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Status and Prospects for Research on the Image of Poland and the Poles in France between October 1938 and December 1939

Stan i perspektywy badań nad wizerunkiem Polski i Polaków we Francji pomiędzy październikiem 1938 a grudniem 1939 r.

ABSTRACT

The text presents the state of research on the image of Poland and the Poles in France between October 1938 and December 1939. This problem appears, first of all, as part of discussions on international politics and becomes part of the then current political situation. As such, it is mainly presented from the point of view of French public opinion on crucial political problems. Only very few of the studies cited in the text devote separate attention to the image of Poland. Despite many achievements in the studies on it, the question remains open with regard to the overall presentation of the problem in the context of

PUBLICATION INFO				
			e-ISSN: 2449-8467 ISSN: 2082-6060	
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SOURCE OF FUNDING: Statutory Research of the Institute of History of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin				
SUBMITTED: 2024.01.04	ACCEPTED: 2024.10.11	PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2024.12.18		
WEBSITE OF THE JOURNAL: https://journals.umcs.pl/rh		EDITORIAL COMMITTEE e-mail: reshistorica@umcs.pl		 
 DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS				

not only the political but also popular press, and also of the new communication channel, which was the radio, or public opinion polls conducted in France from December 1938.

Key words: image of Poland in France, Munich crisis, September 1939, French public opinion

STRESZCZENIE

Tekst przedstawia stan badań nad wizerunkiem Polski i Polaków we Francji w okresie od października 1938 do grudnia 1939 r. Problem ten pojawia się przede wszystkim jako część rozważań o polityce międzynarodowej i wpisany zostaje w bieżącą sytuację polityczną. Jako taki przedstawiany jest przeważnie z punktu widzenia stanowiska francuskiej opinii publicznej wobec kluczowych problemów politycznych. Nieliczne przywołane w tekście prace poświęcają sprawie wizerunku Polski uwagę odrębną. Mimo wiele osiągnięć w badaniach nad nim, otwarta pozostaje kwestia całościowego ujęcia problemu w kontekście prasy nie tylko politycznej, ale również popularnej, nowego kanału komunikacyjnego, jakim było radio, czy też sondaży opinii publicznej prowadzonych we Francji od grudnia 1938 r.

Słowa kluczowe: wizerunek Polski we Francji, kryzys monachijski, wrzesień 1939, francuska opinia publiczna

Research on the mutual perception of the Poles in France and the French in Poland has a long tradition in Polish historiography: it has produced significant studies as its result¹, and is also part of the broadly

¹ Inter alia: K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Francuska opinia publiczna wobec sprawy polskiej i Polaków w latach 1885–1894*, Wrocław–Warszawa 1987; idem, *Francuska opinia publiczna wobec sprawy polskiej i Polaków w latach 1895–1914*, Warszawa 1999; idem, *Francuzi w Polsce. Podróże do kraju pod zaborami*, Warszawa 2000; idem, *Obraz Polski i Polaków w literaturze francuskiej drugiej połowy XIX w.*, „Przegląd Humanistyczny” 1980, 24, 5 (176); idem, *Obraz Polski i Polaków we francuskich podręcznikach szkolnych drugiej połowy XIX w.*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 1980, 1; M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Kontrowersje wokół Polski w opiniach politycznych i prasowych Francji (październik 1938–marzec 1939)*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 1999, 31, 3; eadem, *Polski wrzesień 1939 r. widziany z Paryża*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 2001, 33, 2; eadem, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji? (Francja wobec Polski w latach 1938–1944)*, Warszawa 2003; eadem, *Polska w przekazie informacyjnym we Francji (październik 1938 – październik 1939 r.)*, in: *Kampania polska 1939 r. Polityka – społeczeństwo – kultura*, vol. 2, eds. M.P. Deszczyński, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2014; J. Łaptoś, *Francuska Opinia publiczna wobec sprawy polskiej w latach 1919–1925*, Wrocław–Warszawa 1983; A. Marszałek, *Francja w oczach Polaków*, Toruń 1992; M. Nossowska, *Świadectwo i tendencja. Korespondenci prasy warszawskiej o III Republice Francuskiej (1875–1914)*, Lublin 2001; M. Pasztor, *Polska w oczach francuskich kół rządowych w latach 1924–1939*, Warszawa 1999; eadem, *Polski korpus oficerski w oczach Francuskiej Misji Wojskowej i attachatu wojskowego Francji w Warszawie (1921–1939)*, „Mazowieckie Studia Historyczne” 1998, 1; eadem, *Główne elementy obrazu Polaka w oczach francuskich elit politycznych w okresie międzywojennym*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 1999, 31, 3; T. Szarota, *Prasa paryska o Polsce w latach 1945–1948*, „Kwartnik Historyczny” 1969, 76, 2; W. Śladkowski, *Opinia*

understood research on the mutual perception of different nations, national stereotypes, and on the mechanisms of creating them. It is not the aim of the present text to explore in depth this broad and multifaceted issue, or its functioning in historical studies; however, it is necessary to emphasize its theoretical significance for the findings concerning the image of Poland and the Poles in France in the late 1939². The chronological framework of the text is relatively narrow but connected with an extremely crucial period to fully understand which it is also indispensable to give attention to the problem of mutual perception by the two nations. The author tries to present the most important studies concerning this issue and potential possibilities of broadening and continuing them.

The broad extent of studies concerning the mutual image of Poland and the Poles in France as well as of the French and France in Poland includes, *inter alia*, though not directly related to the period in question, the studies by Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, Wiesław Śladkowski, or by Józef Łaptoś. The scope of this text also covers the studies by Maria Pasztor, Małgorzata Gmurczyk-Wrońska, or by Przemysław M. Żukowski³.

Crucial to the problem presented in the title is to determine how to define the research fields, how to understand the most important concepts i.e. the terms 'public opinion', 'image', and 'picture'. They are not equivalent concepts although they partly overlap and are interconnected both with regard to the scope of research and its source bases. When making in general such a classification and defining what exactly will be the object of research, and consequently, on what source base it will be conducted, scholars studying the mutual Polish-French image most often refer to the

publiczna we Francji wobec sprawy polskiej w l. 1914–1918, Lublin 1976; P.M. Żukowski, *Na przełomie wojny i pokoju. Francja w oczach polskiej opinii publicznej od wiosny 1938 roku do lata 1940 roku*, Kraków 2012.

