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Status and Prospects for Research on Polish on the Functioning Voivodeship and District Administration of the Republic of Poland in the Period since mid-October 1938 till October 1939.

Stan i perspektywy badań nad funkcjonowaniem administracji wojewódzkiej i powiatowej RP w okresie od połowy października 1938 do października 1939 r.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of the article is to evaluate the current status of research on Polish Voivodeship and District Administration just before the WWII and during the Polish September Military Campaign of 1939. Available sources had been analyzed and research perspective were presented in the paper. It also includes assessment of structures and effectiveness of the Polish administration during the time of the Second Polish Republic,

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its place and role in the mobilisation process (in military, industrial and agricultural aspects of this activity), problems of payments in kind for the defense, food supply and assistance to families of mobilized soldiers. The effectiveness of the administration after the breakout of the armed conflict will also be investigated, as well as place and role of Civilian Commissioners, and usefulness and value of evacuation procedures.

Key words: Second Polish Republic, Polish September Military Campaign of 1939, voivode, starost, district head, administration

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest próba oceny aktualnego stanu badań w zakresie działalności administracji wojewódzkiej i powiatowej w okresie bezpośrednio poprzedzającym wybuch II wojny światowej, jak i w trakcie trwania kampanii polskiej 1939 r. Przeanalizowane zostały uwarunkowania źródłoznawcze prezentowanej problematyki, jak również zarysowano perspektywy badawcze. Obejmują one m.in. funkcjonowanie aparatu administracyjnego w okresie II RP, jej znaczenie w kontekście procesu mobilizacji (osobowej, przemysłowej, rolnej etc.), kwestii świadczeń rzeczowych, aprowizacji, ale i pomocy dla rodzin powołanych rezerwistów. W kontekście wydarzeń po 1 września 1939 r. przeanalizowane powinny zostać postawy administracji po wybuchu wojny, funkcjonowanie instytucji komisarzy cywilnych czy praktyczne wdrożenie procedur ewakuacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Druga Rzeczpospolita, kampania polska 1939, wojewoda, starosta, administracja

Before making any generalizations and undertaking efforts to take a comprehensive look into the research status on Polish Voivodeship and District level administration before WWII and in the context of Polish defense preparations, it is necessary to make some reservations.

Firstly, the project-defined timeframe should be treated symbolically. Main accents should be placed for the time from October 1938, but we shall remember that defense preparations started well before that date. The lack of administrative background, proper exploration and evaluation of events and actions since the end of 1935 could distort the real picture of the time and we could miss some important developments and make mistakes in assessing the essence and intensity of different activities within the administrative dimension¹. As for final actions and undertakings of the Polish local administration, it is necessary to use the cut-off date of 6 October 1939².

¹ Authors of work on defense preparations emphasized that inspections and control of mobilization elaborates started after the new mobilization plan entered into force. However, according to source materials, it is possible to show that audit activities at the district level started already in 1935–1936; K. Stepan, A. Wesołowski, *To proste – będziemy się bić. Polskie przygotowania obronne (marzec–sierpień 1939)*, Warszawa 2019, p. 208.

² The establishment of the *Polish Victory Service* (Pol. *Służba Zwycięstwu Polski*, SZP) could be assumed as the cutoff date, as this started the organization of the local

The second doubt stems from the problem of terminology. We will use the term 'Voivodeship Administration' for organs and structures of local general administration at the voivodeship and district level, i.e. Voivodes and Heads of District and local Administration (Starosts)³. Local administration had been the responsibility of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with some responsibilities delegated from a number of ministries (as in the case of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Enlightenment, which was responsible for denominational policy. Local educational administration was subordinated to the regional School Superintendents and School Inspectors).

The authority and responsibilities of Voivodes and Starosts with regard to elements of non-consolidated administration were regulated by the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers, which defined Voivodes and Starosts as representatives of the Government at the local level⁴, but they had been a kind of soft power. For example, Voivode was authorized to organize periodical meetings, for example with a President of a Regional Court.

Just before the Second World War, meetings with representatives of other powers had been organized quite frequently, but their impact was limited and practical results incomplete as this format required close cooperation of different elements of State structures⁵.

As for main activities and areas of activity for local Government administration, it is necessary to take into account its specific nature. These State elements had a hierarchical structure and their particular decisions, actions and initiatives were mostly dependent on decisions and regulations issued by central authorities⁶. It had a very practical impact and manifestation. Instructions, guidelines and interpretations were literally re-written at the voivodeship level and issued as Voivode original documents. Any analytical effort in the area of local administration organs would therefore require to be in close touch with researchers working on history of central administration. The next element that ensured the close cooperation of all segments of the administration was the State

administration structures of the Polish Underground State. However, it should be noted that on 27 September 1939 the Civil Commissioner, Franciszek Sokół, still desked at the Navy Command.

³ W. Kozyra, *Polityka administracyjna ministrów spraw wewnętrznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1918–1939*, Lublin 2009, p. 28.

⁴ Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1931, no. 66, item 546.

⁵ A lot depended on local conditions, experience and position of a Voivode and his status within the ruling establishment. To see this, it is just necessary to compare status and activities of Michał Grażyński and Józef Tymiński.

