stated that the ICIC and the Secretariat of the League of Nations could be a kind of clearing house for the free exchange of scientific publications between the member countries. In his opinion, the ICIC should encourage the countries involved to negotiate bilateral agreements on exchange programmes for scientists and students rather than wait for an international agreement³⁴.

On July 27, during the ICIC session, Halecki presented information about the established “national committees” and intellectual cooperation in the CEE region. He expressed the optimistic view that similar committees in Western Europe would help countries where intellectual life was “especially endangered” by delivering books, journals, apparatus as well as through exchanges of top academics. He also suggested that a conference of CEE national committee representatives should be organized to discuss organizational matters and principles of mutual intellectual cooperation³⁵.

The ICIC broadly supported this idea. The Committee invited national committee representatives from twelve CEE countries to the Third Assembly in Paris (December 5-8, 1923). During the session, suggestions (rather than binding resolutions) about the organization and activity of the national committees in promoting intellectual development were adopted. The committees were supposed not only to mediate between national scientific institutions and the ICIC, but also to co-participate in research undertaken by the ICIC on the conditions of intellectual life in different countries. The national committees were entitled to forward the request of institutions or researchers for books and scientific apparatus and request the facilitation of research visits and academic exchanges between universities to the Secretariat of the ICIC or directly to the national committees of other countries. Simultaneously, the committees were obliged to meet these requests “as far as it is possible”. National committees were to constitute the only coordination centres for their whole countries, among others to popularize the League of Nations’ aim of “ameliorating all international friction on cultural grounds”³⁶.

34 LNA, SDN 1919-1927, 13C, R. 1057. SDN.ICIC. 60, Genève, le 20 Juillet 1923. *vid.* S. W. Pycior, *Poland's Intellectual Institutions*, pp. 352-353.

35 Archives UNESCO, SDN.CCI, Procès-verbaux de la deuxième session, Genève 26 Juillet – 2 Août 1923, Genève, le 1^{er} septembre 1923.

36 Each “national committee” should cooperate with representatives of institutions or societies appointed to promote intellectual life, academies and main scientific societies, universities, national libraries, bibliographic institutions and publication exchange offices, national federation of intellectual workers (Archives UNESCO, SDN.CCI, Procès-verbaux de la troisième session, Genève 5-8 Décembre 1923, Genève, le 1^{er} Janvier 1924).

On March 31, 1924, Halecki finished his work in the IOS and as a Secretary of the ICIC. However, Nitobe and the ICIC members recognized the desirability of Halecki's continued cooperation with them as an expert. He agreed to this proposition as this post allowed him to work both in the Committee and at the University of Warsaw. In mid-March 1924, Eric Drummond, the First Secretary-General of the League of Nations, accepted Nitobe's motion to appoint Halecki as an ICIC expert as from April 1, 1924. The Polish historian was also a member of the Steering Committee of the International Office University Information (IOUI) in Geneva. Its task was to conduct research and facilitate cooperation between universities from different countries³⁷.

In his new role at the ICIC, Halecki continued to show a great deal of initiative in terms of help for the development of intellectual life in CEE countries. In April 1924, he wrote to Professor Bronisław Dembiński about his future tasks as the ICIC expert: "Drawing up a report on the condition and needs of science in all countries lying between Germany and Russia and providing information about Slavonic universities for the Office Bulletin would be one of my duties in the immediate future"³⁸.

During the Fourth Plenary Session of the ICIC in Geneva on July 25-29, 1924, Halecki presented a detailed report on the intellectual life surveys in the CEE region³⁹. On the first day of the session, he began his speech by stating that despite language barriers and traditional differences, there were several common elements for the countries in this region. Looking at the political map of Europe in 1815, we can notice that none of those countries existed and intellectual life there had been deteriorating sometimes even for centuries. Surveys prepared mainly by national committees on intellectual cooperation showed that there were twelve counties of different size where a new intellectual reality was being created at that time. Difficulties, mainly of an economic and financial nature, hindered intellectual life in CEE countries. Halecki stressed that Hungary had the most serious financial situation. However, demands for subsidies appeared rarely in surveys. It resulted from the fact that the financial situation in some countries, especially in Poland, had improved recently. Another reason for that is the self-respect of respondents; they did not want to suggest anything which could be considered as "alms." Halecki

37 The Subcommittee for International Relations of the ICIC tabled a motion to appoint the IOUI. The ICIC managed to convince the authorities of the League of Nations to establish the IOUI. The Assembly of the League of Nations voted on the project on September 27, 1923. G. de Reynold was the chairman of works of the Steering Committee's IOUI. The IOUI began to publish a quarterly (then bimonthly) titled *Bulletin de l'Office International de Renseignements Univeristaires* in 1924 (Pham-Thi-Tu, *La Coopération Intellectuelle sous la Société des Nations*, Genève 1962, pp. 84-85).