² It is worth noting, incidentally, that of great importance for this trend of historical research were studies conducted on the stereotype and image in the context of Polish-German relations or the stereotype of the German. See: D. Jarosz, *Uwagi o polskiej literaturze naukowej na temat stereotypów*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1991, 23, 2; H.H. Hahn, *Stereotypy – tożsamość – konteksty. Studia nad polską i europejską historią*, Poznań 2011; H. Orłowski, „*Niejedno ma imię...*” *Stereotypy długiego trwania a miejsca pamięci*, in: *Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamięci*, vol. 4, *Refleksje metodologiczne*, eds. H.H. Hahn et al., Warszawa 2013; M. Mazur, *Stereotyp(y) Niemca/Niemiec w historiografii polskiej w latach 1945–1956*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 2023, 114, 1; T. Szarota, *Stereotypy narodowe jako temat badań historycznych w Polsce*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1995, 27, 2; idem, *Niemcy i Polacy: wzajemne postrzeganie i stereotypy*, Warszawa 1996; E. Wilczyńska, *Diabli z czubami. Niemcy oczami polskich chłopów w XIX i na początku XX wieku*, Warszawa 2019; W. Wrzesiński, *Sąsiad czy wróg? Ze studiów nad kształtowaniem się obrazu Niemca w Polsce w latach 1795–1939*, Wrocław 1992.

³ Cf. annotation 1.

term 'public opinion'⁴. It is strongly embedded in the research on Polish-French political relations (both in the form of the 'Polish cause' before 1918, and the foreign policy of France and Poland in the later periods), it allows making significant references and findings in this discipline, and it was sometimes the fabric of the picture, woven by scholars, of Poland and the Poles in France and France and the French in Poland. This would be consistent with the views, formed in the theory of research on public opinion, according to which, if 'public opinion' on some topic is to appear, that subject has first to arise in broad public consciousness, and then it has to be recognized as important enough to express different opinions about it⁵. In several crucial moments, the Polish affairs, e.g. during the Great War or precisely in the late nineteen-thirties, satisfied these criteria. To generalize, it can be assumed that the term public opinion is examined in this French context as the outcome of views and opinions expressed by diplomatic, military and government circles and social and economic elites⁶, which can be inferred both from diplomatic documents, personal accounts (memoirs and diaries, or correspondence), as well as from press articles that are often treated as one of the elements of creating this opinion rather than expressing their views. With one reservation, however: it is the political press of different coloring that is usually taken into consideration, far less often the popular press or weeklies.

The concept 'image'/'picture' has a somewhat different and apparently broader scope and partly a more passive character. 'Public opinion' is of more dynamic, active, creative, not only reflecting character; it is often set in current events, while the term 'picture'/'image' also contains more static and passive features, more deeply set in stereotypes, reflecting rather than creating something. According to a very apt definition used by K. Maliszewski, the reconstruction of a picture is the reconstruction of 'the complex and multicolored theatrum mundi, in whose arena the present-day history of humankind took place observed and described by newspaper editors'⁷. A broadly understood, generalized and simplified reflection of reality, which also contains elements going beyond political and current affairs, and in which a tremendous role is played

⁴ For example: M. Pasztor, *Polska*, p. 9; P.M. Żukowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–25; W. Śladkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–7; J. Łaptoś, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–7.

⁵ R. Staniszewski, *Opinia publiczna – teoretyczny sens i zakres pojęcia*, "Studia Politologiczne" 2012, 25, pp. 116–118.

⁶ Decision-makers and enforcers according to J.B. Duroselle's definition cited by M. Pasztor, *Polska*, pp. 7–8 i M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska*, pp. 8–9.

⁷ K. Maliszewski, *Obraz świata i Rzeczpospolitej w polskich gazetach rękopiśmiennych z okresu późnego baroku*, Toruń 1990, p. 16.

by stereotype. It is also important when we focus on studies on public opinion, yet in the case of 'image', if we accept the foregoing remarks, its role appears to be more significant⁸.

Research on the mutual image sometimes became the main objective, sometimes it appeared as an element of reflections on Polish-French relations, both political and others – military or economic. It is difficult after all to examine the latter without taking into account the role of public opinion and its influence on specific decisions even if the decisions themselves were made behind closed doors, in the privacy of offices, or without pondering the general opinion about Poland and the Poles, their image, and mutual notions. The analysis of the image of Poland and the Poles in the eyes of the French is made up of the overlapping and interacting problems of broadly understood Polish-French relations, first of all political, the existing and established stereotypes about Poland⁹, the importance of public opinion in France, and also, in the context of the last point, the importance and role of the press.

In this way two main circles can be distinguished in which it is necessary to study the issues of the image of Poland and the Poles in France (not only the views of French public opinion on their subject) and which have become or should become the subject of research: the narrower circle—a diplomatic-military-government one, strongly embedded in current politics, in current events and making decisions, and the broader circle, which the author would call a press and mass one¹⁰. The borderlines are not always sharp—the two circles interpenetrate and influence each other¹¹; nevertheless, their existence and significance can be adopted as a certain pattern that allows looking into the state of research on the problem of the image of Poland in France and the possible prospects of continuing it.

In this investigation, the analysis covered diplomatic documents, public and confidential at the time of their creation, known to a narrow circle of persons, now kept in archives or in the published volumes of sources, personal accounts and attitudes contained in memoirs, correspondence,

⁸ As stressed by M. Pasztor after T. Szarta, the 'image'/'picture' in a way consists of certain stereotypes that are expanded with the results of one's own experiences and confronted with current realities. M. Pasztor, *Polska*, pp. 7, 11; T. Szarota, *Stereotypy*, p. 4.

⁹ Which, although they evolved, remained unchanging on many points, M. Pasztor, *Główne*, p. 124.

¹⁰ There is also the radio, which appears sporadically in the studies devoted to Poland's image during that period.

¹¹ Especially, if the fact is taken into account that the first circle influenced – through their activity, e.g. through the press – the attitudes and opinions of mass readership, while in turn the expectations of that wide mass audience were not without an impact on Poland's image generated by the decision-making circles.

or dairies, both published and widely inaccessible. Finally, the press and political/social journalism of the period were referred to, and sporadically radio broadcasts with regard to the two interwar decades¹². In this way we can examine the image of Poland and the Poles both among the decision-making, elitist in some way and fairly narrow circles, and the image probably partly consistent with the stereotype that can be found in the mass media of the time. This also allows determining the stance of the French public opinion towards Poland in the context of important political problems of the period.