⁶ W. Witkowski, *Historia administracji w Polsce 1764–1989*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 332–336.

Police, which was, during peacetime, formally subordinated to elements of general administration⁷.

Of course, we would have cases, with regard to the time in question, that such assumptions and propositions were not always justified. After the breakout of the War, decisions of Voivodes and Starosts depended not only on Ministry of Internal Affairs instructions and guidelines, but also on the military factor. Instructions of military commanders of different levels operating in the area and Commanders of operational level units with Civilian Commissioners affiliated to their staffs, had also to be taken into account. With the failure of initial evacuation plans, the big part in planning and execution of such activities was played by heads of local administration. They had to take individual decisions, establish new directions and procedures for evacuation, crossing the border or moving personnel deeper into the Country.

As for the subject literature on the role and place of civil administration in national defense preparations and activities during the September 1939 military campaign, present achievements could be evaluated as rather modest. As for older prints, two elements should be noted here: Volume 1 of *Polskie Siły Zbrojne* on Polish defense preparations and another important source *Wojna obronna Polski 1939*⁸.

As for synthetic and general works on the topic, the print of Alicja Bernaś-Kostynowicz should be mentioned as it focuses on defense preparations of the civil administration and activities of some social organizations (before and after 1 September 1939)⁹. Also the paper of Kamil Stepan and Andrzej Wesołowski touched on defense issues but only a small part of the work was dedicated to such elements as the attention of authors was focused on central administration structures and organs (not only on the Ministry of Internal Affairs)¹⁰. As for this specific book, we should remember and take into account an album character of the publication. Another important print is the source edition prepared by the same authors (more about this a little bit later in this article)¹¹. A. Wesołowski

⁷ In this context, it is necessary to present the issue of establishment of local structures supporting security activities (auxiliary security elements), which were to support the State Police.

⁸ *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej*, vol. 1, *Kampania wrześniowa 1939*, part 1, *Polityczne i wojskowe położenie Polski przed wojną*, Londyn 1951; *Wojna obronna Polski 1939. Wybór źródeł*, eds. E.J. Kozłowski et al., Warszawa 1968.

⁹ A. Bernaś-Kostynowicz, *Spółczesność polskie w wojnie obronnej 1939. Współdziałanie ludności cywilnej z wojskiem w okresie zagrożenia i działań wojennych*, Warszawa 1988.

¹⁰ K. Stepan, A. Wesołowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–228.

¹¹ *Przygotowania obronne państwa 1935–1939*, vol. 1, *Prawo i administracja*, ed. A. Wesołowski, "Wojskowe Teki Archiwalne" 2014, 6.

touched similar issues, but he presented only a small and partial picture in his article published several years ago¹².

As for the chronological dimension of the paper, the natural caesura to make assessments of Polish local administration (not only) is 1 September 1939. Therefore, administrative decisions, plans and activities should be evaluated both through the prism of the upcoming armed conflict and also after the 1 September 1939. The cut-off date, i.e. 31 October 1939, has a contractual character. Evacuation of central authorities from the territory of the Second Polish Republic, during the night of 17/18 September 1939, also comprised the evacuation of officials of local administration. Such activities continued, where possible, in the next days, both in the official way and as well as on one's own. It is not possible to indicate the date when the local administration ceased to function. Dates of such developments are also not identical with the time German troops started to occupy the area as the planned evacuation activities had been conducted earlier (for some incidents evacuation was more similar to running away than to organized withdrawal and flight¹³).

TILL 31 AUGUST 1939

As for the subject literature on the Second Polish Republic administrative apparatus, structures, institutions and organs, some progress has been made in last decades. This assessment also refers to analyses of functioning of general administration elements at the central, voivodeship and district levels.

As for administrative mechanics of the central general administration and its relations with the local elements, the most useful is the work of Roman Hausner¹⁴, and as for newest publications – papers of Waldemar Kozyra and Janusz Mierzwa¹⁵.

However, it should be remembered that a number of mobilization tasks were executed by cities with the special status, as for example the

¹² A. Wesołowski, *Przygotowania władz cywilnych II Rzeczypospolitej do funkcjonowania w warunkach wojny, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem okresu 1935–1939*, in: *Bezpieczeństwo militarne Polski 1918–1945*, vol. 3, *Aspekty wojskowe*, Siedlce 2017, pp. 337–407.

¹³ P. Cichoracki, *Droga ku anatemie. Wacław Kostek-Biernacki (1884–1957)*, Warszawa 2009, p. 381.

¹⁴ R. Hausner, *Pierwsze dwudziestolecie administracji spraw wewnętrznych*, Warszawa 1939.

¹⁵ W. Kozyra, *Urząd Wojewódzki w Lublinie w latach 1919–1939*, Lublin 1999; idem, *Polityka*; J. Mierzwa, *Starostowie Polski międzywojennej. Portret zbiorowy*, Kraków 2012.

municipality of Krakow. This was possible due to Presidential Decree of 28 December 1934 on regulating jurisdiction, processes and procedures in some governmental sections. It changed a number of provisions of the Presidential Decree of 19 January 1928 on Organization and Responsibilities of National General Administration¹⁶. With this legal act, the Minister of Internal Affairs, was able to task local and district level authorities with duties related to national defense and military affairs.

