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Status and Prospects for Research on Strategic Communication Between Poland and France in the Period from mid-October 1938–December 1939

Stan i perspektywy badań nad komunikacją strategiczną między Polską a Francją w okresie od połowy października 1938 do grudnia 1939 r.

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the problem of strategic communication with regard to historical research. It covers Polish and French narratives and actions, taken and exercised by national, scientific elements, governmental institutions and opinion-shaping centres. It also describes elements related to how this kind of human activity influences decision-making processes, decision-makers and general public. The subject literature was presented and evaluated as well as research postulates were generated.

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STRESZCZENIE

Przedstawiono pojęcie komunikacji strategicznej w odniesieniu do badań historycznych i przyjęto, iż będzie ono obejmować przekaz informacyjno-propagandowy wypływający od czynników rządowych francuskich i polskich oraz od istotnych ośrodków opiniotwórczych we Francji i w Polsce, mający na celu przede wszystkim wpływanie na decydentów, ale i kształtowanie opinii publicznej. Dokonano przeglądu polskiej i francuskiej literatury przedmiotu oraz przedstawiono postulaty badawcze.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, Francja, komunikacja strategiczna, polska propaganda, francuska propaganda, sojusz polsko-francuski

THE TERM – STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The term ‘strategic communication’ is relatively young within the area of scientific research as it emerged just in the first years of the 20th century. It was used in management and quality sciences, and in security sciences¹. It has been rarely employed in history and humanities, but it does not necessarily mean that scientists exercising such disciplines had not been utilizing that term and related concepts.

If we accept one of the definitions that the strategic communication is related to information activities of the subject under research, such as states, which wanted to influence actions, views, opinions and politics. This also refers to building narratives that would create or strengthen the desired picture of the Government, Nation or a State. We can find such elements in many historical publications and biographies, which provide a lot of information on ways to shape the public opinion, on direct propaganda activities, media, including press, also diplomacy and politics. Of course, we have to keep the distance to the term and use it intelligently and knowledgeably in historical projects.

What would be also necessary is to take into consideration another term, i.e. *soft power*, which was used for the first time in 1980 by Joseph Nye² and accepted by the scientific community in 1991. This concept refers

¹ See: J. Nowicka, W. Załoga, Z. Ciekankowski, *Komunikacja strategiczna w naukach o zarządzaniu i jakości oraz w naukach o bezpieczeństwie*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania Ochroną Pracy Katowicach” 2018, 1 (14), pp. 193–202; T. Kacała, J. Lipińska, *Komunikacja strategiczna i public affairs*, Warszawa 2014.

² J.S. Nye, *Soft Power. Jak osiągnąć sukces w polityce światowej*, transl. J. Zaborowski, introduction R. Kuźniar, Warszawa 2007.

to the whole spectrum of propaganda and information activities, including efforts to alleviate tensions and conflicts, as well as engagement of many subjects to solve international policy problems by peaceful means.

At present, such a term is commonly used by scientists, mainly in research projects in the area of international policy. Many researchers are quite fascinated with this term and concept applied to modern projects³. However, introduction and employment of 'strategic communication' and 'soft power' to projects remain a challenge for many historians as it is the case of implementating modern terminology to a specific historical period.

As for challenges created by the participation in the project, the research and paper will cover so-called 'strategic communication' with regard to information and propaganda narratives generated by Polish and French governmental institutions, elements created by opinion-shaping centres in Poland and France and actions aimed at influencing decision-making processes and decision-makers as well as public opinion. What should be emphasized is the situation that the application of the term 'propaganda' is more synonymous to the present situations.

At the end of the 1930s, this term had no such pejorative meaning as it has today. There had not been no Ministries of Propaganda in democratic countries of the time. The situation was different in totalitarian states. In Germany, the Ministry for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment was established in 1933, and in Soviet Union the 'propaganda policy' was elevated to the high level and proved to be very effective for managing of the social situation in the country.

Democratic countries such as France or states, which had elements of authoritarian systems, such as Poland, often were outdistanced by Soviet and Nazi propaganda machines. However, this did not mean that such countries had not taken up such challenges to counter information and propaganda of their opponents.

This allowed to start research and prepare a paper for the *Kampania 1939* project in two areas: 1) to cover the problem of propaganda actions and information activities to support or weaken the Polish-French alliance; 2) to present the most influential narratives built by governmental entities, parties and private entities interested or involved in shaping Polish-French relations.

³ D. Miłoszewska, *Europejska soft power w kontekście rozważań Josepha Nye'a*, in: *Perspektywy rozwoju Unii Europejskiej po rozszerzeniu z 2007 – przegląd zagadnień*, ed. C. Trościak, Poznań 2009; P. Pacak, "Soft power" jako środek realizacji celów polityki zagranicznej państwa w systemie postwestfalskim, *Polskie Towarzystwo Stosunków Międzynarodowych*, 2014, <http://ptsm.edu.pl/> [access: 08.07.2022].