There is a very vast literature on the relations, cooperation, conflicts of interests, interrelationships, diplomatic, military and economic aspects in the Polish-French field, on the European situation, German threat, the Munich question, the issue of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, September 1939, fulfillment of guarantees for Poland, or the beginnings of 'drôle de guerre'¹³. Most of these publications contain certain elements that can

¹² Which gradually became a serious competitor to the press, including the mass press. C. Delporte, C. Blandin, F. Robinet, *Histoire de la presse en France. XX^e-XXI^e siècles*, Paris 2016, p. 97; P. Guillen, *Opinion publique et politique extérieure en France, 1914-1940*, in: *Opinion publique et politique extérieure en Europe. II. 1915-1940*, Rome 1984, p. 41; https://www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0000-0000_1984_act_54_2_2296 [access: 27.11.2023].

¹³ *Inter alia*: A.M. Cienciąła, *Polscy sojusznicy. Polska w polityce brytyjskiej i francuskiej w 1939 roku: Wola walki czy próba uniknięcia wojny?*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 1986, 75, pp. 152-183; eadem, *O polskiej polityce zagranicznej w przededniu 2. wojny światowej*, "Bellona" 1964, 3-4, pp. 3-12; H. Bułhak, *Polska-Francja. Z dziejów sojuszu 1922-1939*, part 1, (1922-1932), Warszawa 1993; idem, *Polska-Francja. Z dziejów sojuszu 1932-1936*, Warszawa 2000; J. Ciałowicz, *Polsko-francuski sojusz wojskowy*, Warszawa 1970; J. Faryś, *Koncepcje polskiej polityki zagranicznej 1918-1939*, Warszawa 1981; T. Kuźmiński, *Polska, Francja, Niemcy 1933-1935. z dziejów sojuszu polsko-francuskiego*, Warszawa 1963; J. Kukułka, *Francja a Polska po Traktacie Wersalskim 1919-1922*, Warszawa 1970; K. Mazurowa, *Europejska polityka Francji 1938-1939*, Warszawa 1974; eadem, *Skazani na wojnę*, Warszawa 1979; H. Batowski, *Polska dyplomacja na obczyźnie 1939-1941*, Kraków 1991; idem, *Polska w polityce Francji w przededniu II wojny światowej*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1991, 23, 4, pp. 39-51; idem, *Agonia pokoju i początek wojny. Sierpień-wrzesień 1939* (various editions); idem, *Dramat monachijski 1938 z perspektywy pięćdziesięciu lat*, in: *Niemcy w polityce międzynarodowej 1919-1939*, vol. 3, *W dobie Monachium*, ed. S. Sierpowski, Poznań 1992, pp. 19-26; idem, *Europa zmierza ku przepaści*, Poznań 1977; E. Duraczyński, *Rząd polski na uchodźstwie 1939-1945. Organizacja. Personalia. Polityka*, Warszawa 1993; M. Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne wśród polskiego wychodźstwa politycznego i wojskowego we Francji i Wielkiej Brytanii 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1999; P. Majewski, *Kiedy wybuchnie wojna? 1938. Studium kryzysu*, Warszawa 2019; M. Kornat, *Polska 1939 roku wobec paktu Ribbentrop-Mołotow. Problem zbliżenia niemiecko-sowieckiego w polityce zagranicznej II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2002; idem, *Polityka równowagi (1934-1939). Polska między Wschodem a Zachodem*, Kraków 2007; idem, *Polityka zagraniczna Polski 1938-1939. Cztery decyzje Józefa Becka*, Gdańsk 2012; P. Duber, *Utworzenie Rządu Jedności Narodowej w Paryżu*

be connected with studies on the image of Poland; however, only few of them devote a significant or main space to this issue. This particularly concerns the image created by the most popular media that have the widest audience and create a highly generalized, stereotypical picture but also closest to the largest part of French society and influencing their attitude towards Poland, the war, or the perception of the political relationships and situation in Europe.

For the chronological scope adopted within this text, i.e. the period between the turn of September and October 1938 and the end of 1939, between the Munich Agreement and the period right after the September defeat, as well as for the image of Poland and the Poles in France there is no equivalent to the study by P.M. Żukowski¹⁴, entirely devoted to the image of France and the French in the eyes of the Poles during 1938–1940. There are, however, publications that investigate this subject both in the wider chronological and problem scope. In his book P.M. Żukowski tries to study the picture of France in the widest and most complete way. He also devotes attention to social and economic issues, French colonies, the specificity of French perception of geography, in which the Earth consist of France and only then of the rest of the world. His study also presents everyday life, Paris, and the French provinces, and first of all – because of the specificity of the period he wrote about – political and military issues, the political mosaic of the Third Republic and its foreign policy seen from the Polish standpoint¹⁵.

With regard to the period of my interest, studies on the second vector of the mutual image and the attitudes of French public opinion towards Poland¹⁶ are first of all the texts by Maria Pasztor for the years 1924–1939 and by Małgorzata Gmurczyk-Wrońska for the late 1930s and the first half of the 1940s. Two most important monographs *Polska w oczach francuskich*

(20–30 IX 1939 roku), "Niepodległość i Pamięć" 2010, 31. The survey of the literature on the subject can be found for example in Józef Beck's biography by M. Kornat and M. Wołos. *Józef Beck. Biografia*, Kraków 2020.

¹⁴ P.M. Żukowski, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Complementary to P.M. Żukowski's study are, to some extent, the texts by J. Chrobaczyński. Despite their specificity, sometimes in a more cataloging than analytical formula, they contain interesting elements for the mutual image of the two countries. *Compiègne 1940. Klęska Francji w recepcji i postawach społeczeństwa polskiego*, Kraków 2010 and *Dwie klęski. Wrześnieowy syndrom 1939 i klęska Francji 1940 w postawach, zachowaniach i nastrojach społeczeństwa polskiego. Próba rekonstrukcji i komparatystyki. Kontrowersje i dylematy*, Kraków 2015.