Generally, the subject literature does not provide answers how above-mentioned processes and procedures had been implemented on the local level¹⁷. The first reason for such state of affairs was the faint interest of researchers in projects on such topics¹⁸. Secondly, even if some authors tried to approach problems in an integrated, competent and comprehensive manner, it was the problem of defense preparations that had been the main area of their interest (probably, it was due to the fact that most of publications had been prepared as a result of particular projects, not related to defense and security issues). As the result, we have now to start with a basic research and collect necessary data and information, using available archival materials¹⁹.

The Polish administration had been preparing itself to times of war from the very first moments of independence. The main focus had been to work on crisis and conflict management mechanics, processes, and procedures. Different manuals, regulations and guidelines were issued, and now they have to be carefully examined and evaluated. On a margin of these deliberations, it is necessary to mention that the subject literature noted and provided some assessments (although treated perfunctorily) on administrative reforms introduced during last years before WWII. They were to adjust territorial elements of the general administration to the military structures²⁰. Finally, independently from specific problems and challenges related to the upcoming armed conflict, the local administration had to continue with its regular business and execute everyday tasks in the peacetime. It did not exclude more intensive activities in certain more important and urgent areas. One of the most essential was the law

¹⁶ Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1934, no. 10, item 976.

¹⁷ It is to mention that sometimes authors mixed different administrative and political systems and treated local authorities as a part of State administrative structures.

¹⁸ J. Mierzwa, *Polska lokalna*, in: *Wokół nowej syntezy dziejów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. W. Mędrzecki, *Metamorfozy Społeczne*, vol. 23, Warszawa 2019, pp. 67–70.

¹⁹ This unnecessarily could be a hopeless challenge as more fonds and files generated by local structures survived than those of general administration elements.

²⁰ A.J. Mielcarek, *Podziały terytorialno-administracyjne II Rzeczypospolitej w zakresie administracji zespolonej*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 59–60; J. Mierzwa, *Starostowie*, p. 189.

and order enforcement. This included the establishment of the Auxiliary Security Service, cooperation with Fire Departments, information policy and censorship²¹, as well as avoiding social unrest and problems related to banking, in case citizens wanted to withdraw their deposits and clear accounts (in microscale, this was done by supervising local, community saving banks).

There is no doubt that with such approach one of the main areas of interest should be participation of general administration in mobilisation – with regard to human resources, and also to industrial, agricultural and public health dimensions. What should be firstly explored is the range and scope of administration engagement in particular phases of mobilisation. In practical terms, it would be useful to employ information on the March 1939 mobilisation, problems of general administration structures at that time, lessons identified and learned, actions taken. We know that some conclusions were reached, mainly with regard to vehicles markings and penalties for delivery of faulty equipment. Therefore, we should, for example, follow actions of local administration on updating of different inventories, supplies and equipment, updating of registries of associations and social and political activists. The work of K. Stepan and Ryszard Rybka²² could be used for the purpose, although their information on administration is just a small part of data related to the military. On the margins of this specific issue, another element should also be evaluated – mobilisation of general administration officials and employees as well as efforts to withdraw some personnel from the conscription process.

The separate issue is the question of provisions in kind, personal services and contributions²³. Such elements exemplify problems of operation of general administration on integrated platforms, as in the case of central, civilian central institutions and ministries, for example directives and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms. At the voivodeship administration

²¹ The problem had a wider and more general reach, related not only to inspiring some narratives directed at foreign press or ethnic minorities, but also linked with the intensification of the struggle with pornographic publications; G. Wrona, *Nadzór nad prasą w Krakowie (1918–1939)*, Kraków 2017, *passim*; See also: A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska w latach 1918–1939*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1980, pp. 230–237.

²² R. Rybka, K. Stepan, *Najlepsza broń: plan mobilizacyjny „W” i jego ewolucja*, Warszawa 2010.

²³ For a wider economic context – See: M. Tkaczuk, *Daniny w naturze w skarbowości II Rzeczypospolitej. Studium prawnohistoryczne*, Toruń 2019, pp. 50–51; See also: M.J. Kornarski, *Świadczenia na rzecz wojska w czasie pokoju w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej na przykładzie obowiązku dostarczania mechanicznych środków przewozowych*, “*Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio G*” 2021, 68, 1, pp. 17–42.

level, the agricultural administration was subordinated to a Voivode. This was closely linked to the voivodship and district administration elements supporting families of reservists called up for military service in the spring and summer 1939.

Such problems had been explored by the above-mentioned authors (A. Bernaś-Kostynowicz, K. Stepan, A. Wesołowski), and also by Dariusz Rodziewicz²⁴. This research area also included organization of different forms of social assistance and support (community social assistance committees). Such elements were responsible, together with social organizations, to provide necessary support and assistance. Their responsibilities also included medical aid and other types of support.

Defense preparations of the Polish administration also included elements of cooperation with social organizations. This problem had been already explored and it has its own subject literature. What should be noted are efforts of administration and pressure on officials to engage actively in local initiatives. In case of local administration, we would have many cases for research with regard to cooperation with selected social organizations (political and individual preferences and relationships of Voivodes and Starosts played here a role).