38 The PAN Archives. The Branch in Poznań (further – APANP), P III 34, j. 130. Halecki's letter to Dembiński, written in Cracow on April 24, 1924.

39 The ICIC session was devoted to discuss the surveys' results of the condition of intellectual life in Europe and outside. Gonzague de Reynold assessed the course of the surveys and informed that 40 brochures about the condition of intellectual life in individual countries were published and twenty brochures were ready for publication (LNA, SDN.CCI, Procès-verbaux de la quatrième session, Genève 25-29 juillet 1924), Genève, le 25 août 1924.

suggested creating indirect forms of financial help for the rebirth and development of intellectual life in these countries through:

1. the creation of an international loan and credit fund,
2. an easier financial system for academic and student exchange programmes between universities,
3. the creation of an international scholarship fund for professors and students.

Halecki favoured establishing “national university offices” following the example of the existing ones in Western Europe, to take advantage of their experience in cooperation between universities⁴⁰. He also proposed a meeting of directors of university offices in western countries with national committee representatives from CEE countries to establish such institutions. He stressed that the IOUI should take CEE countries into consideration when promoting international cooperation between universities. He said that CEE countries which are still little known, wanted to establish close contacts and intellectual cooperation with Western Europe, to learn about their culture and popularize their own achievements in this area. Therefore, cultural institutes and international summer youth courses run on a reciprocal basis, could make it easier. The establishment of an international scientific journal, where abstracts in a “common” language written by scholars in less known languages were to be published, would be beneficial for the mutual understanding of intellectual achievements.

The ICIC did not have any funds for the development of international intellectual cooperation. Therefore, Halecki recommended establishing direct bilateral contacts between national committees. He pointed out that Poland and Switzerland had already signed an intellectual cooperation agreement⁴¹. He argued that the ICIC should facilitate the establishment of contacts and agreements between the national committees of the CEE countries with Western European countries. Halecki called for another ICIC meeting of national committee representatives to discuss the rules of mutual intellectual help for one of the CEE countries in 1925. He ended his speech with a remark that university graduates did not have any prospects of pursuing their research interests and dedicating themselves exclusively to scholarship. This was a particularly dangerous phenomenon for the development of research scholarship in those countries. In his view, the ICIC had a mission to deal with this matter of facilitating research opportunities for young scientists.

Halecki's report was the basis for the Subcommittee on Interuniversity Relations' proposals in their part titled *Intellectual life in Central and Eastern Europe*. The ICIC

40 For example, the Universities Bureau of the British Empire (UBBE) with its registered office in London had such experience. In 1912 during the Congress of representatives from fifty-three universities of the British Empire, it was decided to establish the bureau. (The National Archives, London, Ministry of Education, ED. 25/1. Alexander Hill's letter, an honorary secretary of the UBBE, to Halecki on February 28, 1923.) I would like to thank Artur Rosiak, PhD, for his help in obtaining a copy of this letter.

41 See A. M. Brzeziński, *Oskar Halecki – inicjator polsko-szwajcarskiej współpracy intelektualnej w ramach Ligi Narodów*, "Przegląd Nauk Historycznych", Łódź 2010, R. IX, no. 1, pp. 181-199.

approved Halecki's proposals on regenerating intellectual relations between CEE and western countries on the last day of the session. It was decided to:

1. oblige the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property to consider an international project of loan and credit funds for professors going abroad for research purposes and to buy study aids for universities,
2. ask the Assembly of the League of Nations to appeal to member states to introduce discounts in passport fees and train tickets for professors going abroad for scholarly purposes,
3. authorise the University Subcommittee to establish contacts with the main institutes in western countries which were appointed to conduct research on the problems of CEE countries, especially the Institute d'Études Slaves in Paris, the School of Slavonic Studies in London and the Instituto per l'Europa Orientale in Rome,
4. recommend that national committees should take action to expand the activities of cultural institutes abroad to strengthen intellectual bonds between CEE and western countries,
5. encourage meetings between national committees in order to ensure inter-university cooperation,
6. deal with the problem of post-graduate studies "referring particularly to some CEE countries", but equally applying to "all other countries of the world."