The research area includes policy, diplomacy, the military dimension and military strategies, but first of all – information channels built or influenced by the Government and non-governmental entities. In case of Polish-French relations, generated narratives were aimed at weakening or strengthening the alliance, and sending necessary signals to the international community and politicians, both from friendly and hostile countries, and of course to own general public.

In case of the project, we have to take into account how the spirit and the letter of the alliance were exploited for internal plays and plots in both countries, all to position itself in the international policy arena. It should be complemented by finding and evaluating the intent of strategic communication activities and efforts to distinguish between information and propaganda as well as between information and disinformation.

To wrap up this part, there are several dimension of strategic communication in Polish-French relations: 1) signals generated by French governmental and military elements directed to Polish equivalents and vice versa; 2) signals generated by allies and directed to Germany and Soviet Union, also to the United Kingdom, Italy and United States; 3) signals directed to own societies to get support to policies; 4) signals directed to opponents and supporters of Governments in allied countries; 5) signals generated by parties and private entities. As for the period covered by research, i.e. from mid-October 1938 till December 1939, this raises some controversies.

If the starting date, which is linked to the first weeks after the München Conference is readily accepted, the end date should be rather moved to the end of September or beginning of October 1939, i.e. to the time of establishing the Polish Government-in-exile in France or to the transfer of the Polish Government to London after the defeat of France by Germany, i.e. June–July 1940. If one of the options is accepted, it is possible to divide the period under research into several sub-periods, i.e.: October 1938–March 1939; 2) April 1939–August 1939; 3) September 1939; 4) October 1939, or possibly June–July 1940. The period under investigation as well as the significant number of problems and areas to be explored, evaluated and described forces us to limit our research activities to the most important issues only. This, however, should remain open for discussion during the research.

To present and assess strategic communication processes and activities in France and Poland, research activities would include studies on the press (journals, magazines and newspapers, periodicals and press reports), complemented by newsreels, radio programs and diplomatic documents. The focus would be on decision-makers and their official and public statements and declarations (for example, radio messages),

interviews of journalists with politicians and diplomats, as well as narratives inspired by governmental and non-governmental entities.

PERSPECTIVES OF RESEARCH ON INFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES

The Second Polish Republic had no Ministry for Propaganda. It was the Prime Minister, who was responsible for information and propaganda elements in national policies. However, there had been some elements involved in these types of activities. The Presidium of the Council of Ministers had the Press Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs – Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Press Office (P.VI). Since the mid-1936, the Special Task Force (Pol. Biuro Zadań Specjalnych, BZS) was established and operational, led by Major Mieczysław Lepecki.

In autumn 1938, Task Force was reinforced with the Press Office. Lepecki was additionally assigned to lead the Administration Board of the Polish Telegraphic Agency (Pol. Polska Agencja Telegraficzna, PAT). Most of press conferences were organized in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. Before the outbreak of WWII and just after start of hostilities, informing about issues related to the foreign policy was a responsibility of the Head of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Office, Wiktor Skiwski; military affairs were presented by officers from the Staff of the Polish Supreme Commander: Major Józef Skrzydlewski (II Branch, Main Staff, Information and Intelligence) and Major Zdzisław Żurawski (III Branch, Operations).

Only on 4 September 1939, President Ignacy Mościcki informed the public about establishment of the Ministry for Propaganda, led by Michał Grażyński, with Lepecki as his Deputy⁴. Due to the course of war, in practical terms the new entity had not started its operation.

The Władysław Sikorski Government established the new information office, also called the Centre for Information and Documentation (Pol. Centrala Informacji i Dokumentacji), with two elements: the Information Branch (Pol. Dział Informacyjny), led by Marian Seyda, and the Documentation Office (Pol. Dział Dokumentacyjny), headed by Stanisław Stroński⁵.

⁴ See more: G. Łukomski, *Propaganda polska u progu II wojny światowej*, in: *Kampania 1939 r. Polityka – społeczeństwo – kultura*, vol. 2, *Polityka i społeczeństwo. Imponderabilia, pamięć, kultura*, eds. M.P. Deszczyński, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2014, pp. 177–178; R. Habielski, *Polityka informacyjna i propagandowa rządu RP na emigracji 1939–1945*, “Dzieje Najnowsze” 1987, 19, 4, p. 53.

⁵ M. Hulas, *Goście czy intruzi? Rząd polski na uchodźstwie wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1943*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 167–168. Hulas wrote about the Information and Documentation Office / Minutes of the Meeting of Council of Ministers dated 8 October 1939, Stroński Report.

On 28 November 1939, the new „unofficial governmental periodical” started to be printed, i.e. “The Voice of Poland” (Pol. “Głos Polski”; Fr. “La Voix de la Pologne”)⁶. There had also been other magazines available in France: “The Voice” (Pol. “Słowo”), edited by Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, “Polish News” (Pol. “Wiadomości Polskie”), edited by Mieczysław Grydzewski and Zygmunt Nowakowski, „Fighting Poland” (Pol. “Polska Walcząca”) and “Clear as Day” edited by January Grzędziński⁷. On 11 November 1940, President Władysław Raczkiewicz issued the decree on establishment of the Ministry of Information and Documentation. The research should then also cover all above-mentioned organizations with the special focus on the Polish Telegraphic Agency PAT. Its main office was organized in Paris at Rue Bachaumont and it had very good radio and telegraphic equipment at its disposal.