Numerous paramilitary and veteran organizations were also of significant importance²⁵. One of main elements of cooperation (and not only in weeks and months just before the outbreak of the armed conflict in Poland) had been committees organizing military training and physical education that could prepare citizens to organize or reinforce voluntary units. As for passive air defense, the Polish Red Cross was also involved²⁶. Those were main categories that connected local administration elements

²⁴ D. Rodziewicz, *Obowiązek świadczeń wojennych w systemie obronnym Polski w latach 1919–1939*, Oświęcim 2017.

²⁵ See: P. Wrona, *Armia Komendanta. Związek Strzelecki na Lubelszczyźnie w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2019; M. Wiśniewska, *Związek Strzelecki 1910–1939*, Warszawa 2010; J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1996; M. Jabłonowski, *Sen o potęgę Polski: z dziejów ruchu byłych wojskowych w II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939*, Olsztyn 1998; J. Mierzwa, *Kombatancki Kraków 1918–1939*, Kraków 2002; J.S. Tym, *Przysposobienie wojskowe konne (1928–1939)*, Warszawa 2003; A. Niewęglowska, *Federacja Polskich Związków Obrońców Ojczyzny (1928–1939)*, Warszawa 2011; A. Niewęglowska, *Polski Biały Krzyż a wojsko w latach 1919–1939*, Toruń 2005; R. Roguski, *Południowe Podlasie w systemie obronnym II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1918–1939*, Warszawa 2010.

²⁶ That was the reason for the Polish Red Cross General Board to get some mobilisation responsibilities. Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie [National Archive in Cracow], Urząd Wojewódzki Krakowski, ref. no. 0/4/192, sheet 1435.

and local governments, in addition to organizing and conducting fund-raising actions to build up the military potential of the Country²⁷.

The special attention was paid by structures of general administration to problems related to delivery and distribution of provisions. Apart from information available in above-mentioned works of W. Kozyra, J. Mierzwa, and A. Wesołowski), key elements are available in the publication of L. Urliński²⁸.

Another important task ahead of the local general administration organs, with the armed conflict already on the horizon, had been the necessity to take up preventive actions aimed at elimination of potential diversionary threats, sabotage and pressures to the public law and order. Such questions were described and evaluated by Wojciech Śleszyński²⁹.

He included to his work information on preparation of local and regional administration elements in the Northeastern Poland to the armed conflict with Germany, also in the area of public law and order. Such undertakings also included processes and procedures to eliminate 'anti-state elements'.

For this memoirs of Julian Suski, recollections and testimonies stored and archived in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum could be exploited. It might be complemented by the joint publication on Bydgoszcz events of 3–4 September 1939, prints of Waldemar Rezmer, Wojciech Jastrzębski, and Rafał Roguski³⁰.

Another non-system problem that should have been addressed, had been removal of some personnel from occupied post if they declared themselves as ethnic Germans or in the case of an armed conflict, they were to be used by the opponent for harmful actions directed against the Polish State.

²⁷ M. Gieleciński, *Świadczenia społeczeństwa polskiego na obronność państwa przed wybuchem II wojny światowej 1936–1939*, Poznań 2014.

²⁸ L. Urliński, *Polski plan aprowizacji wojennej z września 1939 roku*, Toruń 2009; M. Kardas, Stefan Franciszek Sokół. Komisarz Rządu w Gdyni, Pelplin 2002, pp. 291–293.

²⁹ W. Śleszyński, *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa–Białystok 2007, pp. 331–345.

³⁰ J. Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, Warszawa 1988; *Bydgoszcz 3–4 września 1939: studia i dokumenty*, eds. T. Chinciński., P. Machcewicz, Warszawa 2008; W. Rezmer, M. Wojciechowski, *Polski plan unieruchomienia w razie wojny tzw. elementów antypaństwowych (1931–1939)*, in: *Polska i jej sąsiedzi w czasach najnowszych. Studia i materiały ofiarowane Profesorowi Karolowi Grunbergowi w 70-lecie urodzin*, Toruń 1995, pp. 119–143; W. Jastrzębski, *Realizacja polskiego planu unieruchomienia tak zwanych elementów antypaństwowych (sierpień–wrzesień 1939)*, "Res Historica" 2004, 16, pp. 95–104; R. Roguski, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–188.

We should also make an effort to answer the questions on the range and scale of potential malicious actions, especially as the Polish administration had also some experiences with countering the threat from the Orthodox and Greek-Orthodox communities.

Also reports from general administration elements from 1938 and 1939 should be explored and assessed. In this context, it is worth to submit the question how local administration reacted to the situation on the international political arena?³¹. Was it tasked by the central authorities to carry out security and defense-related tasks? What areas and problems were of particular interest (apart from evident problems with German and Ukrainian ethnic minorities)? How was the reporting system organized and who was getting the information?

To describe and evaluate plans, decisions and activities of Polish administration before the outbreak of WWII, it is necessary to mention so-called 'withdrawal plans' (Pol. 'plany wycofania') prepared by the IV Department of the Main Staff and the Secretariat of the Second Polish Republic Defense Committee (Pol. Sekretariat Komitetu Obrony Rzeczypospolitej), in the civilian dimension – by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms and Ministry of Communication³².