¹⁶ Apart from the study by J. Łaptoś, concerning the first half of the 1920s, and outside the spectrum of the present text but being a direct continuation of *Opinia publiczna we Francji wobec sprawy polskiej w l. 1914–1918* by W. Śladkowski.

kół rządowych. 1924–1939 [Poland in the eyes of the French government circles 1924–1939] and *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji?* [Poland–France’s unnecessary ally?], although they cover a broader chronological scope than the range adopted here, are crucial to the studies on the image of Poland and France in the period in question and complement each other in some way.

This period, the object of interest of scholars studying French-Polish relations, is investigated in most cases first of all from the angle of the international situation, the threat of war, the French-Polish political-military alliance, the intricacies of France’s foreign policy seeking its priorities at the turn of 1938 and 1939, the issues of Munich and Trans-Olza region, guarantees to Poland, and with regard to the subsequent period – from the perspective of Poland’s September defeat, the establishment of a new Polish government in exile, and the Polish army in France. These problems strictly define the interests of scholars and concentrate them around great quantifiers, leaving somewhat aside the problems of public opinion or mutual image. And although the issue of image is not in the forefront of these studies, many findings can be connected with them. The whole period from September-October 1938 to the end of 1939 was the time of heightened interest in Poland, and the role of Poland’s image was significant. The reluctance to go to war, the possibility of withdrawing from the military convention and the growing dependence of French foreign policy on the fluctuations of public opinion – these are the issues that stress the connection of Poland’s image in France with its current policy and at the same its (the image’s) importance¹⁷.

Without going into the intricacies of politics and the French-Polish relations in that period, and remembering about the role played by public opinion in French decisions¹⁸, it is worth pointing out that the fundamental problem of French policy was the matter of avoiding or keeping war away from France’s borders for as long as possible¹⁹. This influenced to the highest extent the way of perceiving Poland, connected its image

¹⁷ M. Kornat, *Polityka*, p. 65.

¹⁸ P. Guillen, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–56; P. Levillain, *Opinion publique et politique extérieure de 1870 à 1981*, in: *Opinion publique et politique extérieure en Europe. III. 1940–1981*, Rome 1985, pp. 307–308, https://www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0000-0000_1985_act_54_3_2343 [access: 27.11.2023].

¹⁹ J.P. Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération 1938–1944*, Paris 2002, pp. 12–50. See also for example K. Mazurowa, *Europejska*; eadem, *Skazani*; J.-B. Duroselle, *Politique étrangère de la France. La Décadance 1932–1939*, Paris 1979; G.-H. Soutou, *Le Deuil de la puissance (1913–1958)*, in: *Histoire de la diplomatie française. De 1815 à nos jours*, eds. J.-C. Allain, P. Guillen, G.-H. Soutou, Paris 2005, pp. 338–346. Many interesting observations on France’s policy and its goals in the late 1930s can be found in the book by T. Bouverie, *Herbatka z Hitlerem*.

with the then current events, strengthened or broke the already functioning pictures and stereotypes, underlay the sources of attitudes expressed by public opinion towards the events taking place at that time. The elements of the image were placed by scholars most often in the chronological and problem order connected with the course of events of European politics and were investigated as auxiliary elements in discussions on the political determinants of the decisions taken. And this context influenced not only how Poland was perceived in the world but also what issues/descriptions/attitudes became its part. That is why they contain reflections on the objectives of Polish foreign policy, but it would be more difficult to form the idea of Polish everyday life or mentality. With one exception, however.

Maria Pasztor, who studied the image of Poland 'in the eyes of the French government circles', adopted as primary the problem-based presentation of contents, distinguishing elements that make up Poland's image. It also contains observations on the national character, faults and virtues of the Poles, on values and attitudes important to them i.e. the issues that go beyond politics, and military or personal matters. A valuable thing is the presentation of both individual analyses and conclusions around the singled-out elements of this image, while a drawback from the standpoint of the period in question is the fact that Pasztor does not focus on it in a special way and both the individual features of the image and the detailed accuracy of the sources are perforce spread over the whole or most of the interwar period without focusing on the specificity of the dozen or so months between the autumn of 1938 and the end of 1939. Apart from the monograph, its author has also made interesting findings in several articles on the problem of the image of Poland²⁰, as well as in the texts that concerned the problem of press propaganda, which will be discussed below²¹.

Significant for the examination of M. Pasztor's studies is to refer to her adopted definition of the terms: 'picture', and 'government circles' which is comparatively broad. Apart from taking into consideration the circle,

Jak brytyjskie elity chciały zjednać Trzecią Rzeszę, transl. M. Gądek, M. Antosiewicz, Warszawa 2021.

²⁰ M. Pasztor, *Polski*; eadem, *Główne*.

²¹ Although they partly concern a somewhat different period and rather the problem of creating an image than the image itself, they enable several important findings related to the subject of the present text. M. Pasztor, *Główne*; eadem, *Polska propaganda prasowa we Francji w latach 1924–1936 (założenia i realizacja)*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1995, 27, 4; eadem, *Polski*; eadem, *Propagande, presse et politique étrangère: la propagande polonaise et la presse française dans les années 1924–1936*, "Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique" 1996, 2.

naturally suggesting itself with the subject so formulated, of politicians and broadly understood political elites, she also takes the opinion-forming press into account, treating it as a kind of the executive arm of the political circles and significant interest groups, and rightly concluding that the opinions expressed in it expressed first of all their voice²². It is an equivalent source to diplomatic sources or documents²³. Pasztor also introduces J.B. Durosell's already cited classification, according to which she classifies as part of government circles the decision-makers and executors (*decideurs* and *exécutants*), or those who participate in decision making (prime ministers, presidents, ministers, and parliamentarians) and those who put the decisions into effect (diplomats, high-ranking military officers, financiers, business persons, and the journalists counted as propagandists)²⁴. It is in this spectrum that she moves while constructing the picture of Poland. And while creating the 'picture' or 'image' itself she is guided by T. Szarota's suggestion, treating the picture/image as a whole that embraces both the elements of the stereotype handed down from generation to generation and 'the results of one's own experiences and the comparison of the stereotype with the realities of the then current international situation'²⁵. In this context, the press reports/articles appear to have a far greater impact on the shape of the image of Poland and the Poles in the eyes of the broad public opinion, not only in the eyes of the elites. M. Pasztor also highlights the fact that opinions about Poland and the Poles were strongly imbedded in the deep-rooted stereotype about them, which in principle was not differentiated in connection with the political views of persons commenting on the subject, and the stereotype did not violently change despite the fact that it evolved with time²⁶.