In the Polish military, the Scientific-Educational Military Institute was established (Pol. Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Oświatowy, WINO) and since 1939 the Propaganda Office (Pol. Szefostwo Propagandy) within the structures of the Polish Main Staff (Pol. Sztab Główny). The Office was later restructured and attached, as the Military Propaganda and Education Office to the HQ of the Supreme Commander (Pol. Biuro Propagandy przy Kwaterze Głównej Naczelnego Wodza, BP KGNW). The military press was subordinated to the office, including “Żołnierz Polski” (Eng. “Polish Soldier”)⁸.

The Military Propaganda and Education Office was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Janusz Soboćko, later by Major Antoni Bogusławski and Major Adam Morbitzer. This entity was also responsible for editing and printing of the “Polska Walcząca”⁹ newspaper, led by Tymon Terlecki. Till September 1939, the Polish Embassy in Paris issued “Le Bulletin Périodique de la Presse Polonaises” (1918–1939).

In France, as in Poland, the information and propaganda functions of the Government had been decentralized. Press conferences were organized by respective governmental and ministerial offices. Quai d’Orsay had its own *Service d’information et de press*. On 29 July 1939, the French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier signed two decrees that were to regulate information and propaganda activities in France and established the

⁶ See more: R. Habielski, *Polityka*, pp. 53–54.

⁷ A.J. Cieślíkowa, *O człowieku który się nie zgadzał. Biografia pułkownika Januarego Grzędzińskiego 1891–1975*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 251–278.

⁸ See more: G. Łukomski, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–176; P. Łossowski, *Dyplomacja Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Z dziejów polskiej służby zagranicznej*, Warszawa 1992, p. 203.

⁹ R. Habielski, *Polityka*, p. 54.

office of the Commissioner General for Information, headed by famous writer Jean Giraudoux.

He was the person responsible for information in the French press and radio. Due to censorship regulations introduced by France during the war, it is possible to find many 'white spots', with fragments or even whole articles cut out with notes about the decision of censors and related legal provisions. Édouard Daladier as the Prime Minister attached great importance to media, with radio becoming his preferred element for information and propaganda. It should be noted here that recently some speeches of Daladier had been digitalized and are available now at the *YouTube* portal.

THE STATUS OF RESEARCH

Poland

In 2009, an international conference was organized by the University of Warsaw (UW) on the Polish Military September Campaign of 1939. It was the task of the Polish History Museum (Pol. Muzeum Historii Polski) together with the Institute of History, University of Warsaw (Pol. Instytut Historyczny UW). In 2013–2014, a two-volume monographic publication was published.

It was edited by Marek P. Deszczyński and Tymoteusz Pawłowski: *Kampania 1939 r. Polityka – społeczeństwo – kultura*, vol. 1, *Strategia*, vol. 2, *Polityka i społeczeństwo. Imponderabilia, pamięć, kultura*¹⁰ (Eng. *Campaign 1939 Policy – Society – Culture*, vol. 1, *Strategy*, vol. 2, *Policy and Society. Imponderables, Memory, Culture*).

Grzegorz Łukomski had been one of the authors who contributed significantly to above-mentioned publication with his article *Propaganda polska u progu II wojny światowej* (Eng. *Polish Propaganda on the Eve of WWII*). This author rightly stated that due to the lack of an entity responsible for propaganda in the Second Polish Republic, any activities in this dimension had a 'decentralized character' and it 'resulted in a lack of professionalism.'¹¹

¹⁰ *Kampania 1939 r. Polityka – społeczeństwo – kultura*, vol. 1, *Strategia*, eds. M.P. Deszczyński, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2013; *Kampania 1939 r. Polityka – społeczeństwo – kultura*, vol. 2, *Polityka i społeczeństwo. Imponderabilia, pamięć, kultura*, eds. M.P. Deszczyński, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2014.

¹¹ G. Łukomski, *Propaganda*, pp. 171–188.

I had submitted my articles to both volumes: *Polska w przekazie informacyjnym we Francji (październik 1938–październik 1939)* – Eng. *Poland in the French Narratives (October 1938–October 1939)* and *Polska a Francja (połowa kwietnia–październik 1939 r.)*, *Niektóre aspekty dyplomatyczne i wojskowe* (Eng. *Poland and France. Mid-April–October 1939. Diplomatic and Military Issues*)¹². Both articles referred to my earlier research and included elements that extended our knowledge on the topic: *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji? (Francja wobec Polski w latach 1938–1944)*¹³ – Eng. *Unwanted Ally of France? (France and Poland in 1938–1944)*. They will constitute a kind-of reference point for further research, also taken up in the current project.