This meant engagement of the local general administration elements and the necessity for close cooperation of civilian institutions with respective Corps District Commands. There is not too much subject literature on this specific topic, but still some publications could be used for the project, as works of A. Wesołowski, Natalia Bujniewicz and some other prints³³.

As for the issue of protection and care of monuments during the armed conflict, the subject literature is still quite modest³⁴. Therefore,

³¹ This refers to implementing of guidelines issued by the Central Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs: A. Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921–1939*, Wrocław 1979, pp. 236–239.

³² K. Stepan, A. Wesołowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–221.

³³ *Kolejnictwo w polskich przygotowaniach obronnych i kampanii wrześniowej*, vol. 1, part 1, *Opracowania i dokumenty*, eds. A. Wesołowski, N. Bujniewicz, Warszawa 2011; *Kolejnictwo w polskich przygotowaniach obronnych i kampanii wrześniowej*, vol. 2, *Relacje*, eds. A. Wesołowski, N. Bujniewicz, Warszawa 2011; I. Bujniewicz, *Ogólne zasady wycofania i rozmieszczenia mienia i ludzi na wypadek wojny z Niemcami w okresie międzywojennym*, "Przegląd Kwatermistrzowski" 1962, 2; P. Sękowski, *Akcja „wycofania”: Ewakuacja wybranych grup Polaków z polsko-niemieckiego obszaru przygranicznego w 1939 roku*, "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka" 2017, 1, pp. 207–228; A. Nawrocki, *Zabezpieczenie logistyczne wojsk lądowych Sił Zbrojnych II RP w latach 1936–1939*, Warszawa 2002; R. Roguski, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–202.

³⁴ See: J. Rolak, *Ochrona zabytków na Górnym Śląsku w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym. Działalność Tadeusza Dobrowolskiego jako Okręgowego Konserwatora Zabytków w latach 1927*

we should exploit information available in works of A. Wesołowski and K. Stepan, archival materials, recollections and testimonies of officials responsible for such elements and tasks.

Another important problem that should be examined is the issue of planning and conducting contacts and consultations of local authorities with military commanders before the war. Such elements were present mainly at the voivodship level and necessary information should be available now in archival materials.

As for the subject literature for above-mentioned aspect, it is dominated by information on contacts and consultations at the central, state level. Most likely, this is due to the fact that such elements had already been widely covered by modern scientific research on Polish administration before WWII. One more task for the general administration had been the air defense. Due to lack of necessary financial resources, it was designed mainly with a passive approach and took the form of dispersal of the population. This was linked to defense systems of individual object and cities, also some pieces of critical infrastructure as ports and critical infrastructure related equipment³⁵.

Another challenge that administration had to face was the issue of reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure (bridges, roads etc.). It would be quite useful to have a closer look at practical dimensions of such plans and actions, including mechanisms of co-operation of administration entities with the Ministry of Communication. As putting such plans into action depended on cooperation with social organizations and coordination with local governments, it would also be helpful to launch additional research of archival materials generated by local elements.

This would allow detailed analysis of actions taken at the local level that followed the guidelines issued by the general administration. Most certainly, it is also worth to look to monographs on individual towns and areas, also to rarely published works on history of particular districts or synthetic prints on history of some regions. However, sometimes findings included to such publication could be somewhat disappointing

–1939, in: *Zamki, pałace*, ed. G. Bożek, Katowice 2010, pp. 209–234; D. Błońska, *W obliczu katalizmu. Zabezpieczenie zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie przed pierwszą i drugą wojną światową*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 2017, 49, 1, p. 27; A. Merta-Staszczak, *Zasady zabezpieczenia i ochrony zabytków wobec zagrożenia wojną w Polsce w latach 1918–1939*, "Ochrona Zabytków" 2019, 2, pp. 121–146.

³⁵ J. Tymiński, *Administracja morska w Gdyni w okresie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Organizacja, kadry, działalność*, Gdynia 2020, p. 237.

and not very useful for the project³⁶. It could be complemented by another research focused on biographies of Second Polish Republic senior officials³⁷ as it would generate many elements for final analysis.

More could be found in publications on local conditions that had an impact on military planning and decision-making processes, and on actions taken by the Polish administration just before WWII³⁸, and in works collating many threads and elements in one integrated publication³⁹.

SINCE 1 SEPTEMBER 1939

The next area that should be explored more is the problem of decisions and activities of administrative organs after the breakout of hostilities. First group of issues are evaluation of effectiveness of administration during that time and attempt to answer the question how processes and procedures were implemented and executed. This should refer both to legal acts issued before 1 September 1939 and documents published officially after this date. In many cases, we would deal with the issues mentioned earlier in the article but under different conditions.

As for co-operation with the military, it included administration activities such as calling up citizens to dig ditches and trenches, handing over vehicles, organization of food supply elements, reception centres for internally displaced persons, and providing law and order. The key element that would support the project would be publications on local and regional history or works on the course of events during the Polish Military September Campaign of 1939 in specific areas and during its specific episodes. In most of the cases, only some sections of texts or some

³⁶ The kind of approach adopted for monographs on Silesian and Pomeranian Voivodehips forced authors to use the construct focused on specific problems. This excluded the description of the general situation in those regions since the end of 1938.