On the basis of M. Pasztor's findings, it can be said that there are several differentiable elements that make up the image of Poland, with the reservation expressed above that it is the image 'in the eyes of the French government circles' and in the press that can be called opinion-forming. The most important elements of this image and significant from the standpoint of the period of the late 1938 and 1939 are connected with the following concepts: the Pole-Catholic and patriot, national virtues and vices, the perception of the Polish army, opinions on the Polish political

²² M. Pasztor, *Polska w oczach*, pp. 9–10.

²³ Pointing out also their certain limitation connected with the comparatively narrowed contact of the diplomatic circles with Polish society as such. This contact included first all political and social elites or government circles. M. Pasztor, *Główne*, p. 124.

²⁴ M. Pasztor, *Polska w oczach*, pp. 7–8.

²⁵ T. Szarota, *Stereotypy*, p. 4; M. Pasztor, *Polska w oczach*, p. 7; eadem, *Główne*, p. 114.

²⁶ M. Pasztor, *Główne*, p. 124; eadem, *Polska w oczach*, pp. 306–307.

system, the attitude towards national minorities, Polish-French economic relations, and the attitude towards the main actors of Polish politics, including the most important figures in Polish foreign policy. Several of these elements can be generalized and do not need to be 'assigned' to a specific period (e.g. religiousness or the characteristics regarded as the virtues and vices of the national character), several elements can, however, be made more detailed, narrowing the French perception of Poland and the Poles to the specific moment of the end of 1938 and 1939.

According to M. Pasztor's studies, crucial and permanent to the image of the Pole throughout the whole of two interwar decades were the elements associated with religiousness and the way of understanding patriotism. Ritual, zealous but comparatively superficial folk Catholicism was attributed to the masses rather than to the elites, the latter being in turn perceived as at least indifferent²⁷. The other characteristic feature was patriotism which, in the eyes of the observers, was connected with Catholicism. According to words of Robert de Traz's daily "Revue des Deux Mondes"²⁸ cited by M. Pasztor, it assumed an almost mystical character, merging politics with spirituality. In the same permanent way, the national character of the Poles was perceived, as a set of virtues and vices²⁹, among which, out of virtues, at the fore are the love of freedom, vigor, valor, bravery, intelligence, the already cited patriotism, the ability to adapt, courtesy, chivalry, and ideological zeal. Among the vices there is recklessness, certain superficiality in perceiving reality, impulsiveness, oversensitivity about oneself, which was attributed to more than a century of captivity and the condition of the newly resurrected Polish state. This opinion stressed 'Slavicity' (manifesting itself inter alia in carelessness and inconstancy), i.e. affiliation with Eastern rather than Western Europe. Further negative features included lack of perseverance, tendency for criticism and envy, the absence of the spirit of good citizenship and political sophistication, negligible interest of large circles of Polish society in public matters, and interestingly enough, this catalog also lists excessive hospitality, which appears in other sources³⁰ as a virtue rather than a vice.

M. Pasztor points out, although she does not analyze this issue at length, that a large portion of texts that express favorable opinions about the Poles are occasional or propaganda publications and memoirs

²⁷ M. Pasztor, *Polska w oczach*, pp. 298–300; eadem, *Główne*, pp. 114–116.

²⁸ M. Pasztor, *Główne*, p. 117; eadem, *Polska w oczach*, pp. 300–301.

²⁹ Eadem, *Główne*, pp. 117–124; eadem, *Polska w oczach*, pp. 301–307.

³⁰ Or, as M. Pasztor points out, in the comments by the same person. This remark refers to Ambassador J. Laroche. M. Pasztor, *Główne*, p. 120.

that ‘smoothed’ the edges of the picture³¹. Nevertheless, the above-cited catalog of virtues contains the elements recurring in many comments, although in light of this interesting remark, the catalog of vices appears to be far more credible as a permanent element of the image of the Poles.

Regardless of the fact that M. Pasztor’s analyses and conclusions definitely go beyond the scope of the present text and cannot be always assigned to a specific moment, which stems from the character of the research objectives, they are an essential element of studies on the image of Poland and the Poles in the eyes of the French throughout a dozen or so months of 1938 and 1939. This image did not appear in a vacuum, it was firmly embedded in the earlier period, in experiences, visits, recently deep-rooted stereotypes, and with respect to many elements it did not differ from how Poland and the Poles were perceived in the period under discussion. Worth noting are also *inter alia* the findings about how the Polish army or the person of Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Beck were viewed, and these elements, important for the period in question, can also be found in the studies by Małgorzata Gmurczyk-Wrońska³². And, most certainly, in the fundamental biography of Józef Beck by M. Kornat and M. Wołos. The authors refer to Piotr Wandycz’s thesis on the connection between the image of J. Beck and the image of Poland, although they do not seem to overestimate this interrelation³³.

In the monograph *Polska-niepotrzebny aliant Francji?* and in several articles referring in many ways to the matter of Poland’s image in France³⁴, M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska tried to combine two issues: the aspect of Polish-French political relationships and the overlapping problem of the attitude of the French public towards Poland and related elements of the image of Poland and the Poles. This is an infrequent approach because, as has already been said, scholars usually analyze the press—the voice of the public—as an expression of current policy, and political dailies are most often taken into account as one of instruments of pursuing it. An excellent illustration here is the monograph by Krystyna Mazurowa devoted to France’s foreign policy in the years 1938–1939, in which the

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

³² M. Pasztor also wrote about the Polish army in: *Polski*. The issue also appears on the margin of discussion.

³³ M. Kornat, M. Wołos, *op. cit.* E.g. subchapters *Beck o swoich partnerach zagranicznych, Od potępienia do uwielbienia*). See also: M. Kornat, *Piotr Wandycz i historyczne dylematy polityki zagranicznej II Rzeczypospolitej*, in: *Piotr Wandycz. Historyk – emigrant – intelektualista*, eds. M. Kornat, S.M. Nowinowski, R. Stobiecki, Bydgoszcz 2014.

³⁴ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Kontrowersje*; eadem, *Polski*; eadem, *Polska – niepotrzebny*; eadem, *Polska w przekazie*.

author refers to numerous press titles, but examined from the viewpoint of French policy rather than from the stance of public opinion as the object of research and the problem of the image of Poland.