I want to refer also to some subchapters from the book: *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji?* They could be useful for planning the current research. These are: *Czy utrzymać sojusz z Polską?* (Eng. *How to save the Alliance with Poland*), *Kontrowersji ciąg dalszy* (Eng. *Continuation of the Controversies*), *Nie będziemy umierać za Gdańsk* (Eng. *We do not Want to Die for Gdansk*), *Vive la Pologne*, *Będą się bić nawet, jeśli zostaną sami* (Eng. *They Will Fight, Even If Left Alone*), *Spektakl waleczności i bezsilności* (Eng. *The Spectacle of Bravery, Gallantry and Powerlessness*), *Potrzebni bohaterowie* (Eng. *Heroes Needed*), *Bohaterowie pozytywni* (Eng. *Positive Heroes*).

Authors of above-mentioned articles used press articles and diplomatic documents. Comparative of such sources allowed to restore intentions of French decision-makers on building narratives for Poland and international community on the eve of the next Great War and later – during the Polish September Military Campaign of 1939.

In the case of the French press, any researcher should be particularly careful. During the times of the French Third Republic, media and press, especially in Paris, played a significant political role. They presented opinions of different political groupings, put pressure on decision-makers, and tried to shape the public opinion. All French political parties had their own press titles. Journalistic groups had been easily bribed with different means and very often served as an information vehicle for national politicians and sometimes also for agents of foreign countries. Several embassies, like German and Soviet, built their own influence networks

¹² M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska w przekazie informacyjnym we Francji (październik 1938–październik 1939)*, in: *Kampania*, vol. 2, pp. 436–452; eadem, *Polska a Francja (połowa kwietnia–październik 1939 r.)*, *Niektóre aspekty dyplomatyczne i wojskowe*, in: *Kampania*, vol. 1, pp. 469–484.

¹³ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji? (Francja wobec Polski w latach 1938–1944)*, Warszawa 2003.

and groups of informers, some with good access and influence on editorial staffs of some titles and used financial means to pay off a number of journalists¹⁴.

Also the Polish Embassy in Paris and consulates scattered all over the France and colonies made significant efforts to influence the content of some articles published in central and local press¹⁵. After 1 September 1939, this role was played by the Polish Central Citizen Committee (Pol. Polski Centralny Komitet Obywatelski) and its propaganda section.

The topic of the Polish press in France was explored and evaluated by Andrzej Paczkowski, who prepared the work *Prasa i społeczność polska we Francji 1920–1940* (Eng. *Press and the Polish Community in France 1920–1940*)¹⁶ and by Rafał Habielski: *Polityka informacyjna i propagandowa rządu RP na emigracji 1939–1945* (Eng. *Information and Propaganda Policies of the Polish Government in-exile 1939–1945*) and *Wolność czy odpowiedzialność? Prasa i polityka w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Eng. *Freedom or Responsibility? Press and Politics in the Second Polish Republic*)¹⁷. Another important work was the print prepared by Anna Ambrochowicz-Gajownik on one of the Polish consulates in France: *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża. Konsulat polski w Marsylii w latach 1919–1940* (Eng. *In the Shadow of the Côte d’Azur. The Polish Consulate in Marseilles 1919–1940*)¹⁸. Especially the subchapter *Relacje z władzami miejscowymi* (Eng. *Relations with Local Authorities*) could be useful for the project as it touches several important issues.

¹⁴ See more in: S. Dullin, *Des hommes d’influences. Les ambassadeurs de Staline en Europe 1930–1939*, Paris 2001, Review: M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Sabine Dullin, Des hommes d’influences. Les ambassadeurs de Staline en Europe 1930–1939, Paris 2001, Payot*, ss. 383, “Dzieje Najnowsze” 2003, 35, 1, pp. 181–185.

¹⁵ See: W. Skóra, *Służba konsularna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Organizacja, kadry i działalność*, Toruń 2006, p. 881 and next. There had been a number of consular offices in France and in overseas territories: Consulates General in Paris, Lille and Marseille (in 1939 the level of this office was elevated from Consulate to Consulate General), consulates in Lyon, Strasbourg and Toulouse, Honorary Consulates in Algiers (Algeria), Bordeaux, Boulogne sur Mer, Casablanca (Marocco), Conakry (French West Africa), Dakar (French West Africa), Dunkirk., Hanoi and Saigon (since 1939, Indochina), Havre, Nantes, Nice, Oran (Algeria), Tananarive (Madagascar), Tanger (Marocco) and Tunis (Tunisia), Honorary Viceconsulate in Metz and consular agencies in Agen (since 1939), Beirut (Syria; Viceconsulate since 1939), Limoges (since 1939) and Périgueux (since 1939).

¹⁶ A. Paczkowski, *Prasa i społeczność polska we Francji 1920–1940*, Wrocław–Warszawa 1979.

¹⁷ R. Habielski, *Polityka*, pp. 53–75; idem, *Wolność czy odpowiedzialność? Prasa i polityka w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2013.

¹⁸ A. Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża. Konsulat polski w Marsylii w latach 1919–1940*, Warszawa 2019.