³⁷ For this specific context: M. Kardas, *Stefan*; T. Wojtala, *Bociun: płk dypl. Ludwik Bociański (1892–1970)*, Pleszew 2012; *Londyńska reduta*, vol. 1, *Władysław Raczkiewicz (1885–1947)*, eds. Z. Girzyński, J. Kłaczek, K. Kania, Toruń 2017.

³⁸ P. Cichoracki, *W cieniu pierwszej mobilizacji. Ostatnie miesiące pokoju 1939 r. w województwie poleskim*, in: *Kampania polska '39. Militarne i polityczne aspekty z perspektywy siedemdziesięciolecia*, eds. J. Kirszak, D. Koreś, Wrocław 2011, pp. 133–149; T. Fałęcki, *Województwo śląskie wobec narastającej groźby wojny, marzec–sierpień 1939*, "Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Śląska" 1973, 12; Z. Kapata, *Przygotowanie obrony cywilnej województwa śląskiego w 1939 roku*, "Zaranie Śląskie" 1979, 2.

³⁹ *Kampania polska 1939 r. Polityka – społeczeństwo – kultura*, vol. 2, *Polityka i społeczeństwo. Imponderabilia, pamięć, kultura*, eds. M.P. Deszczyński, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2014.

elements would be of use, but they can help to build the integrated and comprehensive picture.

The next problem to be touched here is the institution of Civil Commissioners. The Chief Civil Commissioner (Pol. Główny Komisarz Cywilny) was a part of the central national administration. Therefore, our main focus should be on Civil Commissioners attached to units at the Operational level. We should systematize their tasks and responsibilities, define competences of civil and military authorities, and procedures and selection criteria for nominations. This would allow to extend our knowledge about the allocation of posts within civilian structures.

With such an approach, we shall notice that some voivodes and starosts took up posts of Civil Commissioners at HQs and military operational level commanders. There had been two tracks that should be thoroughly examined and evaluated, with associated problems, such as subordination and reporting lines for Commissioners, and for starosts and voivodes. One more question should also get an answer – i.e. on what happened to administrative entities, when heads of respective district and voivodship administration were appointed Civil Commissioners⁴⁰?

To discover and evaluate situation, accounts included to Civil Commissioners individual biographies could be of use⁴¹, as well as for exploring stories related to individual administrative structures. Other useful elements would be monographs of operational grouping and armies⁴² as well as prints on specific battles and clashes in the most interested and important parts of the Country⁴³. It should also be remembered that in most of the subject literature the topic of Civil Commissioners is explored and evaluated as a kind of an introduction to the problem of the

⁴⁰ It should be noted here that Waław Kostek-Biernacki and Michał Grażyński were nominated as ministers.

⁴¹ See: J. Mierzwa, *Słownik biograficzny starostów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. 1, Łomianki 2018, P. Cichoracki, *Droga*; M. Kardas, *Stefan*; W. Kozyra, *Działalność wojewody lubelskiego Jerzego Albina de Tramecourta w okresie wrzesień 1937–październik 1939*, in: *Polski wrzesień 1939 r. – wojna na dwa fronty. Materiały z Międzynarodowej Konferencji Naukowej*, ed. H. Stańczyk, Piotrków Trybunalski 2000.

⁴² P. Bauer, *Armia "Poznań" 1939*, Warszawa 1987; P. Bauer, B. Polak, *Armia "Poznań" w wojnie obronnej 1939*, Poznań 1982; K. Ciechanowski, *Armia "Pomorze" 1939*, Warszawa 1982; S. Maksimiec, *Armia "Lublin" we wrześniu 1939 roku*, Warszawa 2006; W. Rezmer, *Armia "Poznań" 1939*, Warszawa 1992; W. Steblik, *Armia "Kraków" 1939*, Warszawa 1989; J. Wróblewski, *Armia "Prusy" 1939*, Warszawa 1986.

⁴³ L. Głowacki, *Działania wojenne na Lubelszczyźnie w roku 1939*, Lublin 1986; W. Śleszyński, *Wrzesień 1939 roku na Polesiu*, "Studia Podlaskie" 2014, 22; M. Kardas, *Gdynia i jej władze w latach 1926–1935. Główne problemy polskiej administracji publicznej miasta*, Toruń 2013, pp. 484–490.

Polish Underground State (see works of Waldemar Grabowski and Bogdan Chrzanowski⁴⁴).

The third set of issues is reaction of administration to the course of events during the armed conflict. It took the form of launching evacuation procedures (they included destruction of files and documents). Therefore, some more elements should be thoroughly examined as management of administrative and evacuation apparatus (evacuation lists, evacuation priorities, financial and logistic issues), main roads and groups selected for evacuation. As for the project, we should compare wartime plans with their execution and verify final results of such actions.

Problems related to functioning of administration in Western, Central and Southern voivodeships should be evaluated separately from issues associated with voivodeships in the Eastern part of Poland. For the first group – evacuation plans had been prepared and launched after the breakout of the armed conflict. In case of Eastern voivodeships, the administration functioned in a relatively normal way till 16 September 1939. It meant following regular, everyday duties and normal procedures (including issuing tickets for sanitary and other minor offences). However, it was already the time of big influx of displaced persons and there had also been cases of German air raids in some locations.