M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska guides the reader through the intricacies of European politics, interspersing the narrative with analyses connected with or handy in sketching Poland's image in France. And, which is worth emphasizing—not only the stance of the public towards specific events or problems, but also towards the perception of Poland³⁵. This is seen on the excellent example of the stance of the French public – probably most well-known and associated with the period of 1938–1939–i.e. on the issue of Gdansk and on M. Déat and his article *Mourir pour Dantzig?* ("L'Oeuvre" 4 May 1939). In her texts, M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska examines the image that functioned in the political circles and was based on archival documents, minutes, correspondence, memoirs of politicians and on what can be reconstructed basing on the press. In the last case, she focuses attention first of all on the so-called opinion-forming press, dailies reflecting semi-official views of the government or strongly connected with a specific political option. Her studies refer less often to popular dailies, high-circulation magazines, sometimes even of tabloid character, but at the same time with the highest circulation and widest readership.

She rightly observes that determinants of political decisions also include various pressure groups and the voice of public opinion expressed most often through the press³⁶. The press not only reflected the views of various groups but was also an instrument used by political circles, by means of which they attempted to mold the attitudes of public opinion. Decisions were made in political offices, the 'voice of the street' could not, however, be ignored and attempts were made to influence its tone.

As M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska points out, the image of Poland during that period underwent quite violent changes, firmly embedded in current events. Over the dozen or so months before, during and after the Munich conference, when the fate of peace was pending, France faced important questions about the directions of its foreign policy, the level of involvement in Central Europe, and its allied obligations. Poland was perceived in these deliberations and discussions first of all as an element of a wider puzzle that would protect France from Germany and as such it landed in the very center of French political and public debate. Controversies and discussions, already vivid earlier, over the problem which road France should take and what place Poland would take on this road, became more fervent after Munich 1938. Poland appeared inevitably in discussions

³⁵ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, pp. 139–143, 392–394.

³⁶ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Kontrowersje*, p. 140.

on France's involvement in the future war or on evading the conflict. Voices urging France to withdraw from the involvement in Central Europe to avoid a clash with the German potential expansion into the East were strengthened. Voices about the sense of alliance with Poland were stressed with a simultaneously recurring question whether Poland still offered a protection of the French interests on the eastern side of the German border, whether the betrayal, as it was perceived, of Czechoslovakia could still include Poland in French calculations. These questions were asked in the offices of politicians but also in the press. In the French realities and with the dominant pacifist attitude associated with the idea of security, this was a discussion of fundamental importance.

It should be observed at the same time, which is also discussed by the aforementioned scholars, that the vast majority of French dailies, both 'serious' and 'popular' ones, were strongly connected with the French political scene, funded in a more or less legal way, associated with specific political options via persons who wrote for them and treated as an element of creating public opinion, molding it in accordance with specific paths of political activity. And everybody wrote for the newspapers: politicians, artists, members of government and parliament, and intellectuals. They expressed their views and pushed their important matters through, thus making newspapers one of the most important platforms of public discussion, no less important than the parliamentary platform. Moreover, in almost every newspaper the embassies of individual states used their influence for propaganda purposes, as did the Polish embassy, which acted, in any case, with different effects³⁷.

The interest of Polish scholars is also aroused by the last moments of peace and by September 1939, when there is a noticeable turn in the perception of Poland by French public opinion, and thereby a change in Poland's image. In most cases, however, the authors focus on the political context, diplomatic documents, relationships between the states, the issue of Poland's image and the stance of public opinion expressed in the press usually playing a secondary role or being an addition to strengthen 'diplomatic' arguments. Among the exceptions we have, however, the studies by M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, and Aneta Nisiobęcka, discussions concerning

³⁷ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, pp. 67, 89; eadem, *Kontrowersje*, pp. 140, 148; *Histoire générale de la presse française*, eds. C. Bellanger et al., vol. 3, *De 1871 à 1940*, Paris 1972, pp. 486–489; P. Guillen, *op. cit.*, p. 39. See also: M. Pasztor, *Polska propaganda*. For an interesting context for the issue of funding French newspapers and raising subventions from various sources, see for example: R. Milza, *Les problèmes financiers du journal "L'Humanité" de 1920 à 1939*, "Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine" 1973, 20, pp. X–XII, https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhmc_0048-8003_1973_num_20_4_2266 [access: 27.11.2023].

the France-Poland (France-Pologne) association and Henri de Montfort, and also an interesting text, although confined to one press title, by Anna Pachowicz devoted to the picture of September 1939 in "Le Figaro"³⁸.

The beginning of the war changed the perspective from which Poland and the Poles were perceived. Instead of being those who were an obstacle to the preservation of peace, they became defenders of the most important values, freedom, and allies who resisted the common threat. To the foreground came the heroic, martyrological element, one of support for the fighting Poland, solidarity and compassion³⁹. 'The spectacle of valor and helplessness', as M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska describes it⁴⁰, induced French public opinion to revise previous attitudes, although this surge of positive enthusiasm did not last long and was soon supplanted by progressive indifference in the face of internal problems, fears and anxieties, and uncertainty about one's own fate⁴¹.

French historiography does not generally focus on the problem of the image of Poland, yet Poland is perforce one of the central points of research on the last months of peace and the beginning of the war. The most important themes of these studies were shown by M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska in the text *Rok 1939 w historiografii francuskiej* [*The 1939 in French historiography*]⁴². Many of the political contents discussed in it border on the problem of the image of Poland as seen by the French; however, this is neither the basic object of research nor the main theme of the survey presented by M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska: it is necessary to extract and reconstruct the elements of this image from frequently indirect comments. The Poles and how they were perceived also appears in the works by Janine Ponty, an eminent expert on Polish immigrant circles in France in the interwar period and a pioneer of research into this community.

³⁸ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, pp. 149–163, 170, 176–177; eadem, *Polski*; eadem, *Polska w przekazie*; A. Nisiobęcka, *Przyczynek do historii dyplomacji kulturalnej II Rzeczypospolitej we Francji. Zaangażowanie France-Pologne w polsko-francuską wymianę kulturalną i naukową w latach 1919–1940 (wybrane aspekty)*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 2020, 4, pp. 306–310; A. Pachowicz, *Wizerunek państwa polskiego w publikacjach prasowych zamieszczanych w dzienniku "Le Figaro" we wrześniu 1939 roku*, in: *Medialne i transmedialne procesy narracyjne w identyfikacji postaw patriotycznych Polaków*, eds. M. Kawka, W. Prażuch, Kraków 2021.

