

Agata Fijuth-Dudek

(Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8314-4373>











e-mail: agata.fijuth-dudek@mail.umcs.pl

The Polish Press on the International Position of the Second Republic from the Munich Conference of 1938 to the September Campaign of 1939. Status and Prospects for Research

*Polska prasa o sytuacji międzynarodowej II Rzeczypospolitej od konfederacji monachijskiej w 1938 r. do kampanii wrześniowej 1939 r.
Stan badań i perspektywy badawcze*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze the state of research on the portrayal of the international position of the Second Republic in the period from the Munich Conference in 1938 to the outbreak of the Second World War in the Polish press. Despite the plethora of literature on the press of the interwar period in Poland, there are few references to the

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THE AUTHOR'S ADDRESS: Agata Fijuth-Dudek, the Institute of Communication and Media Studies of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, 45 Głęboka Street, Lublin 20-612, Poland				
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content of the media published during the aforementioned period. Authors synthesized the press of the Second Republic most often focusing on the analysis of periodicals according to the political criterion and on statistics concerning their quantitative development. However, in the literature one can find references to the content of the media that commented on the international position of the Second Republic in the period 1938–1939. The authors focused on the circumstances of the Munich Agreement in September 1938 and its consequences also for Poland. They also leaned on the echoes of the outbreak of the Second World War on the pages of Polish periodicals. It is therefore worth formulating as a postulate for further research the view that there is still a lack of studies that would present the international situation of Poland between the Munich conference and the end of the September campaign in the pages of the national press to a broader extent.

Key words: Polish press, interwar period, Munich conference 1938, outbreak of the Second World War, Second Republic, September campaign 1939

STRESZCZENIE

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza stanu badań na temat ukazania międzynarodowego położenia II RP w okresie od konferencji monachijskiej w 1938 r. do wybuchu II wojny światowej na łamach polskiej prasy. Mimo mnogości literatury dotyczącej prasy dwudziestolecia międzywojennego w Polsce, niewiele jest odniesień do zawartości mediów ukazujących się w wyżej wymienionym okresie. Autorzy dokonywali syntezy prasy II RP koncentrując się najczęściej na analizie pism według kryterium politycznego oraz na statystykach dotyczących ich rozwoju ilościowego. W literaturze przedmiotu można jednak odnaleźć odwołania do zawartości mediów, które komentowały międzynarodowe położenie II RP w okresie 1938–1939. Autorzy koncentrowali się na okolicznościach zawarcia układu monachijskiego we wrześniu 1938 r. i jego konsekwencjach także dla Polski. Pochylali się również na echach wybuchu II wojny światowej na łamach polskich pism. Warto zatem jako postulat dalszych badań sformułować pogląd, że brak nadal opracowań, które w szerszym stopniu prezentowałyby sytuację międzynarodową Polski pomiędzy konferencją w Monachium, a końcem kampanii wrześniowej na łamach krajowej prasy.

Słowa kluczowe: prasa polska, dwudziestolecie międzywojenne, konferencja w Monachium 1938 r., wybuch II wojny światowej, II Rzeczypospolita, kampania wrześniowa 1939 r.

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, there were about 2,500 periodicals published in Poland, including more than 250 daily newspapers and news magazines. The press was served, in addition to the official Polish Telegraphic Agency, by about 40 general and specialized agencies. Polish Radio, on the other hand, had 10 broadcasting stations and several substations and covered almost the entire country¹. Research on the history of the media in the Second Republic has a long tradition in Polish historiography and legitimizes significant achievements².

¹ L. Dobroszycki, *Prasa polska w okresie kampanii wrześniowej (1–28 września 1939 r.)*, „Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego” 1966, 5, 1, p. 151.

² W.M. Kolasa, *Kierunki badań nad historią prasy polskiej 1918–1939*, „Rocznik Historii Prasy Polskiej” 2011, 14, 1–2 (27–28), p. 7.

It is worth mentioning, for example, the works of recognized scholars who synthetically present the periodicals of the interwar period: Władysław Władyka³, a collaborative volume by Władysław Władyka, Jerzy Łojek, Jerzy Myśliński⁴, Andrzej Paczkowski⁵, Andrzej Notkowski⁶ or Rafał Habielski⁷. The state of research resulting from these studies is complemented by somewhat more detailed monographs, e.g. by Elżbieta Kaszuba⁸, or Władysław Marek Kolasa⁹.

The echoes of the events of the period from the Munich Conference of 1938 to the end of the September campaign of 1939 in the press have not received much synthetic academic discussion. Nevertheless, analyses of the content of the media describing particular historical events can be cited.