With such evidence, it is possible to state that the 17 September 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland was a shock for the administration. Decisions taken during first hours of aggression had been chaotic. There had even been information about friendly character of Soviet actions and it resulted in same places in preparations to hand over offices to “allies”. Only after information and explanations from Składowski, Polish officials started preparation for evacuation and started to pack documents and money. However, such actions had been uncoordinated and badly organized due to rapid turn of events and officials being taken by surprise⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ W. Grabowski, *Polska tajna administracja cywilna: 1940–1945*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 18–26; B. Chrzanowski, *Okupacja i aneksja na Pomorzu. Tworzenie pierwszych struktur Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego (1939–1940)*, in: *Pomorze pod okupacją niemiecką. Jesień 1939*, ed. P. Madajczyk, Warszawa 2021, pp. 229–252; E. Rojowska, M. Tomkiewicz, *Gdynia 1939–1945 w świetle źródeł niemieckich i polskich. Aresztowania – egzekucje – wysiedlenia ludności cywilnej narodowości polskiej*, Gdynia 2009, pp. 52–53.

⁴⁵ See: K. Liszewski, *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 49–51.

SUMMARY

All elements and information listed above were to describe and evaluate status of research and subject literature that could be useful for some elements of the project. Now, it is a time to look into and assess the general source base. The most important and useful are two editions prepared for "Wojskowe Teki Archiwalne" series. The first one is dedicated to March 1939 mobilisation and provides access to documents, which could be of use for evaluation of plans, decisions and actions of Polish administration with regard to military operations⁴⁶ (the archival research has already produced some results and allowed more detailed analysis). Another important element is the source edition printed two year later that also covers defense preparation of the Polish administration⁴⁷. It had been the outcome of extensive research project in the Central Military Archive, Archive of Modern Records and Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum. It will certainly reduce the necessity to launch new such efforts within the project and allow better and faster access to documents⁴⁸.

Some other source editions could be used for the purpose, explored, exploited and evaluated. All to support some elements of the project⁴⁹. Available documents should be supplemented by next archival research on general administration fonds and files. Such efforts should mainly be launched with regard to materials generated mainly by offices at the Voivodeship level, and to a lesser degree – by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Districts. Therefore, we should direct our first steps to the Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw and some National Archives. Such arrangements are necessary due to source materials availability and possibility

⁴⁶ *Mobilizacja marcowa 1939, Dokumenty i relacje*, ed. A. Wesołowski, "Wojskowe Teki Archiwalne" 2012, 2.

⁴⁷ *Przygotowania obronne państwa 1935–1939*.

⁴⁸ An analysis was prepared by the author for the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum. It shows that from to 1/2 of necessary documents and materials could be found in its archive and library.

⁴⁹ *SGO "Polesie" w dokumentach i wspomnieniach*, vol. 4, *Dywizja "Brzoza"*, ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa–Londyn 2015; *SGO "Polesie" w dokumentach i wspomnieniach*, vol. 5, part 1, *Podlaska Brygada Kawalerii*, ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa–Londyn 2015; *SGO "Polesie" w dokumentach i wspomnieniach*, vol. 5, part 2, *Suwalska Brygada Kawalerii Dywizja "Zaza"*, ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa–Londyn 2015; *Praga 1939 w dokumentach i wspomnieniach*, vol. 1, *Grochów–Saska Kępa (1–16 września)*, ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa 2015; *Praga 1939 w dokumentach i wspomnieniach*, vol. 2, *Grochów–Saska Kępa (17–29 września)*, ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa 2015; *Obrona Lwowa 1939*, vol. 1, *Dokumenty 1–16 września*; ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa 2018; *Obrona Lwowa 1939*, vol. 2, *Dokumenty 17–22 września*, ed. A. Wesołowski, Warszawa 2018.

to address identified research problems, discrepancies and deficiencies⁵⁰. For obvious reasons, such efforts should be continued with additional research in the Central Military Archive, Lithuanian State Historical Archive in Vilnius and the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (more on this below). It could be complemented by research in archives of the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (Pol. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, IPN) and in manuscripts' sections of some Polish libraries (Jagiellonian Library, Ossolineum, Polish National Library, Warsaw University Library). Some research should also be done with official journals of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Voivodeships official publications and journals.

The press of the time should also be explored and evaluated with regard to the main objective of the project. However, some reservations should be made, especially referring to elements related to planning, decision making and actions of the local administration. It is necessary to remember that the period of 1930s was not the best time for the regional press, which had to face many problems and difficulties. This had been a result of economic problems of the Polish publishing market and strong administrative pressure from 'Sanacja'.

To survive, newspapers and journals had to establish contacts with the ruling establishment or with administrative entities (in practical terms, it came out the same, but such delineation should be made for formal reasons). Another element that should be taken into account is the preventive censorship at that time, which actions had been based on experiences and lessons learned during years of functioning of such element. Also, the impact of consolidated press law of November 1938 should be noted and some specific legal provisions⁵¹. Such research on press materials, newspapers and journals most likely will consume a lot of time and effort.