³⁹ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polski*, pp. 64–66.

⁴⁰ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polski*, p. 68; eadem, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, pp. 156–172.

⁴¹ A. Nisiobęcka, *op. cit.*, p. 310; M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, pp. 234–237; M. Nossowska, *O Francuzce, która pokochała Polskę. Rosa Bailly i stowarzyszenie Les Amis de la Pologne*, Lublin 2012, pp. 263–270.

⁴² M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Rok 1939 w historiografii francuskiej*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 2009, 41, 3.

A section of Chapter Nine [*Ce n'était qu'une trêve (1936–1939)*] of her fundamental monograph *Polonais méconnus. Histoire des travailleurs immigrés en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres*⁴³ was devoted to the period from the Munich Agreement to the outbreak of WW2, and when writing about the situation of the Poles and referring to press comments, J. Ponty creates a panorama that allows the reconstruction of the ways of perceiving the Poles in general, not only those who lived in France, especially in France's north. Interesting, although scattered, remarks connected with the image of Poland can be found in the study by Yves Beauvois *Stosunki polsko-francuskie w czasie dziwnej wojny [Polish-French relations during the phony war]* (Kraków 1991)⁴⁴, and also in his reflections devoted to the French ambassador to Poland Léon Noël⁴⁵. The text is the more so interesting that it directly refers to the problem of image and stereotype. An interesting text of general and possibly inspiring character is the article by Lidwine Warchol, which, although it explores the period of my interest very briefly, yet it may constitute a broader context for analyzing the Polish image in the French eyes⁴⁶, as J. Ponty's *Dépasser les stéréotypes: au sujet de l'immigration polonaise en France*⁴⁷ does.

However, an important theme of the French studies, which are of essential significance in the context of the Polish image, is the research devoted on the one hand to public opinion and its role during the interwar period⁴⁸, and, which M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska emphasizes, the re-

⁴³ *Polonais méconnus. Histoire des travailleurs immigrés en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, Paris 1988 (and others, the latest reissue having been published in 2020) <https://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/50853> [access: 27.11.2023].

⁴⁴ French edition: *Les relations franco-polonaises pendant la "drôle de guerre"*, Paris 1989.

⁴⁵ Y. Beauvois, *Stéréotypes nationaux et diplomatie: Léon Noël, ambassadeur de France en Tchécoslovaquie et en Pologne (1932–1939)*, in: *Regards sur l'indomptable Europe du Centre-Est du XVIII^e siècle à nos Jours*, eds. J. Kłoczowski, D. Beauvois, Y.-M. Hilaire, Lille 1996, pp. 369–377.

⁴⁶ L. Warchol, *La Pologne en France: les différences de perception entre l'opinion publique et les intellectuels Français*, "Studia Środkowoschodnie i Bałkanistyczne" 2017, 25, pp. 173–190 (the late 1930s: p. 178).

⁴⁷ J. Ponty, *Dépasser les stéréotypes: au sujet de l'immigration polonaise en France*, in: *La France et la Pologne au delà des stéréotypes*, eds. M. Delaperrière, J. Doberszyc, B. Drwęski, Paris 2004, pp. 27–36.

⁴⁸ For example: Y. Lacaze, *L'Opinion publique française et la crise de Munich*, Paris 1991; A. Mares, *La question tchécoslovaque devant l'opinion française en 1938*, "Revue des Études Slaves Année" 1979, 1–2, pp. 109–122; C.-R. Ageron, *L'opinion publique française pendant les crises internationales de septembre 1938 à juillet 1939*, "Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de la presse et de l'opinion" 1975, 3, pp. 203–223; G.-H. Soutou, *Des Lumières à l'opinion publique: politique extérieure et société (XVIII^e–XX^e siècle)*, in: *Dans l'Opinion publique et crise de la démocratie*, Paris 2019, pp. 73–96; J. Stoetzel, *Une enquête sur l'opinion publique française*, "Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines" 2002,

search devoted to the phenomenon of French pacifism, its sources and importance for political decisions of the late 1930s⁴⁹. These studies can contribute significantly to the attempt to comprehensively present the problem of the image of Poland in the eyes of the French. Especially, when bearing in mind that until September 1939 the word 'Poland' was equivalent for many French people to the word 'war' which defined the issue of the perception of Poland at that time.

It is also necessary to emphasize once again how important was the role of public opinion in creating French policy and at the same time the important role of the French press in molding that opinion. The press was a significant political actor in the realities of the Third Republic, a forum for expressing opinions and views, the place where current and former politicians expressed their comments, where, parallel to parliamentary debates, discussions were held about vital political issues. It was the newspapers that determined the directions of emotions and the temperature of debates, expressed the views of political parties, and tried to influence the attitudes and ideas of their readers.

Alongside the research on the issue of image there has to also appear the problem of creating it, of propaganda, and the ways and efficacy of action, these problems having become, for the interwar period, the object of important findings by Polish historians. The survey of the most important studies can be found in the text by Aneta Nisiobęcka *Przyczynek do historii dyplomacji kulturalnej II Rzeczypospolitej we Francji* [A Contribution to the history of cultural diplomacy of the Second Polish republic in France], which is also an interesting analysis of Polish activities and possibilities of influencing the form of the image of Poland in the eyes French public opinion. In the context of the press and the activities of Polish diplomacy, Maria Pasztor wrote on the subject, as has been already said⁵⁰, emphasiz-

1, pp. 155–160; <https://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-des-sciences-humaines-2002-1-page-155.htm> [access: 27.11.2023]; "Ifop Collectors" août 2013, no 21 https://www.ifop.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/614-1-document_file.pdf [access: 27.11.2023].