The author emphasized the importance of such relationships for consulates, especially in the case of the “Le Petit Marseillais”, the most frequently read regional newspaper. This referred mainly to good relations of consulate officials and the editorial staff of the newspaper. A. Ambrochowicz-Gajownik tried to approach the problem in a general way, i.e. taking into account the whole of Polish–French relations, Polish–French alliance and their impact on the regional level. She also presented a lot of information on cooperation of the Polish Consulate in Marseille with the “Les Amis de la Pologne” association.

Also noteworthy is the fragment, quoted by the Author, from the “Le Petit Marseillais” dated 24 September 1939, on the meeting of Consul Jan Rozwadowski with members of the French Chamber of Commerce, with many statements and declarations of sympathy to the heroic fight of the Polish Nation with the aggressor.

Of course, the question arises about intentions and reasons for such declarations. We really do not know if those had been just courtesy statements and why French representatives used such forms and sentences. What should be added here is that in September 1939 most of the French media presented very favorable and friendly position towards Poland. In addition, narratives of the media at the national level played a role and influenced the general tone of the local press.

Among many monographs on Polish–French relations, one of the most important is the work of Maria Pasztor *Polska w oczach francuskich kół rządowych w latach 1924–1939* (Eng. *Poland in the Eyes of the French Government Circles in 1924–1939*). It includes many mentions about a number of critical statements on Poland as a French ally¹⁹. The period important for the project is not very well covered in the print but Pasztor’s research had been a good starting point for other authors, such as Małgorzata Nosowska and Przemysław Żukowski. The work of M. Nosowska *O Francuzce, która pokochała Polskę Rosa Bailly i stowarzyszenie Les Amis de la Pologne* (Eng. *About the Frenchwoman, who fell in love with Poland. Rosa Bailly and the Les Amis de la Pologne Association*)²⁰ includes many important facts from the period just before the outbreak and in the first months of WWII. The author presented the biography of the main character of the book and elements important for description and evaluation of her association activities. The “Les Amis de la Pologne” association operated out of the political dimension and conducted propaganda activities in support

¹⁹ M. Pasztor, *Polska w oczach francuskich kół rządowych w latach 1924–1939*, Warszawa 1999.

²⁰ M. Nosowska, *O Francuzce, która pokochała Polskę. Rosa Bailly i stowarzyszenie Les Amis de la Pologne*, Lublin 2012.

of Poland. The promoted picture of Poland had been a country friendly and allied with France, important for situation in Europe and with excellent tourist qualities.

The most important for our work could be the Chapter VII of the work titled *Czas burzy* (Eng. *The Storm*) on the 1939–1940 period. It should be underlined that it was the time when the French press wrote very favorably about Poland as France needed something and somebody to present as hero and heroic acts. It does not mean that Bailly just joined the trend. She had been just very friendly to Poland and most likely wanted to protest against actions and atrocities committed by Germany and Soviet Union.

We should first of all explore and assess those issues of “*Les Amis de la Pologne*”, which described methods, tactics, techniques and procedures of the Red Army beatings, lootings, executions and crimes that could had been attributed to the Soviet Union. It should be noted that although French press mentioned some facts related to the Soviet invasion of Poland, most of its attention was given to the actions of Germany and its Wehrmacht.

What is missing in the print of M. Nossowska is an effort to take a broader view on Bailly’s contacts with the Polish Government, Polish Embassy in Paris and Polish consulates during the interwar period. The author noted facts of this type of relations, presented some examples, but this had not been done in the context of the Polish information and propaganda policies and personal relations with representatives of Polish diplomacy. All this brings up a question about Bailly’s independence in her actions. She led the association that operated within the French territory but conducted propaganda activities in support of Poland. Hopefully, we would be able to find materials and documents to support a hypothesis that Bailly had been to an extent directed by Polish or French entities to work on strengthening the Polish-French alliance. Another possibility could be that her activities reflected intentions of circles supporting the alliance but had no connections with the Government.

Also Przemysław Marcin Żukowski presented Rosa Bailly in his book: *Na przełomie pokoju i wojny. Francja w oczach polskiej opinii publicznej od wiosny 1938 roku do lata 1940* (Eng. *Between Peace and War. France in the Eyes of the Polish Public Opinion since Spring 1938 till the Summer of 1940*). He rightly stated that Bailly stood out in her opinions on Poland. In addition, French citizens lacked the basic knowledge on our Country, not to mention the knowledge and understanding of our history.

It would also be necessary to draw attention of readers to the Polish Press, graphics and cartoons, caricatures of politicians and VIPs,

comments on meetings and conferences from 1938–1940 with satirical comments. These are really very unique materials. An important part of his work are annexes enclosed to the publication with military and diplomatic documents as well as with testimonies and recollections. One of the most important is the Document #4 of Józef Opieński, who was the Polish Radio announcer in Warsaw and then in Paris.

Another important book is the print of Wojciech Mazur *Lot ku burzy. Polska w przygotowaniach mocarstw Zachodu do wojny powietrznej marzec–sierpień 1939* (Eng. *Flight to the Storm. Poland and War Preparations of the West to the Air Warfare March–August 1939*)²¹. The monograph focuses on military elements but results of this research could also be used for the project and serve as a reference point for further archival searches, for example in the Polish Central Military Archive in Warsaw, Military Archive in Vincennes and Diplomatic Archive in Paris.