At present, there is no doubt that problems with materials of the archival provenance could be addressed with another category, i.e. with first-hand sources. They could be useful for the research in two main areas:

1. personal accounts of defense preparations of the State administration. They provide a lot of information on mobilisation processes and procedures (also within the industry and in the agricultural sector), on eliminating a group of "dangerous elements" and executing tasks

⁵⁰ It should be noted that in archival materials it is possible to find evidence confirming activities of administration still during the first week of war.

⁵¹ See the Presidential Decree: *Dekret Prezydenta RP z 22 XI 1938 o ochronie niektórych interesów Państwa* and *Ustawa z 7 IV 1938 r. o ochronie imienia Józefa Piłsudskiego, Pierwszego Marszałka Polski*.

to address new challenges for general administration related to defense preparations and national security;

2. personal accounts on participation of officials in the Polish September Military Campaign 1939, courses of events, decision making processes, cooperation with the military, organization of evacuation, its main directions, implementing evacuation plans, selecting groups for evacuation, actions aimed at dispersal of the population.

The first and main category of first-hand sources that should be explored, described and evaluated are memoirs and diaries of officials from the voivodeship and district level institutions. Their historical value varies. Also, their geographic distribution is patchy. Most of such sources are documents generated by starosts⁵², but there are also some recollections available, which had produced by officials working at the regional level⁵³. The value of these elements cannot be overrated as due to historical developments there are some significant gaps in the documentation. Above-mentioned materials could therefore be used to reproduce the history of Polish administration at the end of August 1939 and in September 1939.

Apart from voivodeship and district level official personal accounts, we can also use diaries, recollections and memoirs of other officials, also those not necessarily working within the organizational framework of general administration⁵⁴. Such reminiscences would certainly throw some more light on national defense preparations, on course of events during planning and execution of evacuation of the State administration apparatus and fates of several officials, who worked at regional and district levels.

⁵² See: P. Sulatycki, *Żyłem w trudnych czasach (wspomnienia)*, Gdańsk 1998; I. Głodowski, *Na pewnym odcinku w Poznaniu w roku 1939*, introduction and prep. P. Matusik, "Kronika Miasta Poznania" 2009, 2, p. 49; M. S[ochański], *Pamiętnik starosty pow. Zamojskiego*, in: *Niemcy i Zamojszczyzna 1939–1944*, Zamość 1946; I.K. Głodowski, *Pierwsze dni Września w Poznaniu*, in: *Wrześniowe dni kłęski, dni chwały. Wspomnienia żołnierzy Armii „Poznań” i Wielkopolan o wrześniu 1939*, ed. E. Makowski, Poznań 1989, pp. 104–115; F. Kasprzak, *Opuszczenie Gniezna*, in: *Wrześniowe*, pp. 145–152.

⁵³ See: A. Korwin-Sokołowski, *Fragmety wspomnień 1910–1945*, Paryż 1985, pp. 149–157; H. Józewski, *Zamiast pamiętnika*, eds. J. Giedroyć, P. Mitzner, Paryż–Kraków 2017; *Dzienniki czynności Prezydenta RP Władysława Raczkiewicza 1939–1947*, vol. 1, 1939–1942, ed. J. Piotrowski, Wrocław 2004.

⁵⁴ See: F.S. Składkowski, *Nie ostatnie słowo oskarżonego. Wspomnienia i artykuły*, ed. A. Adamczyk, Warszawa 2003; *Diariusz i teki Jana Szembeka (1935–1945)*, vol. 4, ed. J. Zarański, Londyn 1972; J. Szembek, *Diariusz wrzesień–grudzień 1939*, ed. B. Grzełoński, Warszawa 1989; W. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Z mojego okienka. Fakty i wrażenia z lat 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 1939–1940; ed. P.M. Żukowski, Łomianki 2013; W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce. Wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914–1947*, Warszawa–Kraków 2014.

Apart from above-mentioned memoirs, it is also possible to use unpublished and unedited sources available in some libraries, including those already mentioned above. I have indicated the necessity to launch additional research in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum and Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation. We can also use investigation materials collected for some cases, i.e. prepared by institutions in-exile in 1939–1945 for future legal proceedings against people from the ‘Sanacja’ camp and prewar ruling establishment. Such files also included documents related to activities of the State administration before 1939.

We have also to remember that the security apparatus of the post-war Communist regime has also launched big numbers of legal proceedings and investigations. Most of the cases had been launched on the basis of the Article 1 letter b. of the 22 January 1946 Decree issued by the Council of Ministers and Presidium of the State National Council – on Responsibility for the September 1939 Defeat and Fascisation of the National Life. Due to the circumstances of generation of such documents, their credibility can be undermined. However, there are still some elements and information that could be confirmed by other materials and sources.

To wrap up, the current status of research in the area in question should be deemed highly insufficient. Generally speaking, topics related to the Polish general administration did not get too much interest from modern historians and researchers. The situation is different with regard to the local general administration elements as we can use fundamental and historically important publications by A. Wesołowski. As for other areas, it is possible to use publication of the fragmentary character or materials, which require further detailed analysis – all to get necessary and valuable pieces of information. In this state of affairs, the basic research activities will be of a key importance, also to secure access to valuable archival materials.

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