⁴⁹ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Rok 1939*, pp. 117–119. M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska refers to the most interesting studies, first of all: P. Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy. Les Français et la crise d'identité nationale 1936–1944*, Paris 1990; Y. Lacaze, *op. cit.*; M. Väisse, *Le pacifisme français dans les années trente*, "Relations Internationales" 1988, 53. See also: A. Brzeziński, *Zagadnienie bezpieczeństwa zbiorowego w Europie w polityce zagranicznej Francji (1919–1939)*, Łódź 1992; idem, *Sojusz polsko-francuski a problem rozbrojenia w dwudziestolecie międzywojennym (1919–1937)*, Łódź 1996; P. Guillen, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–56; I. Davion, *Social Mood in France in 1939* [*Nastroje społeczne we Francji w 1939 r.*], in: *Kampania*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Especially in: *Propaganda, Propagande and Słabnące lobby. Działalność propolskich grup parlamentarnych we francuskim Zgromadzeniu Narodowym w latach 1921–1936*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1997, 29, 3.

ing the weakening Polish influence and practical helplessness in the final stage of peace in the face of vigorous activities of the German and Soviet propaganda, which had considerable influence in some part of the French newspapers. One should also mention the activities of the association Les Amis de la Pologne, which tried, throughout the interwar period, to actively influence the image of Poland in the eyes of the French, and was one of the most active actors in the field of pro-Polish⁵¹ propaganda. Although the effectiveness of its activities significantly weakened in the 1930s, as did its influence on French public opinion at the same time, yet when the war broke out Les Amis de la Pologne as well as the persons connected earlier with the association France-Pologne, mentioned above by Aneta Nisiobęcka, immensely intensified their efforts, trying to emphasize the drama of the war fought on the Polish territory and the fate of refugees, to arouse liking and compassion, and induce help for the Poles who found themselves in the territory of France.

On the example of the activities of Rosa Bailly, Les Amis de la Pologne or Henri de Monfort, connected from the very beginning both with the France-Pologne, and Les Amis de la Pologne, one can see very clearly how the attitude of the French public towards Poland changed and how Poland's image evolved. At first there is the weakening interest in Poland, bordering on indifference, and ignoring most of the actions conducted by various pro-Polish- and Polonophile-minded organizations, or the propaganda activities conducted at the diplomatic and press level. Then, there is a distinct increase in the aversion of pacifist-oriented French society towards Poland and the Poles who are seen as the main threat to peace, the reason why it will not be possible to stabilize the situation in Europe. Finally, with the outbreak of the war, the vector of sympathies changed fairly rapidly and allowed compassion, liking and solidarity to come to the fore. The difficulties encountered in the activities to promote Polish causes in France, the effectiveness of these actions or the level and kind of interest in Poland constituted an important jigsaw element helping to depict the image of Poland.

To sum up: research on Polish-French relations in the last years of peace has significant accomplishments for Polish historiography. An important element of this research is the issue of the Polish image in the eyes of France's public opinion understood not only as the voice of opinion-forming and political circles but also as the broader, more

⁵¹ M. Nossowska, *O Francuzce*; eadem, *AMPOL – francusko-“polskie” biuro prasowe*, “Rocznik Lubelski” 2009, 35; eadem, *Żeby widzieli nas pięknie... Propagandowy obraz II RP w “Bulletin »Les Amis de la Pologne«”, “Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio F”* 2010, 65, 2.

general public opinion presented by the mass media. In most studies by Polish historians it is a problem that appears as an element, not entirely the most significant, of discussions closely connected with political relations, decisions made in the privacy of offices. Apart from some studies referred to above, the problem of the image of Poland and the Poles was not in the scope of main interests, nevertheless some general remarks and suggestions can be formulated:

- crucial to the research so far on the image of Poland and the Poles during the period from the autumn of 1938 to the end of 1939 is to place it within the then current political events. Consequently, a serious challenge to the scholars is to separate the issue of the image as such from the current course of political events or government decisions;

- for that reason, it is difficult to reconstruct the picture consisting of features rather than elements connected with the chronological course of events. This sometimes results in the ‘image’, ‘picture’ being in a way veiled by political interests, current objectives, and reactions to events taking place. That is why most findings concern individual moments, e.g. September 1939 or the Munich crisis, and at the same time they concern more the stance of French public opinion towards specific problems than Poland’s image understood as a certain comprehensive, moderately coherent picture;

- research is usually focused on the image of Poland as perceived by political and government elites with all the resulting consequences, inter alia on the basis of comments of the so-called opinion-forming press, first of all political dailies (“La République”, “L’Action Française”, “Le Temps” “Le Populaire”, “L’Oeuvre”, “L’Ère Nouvelle”, “L’Ordre”, “Intransigeant”). Popular dailies (“Le Matin”, “Le Petit Parisien”, “Paris-Midi”, “Paris-Soir”, and “Le Journal”) are used less often although there are exceptions. However, their contents are usually examined in the context of current political events rather than the problem of Poland’s image;

- the press of the period is largely treated as an instrument for expressing/accomplishing specific political goals, and used in these aspects. It is one of the tools of political analyses;

- apart from very few mentions, no elements appeared connected with the new tools for examining public opinion, and, consequently, the image of Poland, i.e. opinion polls carried out regularly in France by l’Institut Français d’Opinion Publique founded on 1 December 1938⁵²;

- the new communication channel, i.e. the radio, has also been studied to a very moderate extent. M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska mentions its use

⁵² P. Guillen, *op. cit.*, p. 39. “Ifop Collectors” août 2013, no 21 https://www.ifop.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/614-1-document_file.pdf [access: 27.11.2023].

and the fact of its supervision by the government⁵³; there are also items of information about individual speeches and broadcasts in the aforementioned publications, but it is certainly a problem worthy of more attention⁵⁴;

– research on Poland's image should also be embedded deeper in the analysis of how the French, primarily Parisian, press functioned. Studies should cover its character, role, circulation and extent, but also the revival of influence of the political press in the 1930s⁵⁵, and the triumph of the weeklies. The most popular "Gringoire" had the circulation of 500 thousand copies in 1938 and was the most popular weekly and the newspaper with the third largest circulation in France, after "Paris-Soir" with 1,739 thousand copies, and the million copies of "Le Petit Parisien"⁵⁶.

Despite many important findings, the problem of research on the image of Poland and the Poles in France in the years 1938–1939 still leaves many questions open. The taking into consideration, to a greater extent, of mass media, not only the political and opinion-forming press, but also radio, opinion polls, as well as the examination of Poland's image in the context of studies on public opinion and its role in France are still the problems that can broaden our look not only at the dozen or so critical months of 1938 and 1939, but, more generally, at the problem of the functioning of the image of Poland and the Poles in France.

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⁵³ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, p. 60.

⁵⁴ M. Nossowska, *O Francuzce*, pp. 264–265.

⁵⁵ C. Delporte, C. Blandin, F. Robinet, *op. cit.*, pp. 113–117.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 93, 104–110.

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