The ICIC members had no qualms in accepting the first five proposals. However, Hendrik Lorentz, an outstanding Dutch physicist⁴², doubted whether the ICIC had the possibility to organize post-graduate studies or undertake the necessary steps to implement these proposals. Halecki said that it was not about "dealing or intervening" but about examining the possibilities to facilitate research for university graduates. In his opinion, there should be the profession of a research scholar who, having graduated from university, could devote himself to research. It was impossible then, even though the aspirations of graduates to pursue their research interests further, was evident.

Maria Skłodowska-Curie supported Halecki and stressed the problem of granting scholarships which should be national as well as international. Scholars in affluent countries, which had more opportunities of that sort, used the majority of the granted national scholarships. Skłodowska-Curie proposed to oblige the University Subcommittee to discuss the problem of improving the system of granting national and international scholarships. In her opinion, foundations granting scholarships should be made aware of the approved decisions. The ICIC approved the Polish scientist's proposal⁴³.

42 Hendrik Lorentz (a Nobel prizewinner in 1902) was appointed an ICIC member in 1923. In ≈1925, he was chosen as the President of the Committee when Bergson resigned from this post due to ill-health. Lorentz was in charge of the ICIC works until his death in 1928. J. Kolasa, *International Intellectual Cooperation (The League Experience and the Beginnings of UNESCO)*, Wrocław 1962, pp. 168-169, wrote about the staff changes in the ICIC.

43 J. Piskurewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

Halecki played an important role in the ICIC's formal decisions on the development of intellectual life in CEE countries. He wrote to Bronisław Dembiński that he guided through "all university motions successfully at the Committee Plenum"⁴⁴.

The problem of help for CEE countries was discussed not only by the ICIC but also during the Fifth League Assembly Session in September 1924. The proposal of an international loan fund for the intellectual development of economically ruined countries, submitted by the Romanian delegate Sextil Puscariu, a linguist and literature historian at the University of Cluj, was approved by the Assembly. Also a resolution obliging the ICIC to call for international support for Hungarian institutions and intellectual circles, similar to the appeal on behalf of Austria as submitted by the Committee in 1922, was passed on a Hungarian delegate's motion. The Fifth League Assembly agreed to appoint Emil Rakowitz, a professor of sociology at the University of Cluj, and Jaroslav Kalab, a professor of international law at the University in Brno, as new and permanent correspondents of the ICIC representing the Central European region. George Oprescu, an historian, art critic and university professor in Cluj, replaced Halecki as the ICIC secretary⁴⁵.

The ICIC accepted Puscariu's project and decided to take action aimed at its implementation along with the Financial Committee of the League of Nations⁴⁶. With the Council of the League of Nations' consent, the ICIC issued an appeal to universities, academies, scientific societies and scholars from all countries for help for Hungarian institutions and intellectual circles on November 5, 1924⁴⁷.

These actions represented an attempt to meet Halecki's proposals. As the ICIC expert, he persisted in proposing other initiatives of supporting intellectual life in CEE countries. In a note prepared for the ICIC on February 6, 1925, Halecki suggested that the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IICI) in Paris, which was being organized on the initiative of the French diplomatic service as the executive body of the ICIC⁴⁸, was to help support Central European countries in the intellectual sphere.

Halecki strongly supported establishing the IICI and thought that the Institute would organize intellectual help successfully. Referring to Puscariu's motion, he repeated his proposal to establish an international credit fund supervised by the League of Nations for the rebirth and development of intellectual life in CEE countries. He indicated that the IICI's task was to support national committee activities of this region. Halecki also suggested calling for a conference of national committee representatives with the IICI authorities in Warsaw in order to discuss

44 APANP, P III 34, j. 130, Halecki's letter on August 23, 1924.

45 "Nauka Polska", *Kronika*, vol. VI, 1927, p. 422.