Wojciech Mazur wanted first of all to analyse concept, plans for air operations and decision-making processes of western powers as well as to present Polish-French-British contacts of Air Forces with regard to planning and operations. The latter aspect should be included to the project. What is also needed is exploration and evaluation of an extent to which related narratives were built by decision-makers and politicians, and a degree to which it reflected realities of Polish-French relations.

This author presented the assumption that in available sources there is no precise answer to the question if Polish military and political entities had been aware of military problems of the French ally. Most likely, such knowledge was fragmentary and limited. At that time French Armed Forces were considered the largest and best equipped army in Europe.

Mazur quoted the report of the Polish Air Attaché in France, Franciszek Piniński, who sent reports on problems and the combat readiness and capabilities of the French Air Force. So far, such materials had been only partially exploited, explored and assessed by researchers. As for the project, one of the aspects should be assessed – how this information was used by politicians and military commanders, also in the information sphere and in propaganda activities. The most impressive part is the Chapter III *Sojusznik, którego nie było* (Eng. *The Ally Who Was Not There*) with its selection and evaluation of archival materials from France and United Kingdom. The author also included documents prepared by or signed by the Commander in Chief of the French Air Force (Général d'Armée Aérienne; Eng. Air Chief Marshal), general Joseph Vuillemin.

²¹ W. Mazur, *Lot ku burzy. Polska w przygotowaniach mocarstw Zachodu do wojny powietrznej marzec–sierpień 1939*, Kraków 2017.

The subject literature shows that France did not want to be involved in any form of air support and assistance to Poland. Mazur presents an opinion that the whole issue had been much more complicated and he used new materials and documents. They prove that in the springtime of 1939, France considered some options of support and assistance to the Polish Air Force, but on its own terms. That would have led to the situation of overall French control on air operations and putting Poland in the role of a mere supplicant, who had to accept any decision of the French ally. In the current project, this problem should also be included and a question submitted how France wanted to use such elements in propaganda activities or as a kind of deterrence with regard to Germany. Polish reactions and decision should be examined and evaluated as well.

As for another publication we can refer to during the project, there is the biography of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Józef Beck, prepared by Marek Kornat and Mariusz Wołos²². These historians touched issues of the Beck's 'Black Legend' and the negative attitude of the French Government to the Polish Minister. Such French narrative was intentional and should be included to the research.

As for Polish-French relations in 1938–1939, despite the extensive source base available, there are still items, which need further elaboration and clarification, mainly due to lack of documents and source materials. There are also issues that could not be interpreted decidedly. One of them is the problem of alleged influence of France on the internment of the Polish Government in Romania.

Such claim was presented by the French researcher Yves Beauvois, who pointed out close relations and intensive contacts of the French Ambassador to Poland Léon Noël, who came into conflict and been at odds with Minister Beck, with the French Ambassador in Bucharest, Adrien Thierry²³. Beauvois stated that Noël exploited the course of events to get rid of Beck and his team, and replace it with people loyal to Paris. However, so far, we do not have any substantiation for such a hypothesis, but it is clear that France set the stage with its propaganda for the change of the Polish Government in September 1939. In theory, the Alliance was to function effectively, but it was just Poland, which was a loyal and dedicated ally.

As for biographical writings, we should take into account the work of Agnieszka Cieślukowa *O człowieku, który się nie zgadzał*. *Biografia*

²² M. Kornat, M. Wołos, *Józef Beck. Biografia*, Kraków 2020.

²³ Y. Beauvois, *Stosunki polsko-francuskie w okresie "dziwnej wojny"*, Kraków 1991; idem, *Francja a rządy pułkowników (wrzesień 1936–wrzesień 1939)*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1999, 31, 3; idem, *Léon Noël de Laval à de Gaulle via Pétain (1888-1987)*, Paris 2001, pp. 131–181.

pułkownika Januarego Grzędzińskiego 1891–1975 (Eng. About the Man who Did Not Agree. The Biography of Colonel January Grzedzinski)²⁴. This former adjutant to Marshal Piłsudski was in Paris, during the time in question. Most likely during the summer 1939 he was executing the special task for the II Branch of the Polish Main Staff. Grzędziński was also the editor of the “Świat i Polska” (Eng. “World and Poland”), “Czarno na białem” (Eng. “Clear As Day”) and “Polska Walcząca” (Eng. “Fighting Poland”) in Coëtquidan.

The exploration of issues of the last newspaper can bring clear, measurable and real results. A. Cieślikowa has made quite an effort to describe and evaluate some events in Paris, especially the one 1924–1939 was part of, i.e. *International Conference in Defence of Democracy, Peace and Human Dignity* in Maison de la Chimie in 13–15 May 1939. It gathered many significant figures from the worlds of literature, policy and diplomacy. During this meeting Grzędziński delivered the speech and asked the audience ‘is the French Army able to break through the Siegfried Line?’²⁵.

