

The British occupation of the Rhineland in the period between 1918 and 1929/30 (Cologne Zone and Wiesbaden area) is in many aspects very surprising in comparison with the “traditional” British policy. The answer to the question why Great Britain stayed so long in this area was an effort to modify the Versailles peace system through a work in various inter-allied commissions. According to an opinion of British politicians and occupation authorities, the most important troubles were caused by the French who endangered the German unity, and obstructed its economic recovery. The form of the occupation had changed during the 1920s. Since December 1918 until the evacuation of the Cologne Zone at the turn of 1925 and 1926 we can ascertain four phases. In the period from the occupation of Cologne till the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles was the Rhineland placed under military administration. The military governors had in their zones of occupation practically absolute authority. In January 1920 became the highest representative of occupation forces civil body called Inter-Allied Rhineland Commission (High Commission) with its seat in Coblenz. Its main goals were to protect allied soldiers, issue ordinances for their security but also to veto German laws. However, in January 1920 the Congress of the United States of America refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. As a result the American representatives in various inter-allied committees became mere “observers” without a right to vote. This decision also increased impact of France that, with the help of Belgium, gained dominant influence on these committees.