46 O. Halecki, *Międzynarodowy Instytut współpracy umysłowej*, "Kurier Warszawski" August 23, 1925 (no. 235), p. 7.

47 Text: H. Bergson, *Écrits et paroles*, vol. 3, pp. 581-582.

48 More on the origin of the IICI: J. J. Renoliet, *L'UNESCO oubliée. La Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919-1946)*, Paris 1999, p. 47 and ff.

the rules of mutual intellectual help and adopt decisions that would further promote that cause⁴⁹.

Having received favourable assessments for his performance in the ICIC by the League of Nations and French diplomacy, Halecki was a strong candidate for one of the most important positions in the IICI. The Administrative Council of the IICI appointed him as the head of University Relations Department on November 1, 1925⁵⁰. Thus commenced the next stage of the Polish historian's efforts to further develop and consolidate international intellectual cooperation between western countries and "new Central Europe". The assessment of Halecki's activity in the IICI remains in need of thorough consideration.

In assessing Halecki's initiatives in the ICIC for the rebirth and development of intellectual life in CEE countries, several issues should be emphasized. This historian was the only intermediary linking the Committee with the centres of learning and universities of the Central European region. He was also professionally and linguistically suited to this task. Halecki complied with the development of surveys on the state of intellectual life in twelve CEE countries to perfection. Thanks to his work, the ICIC learned about the needs of institutions and intellectual circles in the countries of "new Central Europe". Halecki proposed a wide range of solutions to help organizations in the rebirth and development of intellectual life in the CEE countries, gaining the formal support of the ICIC. At the same time, he tried to establish intellectual cooperation through national committees, which were to liaised with the ICIC. He also initiated a meeting of national committee representatives of CEE countries with the ICIC in December 1923, to discuss the rules of cooperation, and the role and tasks of the national committees. Halecki, being aware of the fact that the ICIC did not have funds for developing international intellectual cooperation, favoured direct bilateral contacts between the national committees of CEE countries and Western Europe. As a member of the Steering Committee of the IOUI, he also proposed to create "national university offices" in CEE countries to benefit from the experience of the existing offices in Western Europe and coordinate direct cooperation between universities.

Oskar Halecki – the advocate of Central and Eastern European countries in the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations (1922-1925)

This article presents and characterizes Oskar Halecki's activity for rebirth and development of the intellectual life in the economically ruined Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) during the years 1922-1925. At that time Halecki was a secretary and expert (from April 1st 1924) of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) of the League of Nations,

49 ALN, SDN, 1919-1927, 13C, R. 1071, SDN.ICIC.I.135, *The International Institute in Paris and Intellectual Mutual Assistance. Note by M. O. Halecki, Expert on the Committee. Geneva, February 6, 1925.*

50 On the session on July 28, 1925, the Administrative Council of the IICI decided to appoint Halecki (ALN, SDN, 1919-1927, 13C, R. 1071), George Oprescu's, the secretary of the ICIC, letter to Halecki of July 28, 1925.

which consisted of twelve eminent scholars representing countries from Western Europe. Halecki, a well-known expert of the history of Central and Eastern Europe (He did not include Russia), became the advocate of the intellectual collaboration between countries of this region and Western countries. In 1923 he presented results of the survey concerning the needs of intellectual life in twelve CEE countries to the ICIC. Halecki proposed among others to establish an international loan and a credit fund in order to support professors financially while traveling abroad for scientific purposes and for the purchase of indispensable equipment to university institutes.

Halecki paid a lot of attention to establish “national committees” on intellectual cooperation in the CEE countries to be a kind of “a bond” of these countries with the ICIC and international scientific life of other countries. He provided essential information and established first formal contacts. He also contributed to call the first conference of “national committees” of intellectual cooperation from twelve CEE countries, which took place in Paris in December 1923. During the years 1924-1925 Halecki presented several projects concerning strengthening intellectual relations between the CEE countries and Western countries to the ICIC. He suggested that this task should be undertaken by the Institut d’Études Slaves in Paris, the School of Slavonic Studies in London and the Instituto per l’Europa Orientale in Rome.

Translated by Marta Antoniuk