In September 1939, Grzędziński took part in many meetings with Polish and French participants to build up and strengthen the spirit of the Polish-French alliance. He also initiated many efforts to prepare and distribute petitions and addresses to French authorities calling for a joint front against Germany.

France

In the project, we can use the biography of the Head of the French Government Édouard Daladier prepared by Élisabeth du Réau²⁶. During the period in question, Daladier held the positions of the Minister of War, and since 13 September 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Réau focused on political and diplomatic elements of Daladier’s activities, but she also quoted fragments of his radio addresses and press releases, which often had information and propaganda character. Polish issues had been their important elements. A valuable addition are radio addresses of the French Prime Minister available now on the *YouTube* portal.

We have also the biography of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, who held the office from 13 April 1938 till 13 September 1939 – Georges Bonnet, written by Jacques Puyaubert²⁷. In this case, we can explore and assess extensive archival resources and also materials from *Archives*

²⁴ A.J. Cieślikowa, *op. cit.*

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

²⁶ E. du Réau, *Édouard Daladier 1884–1970*, Paris 1993.

²⁷ J. Puyaubert, *Georges Bonnet (1889–1973). Les combats d’un pacifiste*, Rennes 2007.

Audiovisuelles in Paris. This author also used other important sources such as the diary of Raymond de Sainte-Suzanne, high-ranking Quai d'Orsay official²⁸.

Bonnet had been a pacifist and a typical representative of the French appeasement policy. Examination of his press interviews, article and radio addresses could be used as a good source for research on propaganda and what we call now strategic communication. Another element that is worth our attention is the biography of the French Ambassador to Poland in 1935–1939, Léon Noël, written by Yves Beauvois²⁹.

Beauvois assumed that despite the situation of lack of any direct evidence Noël was responsible for internment of the Polish Government and Beck in Romania in September 1939. François Delpla criticised this position in his work: *Churchill et les Français. Six hommes dans la tourmente. Septembre 1939–juin 1940*³⁰. He just copied the critical approach of French scientists to the Polish foreign 1939 policy and decisions of Minister Beck, although he also confirmed that France abandoned Poland to its own fate and did not comply with all the agreements.

Another important biography is the work on Henri de Kerillis by Jean-Yves Boulic and Annik Lavaure³¹. Kerillis was linked with *Indépendants républicains* and voted in the French Parliament against the München Conference's decision and solutions. He wrote a number of articles for "l'Époque" and "L'Écho de Paris", in which he tried to convince his compatriots to resist decisively the policy of Germany and Hitler, and criticised Minister Bonnet for his pacifism. During the summer 1939, he many times prepared articles positive for Poland (he even used the catchphrase *Vive la Pologne*). Kerillis also emphasized the role of the Polish-French Alliance, but he wanted it to be complemented by an Alliance with the Soviet Union, all to counter the threat from Germany

In 1978, the book *La France et les Français 1938–1939* was published³². This print started the discussion on attitude of the French society and French public opinion. Programs of many different media were analysed, including radio, film screenings in cinemas and the press. Topics related to WWII's main events were supplemented by the description and

²⁸ R. de Sainte-Suzanne, *Une politique étrangère. Le Quai d'Orsay et Saint-John Perse à l'épreuve d'un regard, novembre 1938–juin 1940*, Paris 2000.

²⁹ Y. Beauvois, *Léon Noël*; Beauvois is also the author of the book: *Stosunki francusko-polskie w okresie drôle de guerre*, transl. I. Kania, Kraków 1991.

³⁰ F. Delpla, *Churchill et les Français. Six hommes dans la tourmente. Septembre 1939–juin 1940*, Paris 2000 (1st edition 1993), pp. 218–219.

³¹ J.-Y. Boulic, A. Lavaure, *Henri de Kerillis 1889–1958. L'absolu patriote*, Rennes 1997.

³² *La France et les Français 1938–1939*, eds. R. Rémond, J. Bourdin, Paris 1978.

analysis of ordinary French citizens' life. Author pointed out at the pacifism of French farmers and the rural population, as well of members of socialist party. This topic was elaborated further by Yvon Lacaze in the publication *L'opinion publique française et la crise de Munich*³³, and by Pierre Laborie in *L'opinion française sous Vichy. Les Français et la crise d'identité nationale 1936–1944*³⁴.

Laborie had made quite an effort to tackle the problem of French stereotypes of the time on the role and grandness of the country and ideas of an ordinary Frenchman life. He emphasized that during the München Conference in 1938, there had been a conflict between consumerism model of life and French national interests that included the principle not to give in to demands of Hitler. Author stated that if the French Government launched decisive actions against Germany in 1938, and again in 1939, including a military operation, it would have done it against its own society.

Laborie used the term 'blocked society', which did not want to learn and know anything about an international security situation. Such conditions led to a national identity crisis in France during WWII. Such problems surfaced several times also after the war. Such disorientation of the general public and public opinion, as indicated by Laborie, was linked to posture and deliberate activities of French politicians, who wanted great and powerful France. It was this myth they perpetuated.

On the eve of WWII, international and domestic policies had been becoming a kind of drama that had been played out of the regular social life. Therefore, issues explored and evaluated by Laborie have to be included to the project, but after proper additional examination and verification. They can be useful to formulate next research questions and find answers regarding political and social conditions in France at the time. It could also help to identify limitations of the time and barriers purposefully created by French decision-makers for its own society and signals generated for the Polish Government.

The topic of French pacifism should also be included in the research. There is already quite an extensive subject literature on these type issues. Maurice Vaïsse³⁵ wrote that such French approach had become an inher-

³³ Y. Lacaze, *L'opinion publique française et la crise de Munich*, Bern 1991. This author has also published the work *La France et Munich. Etude d'un processus décisionnel en matière de relations internationales*, Bern 1992.

³⁴ P. Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy. Les Français et la crise d'identité nationale 1936–1944*, 1st edition, Paris 1990 (2nd edition 2001).

³⁵ M. Vaïsse, *Le pacifisme français dans les années trente*, "Relations Internationales" 1988, 53, pp. 37–52. See more: J.-B. Barbier, *Le pacifisme dans l'histoire de France*, Paris 1966;

ent part of the political and military life of the country. These had not only been efforts to maintain peace, even at all costs, but actions linked with plans to reform the country. They symbolised moral and religious values and even became the synonym of patriotism.

Such trends had been very strong in socialist, communist, radical, Christian democrat and veteran groupings and organizations. Such issues were presented by Yves Santamaria in his work *Le pacifisme, une passion française* and *L'enfant du malheur. Le Parti communiste Français dans la Lutte pour la paix (1914–1947)*³⁶. This author meticulously analyzed the resistance and sometimes public and political hostility towards war as a social and political phenomenon. He also linked attitudes of Frenchmen objecting to the participation in any armed conflict with a social 'revolution' trend, connected to changes in life conditions and revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union.

According to Santamaria, the French pacifism was based on values of the Western civilisation and culture of peace. He also wrote that even a tendency emerged to 'save France', which functioned well up until 1944. In practical terms, the *drôle de guerre* lasted during the period 1939–1944³⁷. This author also analysed the programme and activities of right-wing groupings, such as *L'Action française*.

The integral nationalism of Charles Maurras included both anti-Semitic and antipathic elements and presented a lack of confidence towards other nationalities in France. His ideology had pieces of Christian democracy and the vision of restoring the monarchy in France. It was anti-republican and was linking the weakness of France in 1939 with its national political system. Maurras' attitude was clearly anti-Soviet and considered the conflict of Germany with Soviet Union as the only possible option for the future course of events. Such posture presented a view of necessity to direct German political and military efforts to the East. We should all agree with Santamaria in his assessments of these groupings and his criticism to events that could have disrupted the peace in the Western Europe. It should be noted that *L'Action française* negatively assessed policies and action of the French Government and very often used the Polish card. This group was also accusing the French diplomacy of building wrong alliances with countries in Central and Eastern Europe and making decisions to enter into war conditional on compliance with

M. Angenot, *L'Antimilitarisme: idéologie et utopie*, Paris 2004; J.-P. Biondi, *La Mêlée des pacifistes (1914–1945). La grande dérive*, Paris 2000.

³⁶ Y. Santamaria, *Le pacifisme, une passion française*, Paris 2005; idem, *L'enfant du malheur. Le Parti communiste Français dans la Lutte pour la paix (1914–1947)*, Paris 2002.

³⁷ Y. Santamaria, *Le pacifisme*, p. 148.

the decision of Poland to fight with Germany. *L'Action française* also was accusing Poland of provocations and pursuit of a military solution to the conflict with Germany³⁸.

Another piece should be added here as one of the most important moves for pacifists was made already on 4 May 1939. It was the famous article of Marcel Déat *Mourir pour Dantzig*, published in "L'Oeuvre". Polish politicians considered this event as prepared at the inspiration of Bonnet³⁹. However, there is no solid evidence for this. However, it is true that Déat had close contacts with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. He mentioned in his memoirs that due to a difficult situation in Europe during the spring 1939, a strong statement was needed ('dire en langage cru')⁴⁰, to protest against madness of giving Poland political and military guarantees by Great Britain and France.

Déat, the publicist, philosopher and member of the Parliament, used the press to express outrage over the decision of the French Government to get involved in solving problems of such a remote country as Poland. These problems and the political career of Déat, from socialism to national-socialism, were examined and assessed by Jean-Paul Cointet⁴¹. This author presented, in a very interesting way ideas and political activities of Déat and his role in the group of pacifists in the French Parliament. It also included cases of calling Poland to reach an agreement with Germany in September 1939 and pressure on the French Government to defend peace.

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³⁸ M. Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny*, p. 144.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

⁴⁰ M. Déat, *Mémoires politiques*, Paris 1989, p. 466.

⁴¹ J.-P. Cointet, *Marcel Déat. Du socialisme au national-socialisme*, Paris 1998.

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