The Polish press of the late 1930s reacted vividly to Poland's changing international situation. This should not come as a surprise. After all, the disputes that broke out every now and then concerned and affected Poland's closest neighbors. The press presented texts on its pages which commented in various ways on the changing international situation, the rise of German power and Poland's role in Europe.

Analyses of the content of the national press of this period can be found in the literature. The authors raised the issue of the Polish press's presentation of the geopolitical situation in Europe and Poland's place in it in 1938, which became a manifestation of Germany's growing power. On 29–30 September 1938, a conference was held in Munich, during which an agreement was signed on the annexation of part of Czechoslovakia's territories to the German Reich. The agreement was concluded between Germany, Italy, Britain and France, in the absence

³ W. Władyka, *Rozwój badań nad czasopiśmiennictwem Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w ostatnim dwudziestoleciu*, "Kwartalnik" 1981, 4; idem, *Krew na pierwszej stronie. Sensacyjne dzienniki Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1982.

⁴ J. Łojek, J. Myśliński, W. Władyka, *Dzieje prasy polskiej*, Warszawa 1988.

⁵ A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1980; idem, *Prasa Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939): ogólna charakterystyka*, "Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego" 1972, 11, 1.

⁶ A. Notkowski, *Polska prasa prowincjonalna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)*, Warszawa–Łódź 1982; idem, *Prasa w systemie propagandy rządowej w Polsce (1926–1939). Studium techniki władzy*, Warszawa 1987; idem, *Rozwój ilościowy polskiej prasy prowincjonalnej w okresie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej: charakterystyka statystyczna*, "Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego" 1974, 13, 4.

⁷ R. Habielski, *Wolność czy odpowiedzialność? Prasa i polityka w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2013; *Polityczna historia mediów w Polsce w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2009.

⁸ E. Kaszuba, *System propagandy państwowej obozu rządzącego w Polsce w latach 1926–1939*, Toruń 2004.

⁹ W.M. Kolasa, *op. cit.*

of Czechoslovakia, despite the fact that its territory was the subject of the conference arrangements.

Adrian Matuła in his work on the attitude of the Polish conservative press towards Germany in the period from 12 March 1938 to 30 September 1938¹⁰ analyzed such periodicals as: *"Dziennik Poznański"*, *"Czas"*, *"Słowo"*, *"Dziennik Polski"*. The author pointed out that these newspapers had been predicting since June 1938 that the dispute between the German minority in the Sudetenland and the Czechoslovak authorities would intensify, but it was hoped that it would turn into a rather protracted conflict. The study presents the pro-Hungarian profile of the journal *"Dziennik Poznański"*, whose columnists stressed the need for a close alliance with Hungary. It was to allow Polish policy to become independent of Germany, while at the same time preventing it from siding with Czechoslovakia, the disintegration of which was to strengthen Hungary. The author stressed that, in turn, the pages of the Vilnius-based *"Słowo"* ["Word"] published by Stanisław "Cata" Mackiewicz emphasized Hitler's anti-communism and his hostility to the USSR, which, according to the magazine, could bring Poland closer to the German state. The willingness to enter into an agreement with Germany was also put forward by young conservatives publishing in *"Bunt Młodych"* and *"Polityka"*, magazines published by Jerzy Giedroyc. They saw the possibility of an alliance against a Sovietized Russia; moreover, joint actions to break Russia into smaller state organisms were allowed. The pages of Polish Day also saw the possibility of Polish-German cooperation, which was conditioned by a common civilizational and cultural heritage. The most balanced position was presented by a group of conservatives associated with Janusz Radziwiłł and the editors of the *"Czas"* magazine. They believed that Poland's geopolitical situation after the Nazis came to power was strengthened by the increased German threat to France. The author analyzed the attitude of the journals to the provisions of the Munich Conference. He noted that the editorial boards of newspapers such as *"Dziennik Poznański"*, *"Czas"* and *"Słowo"* welcomed them with relief and satisfaction, emphasizing that the Sudetenland question had been resolved peacefully. He gave a separate reflection on the journalism in the pages of these journals, which referred to the consequences of the Munich Conference and the changing position of Poland. He described the position of the Poznań-based *"Dziennik"*, which focused on the need to strengthen Poland's position in the center of Europe, while *"Czas"*, as he pointed out, highly valued Polish diplomacy, especially the settlement of relations

¹⁰ A. Matuła, *Od Anshlusu do Monachium. Polska prasa konserwatywna wobec Niemiec w 1938 roku*, "Studia Sandomierskie" 2018, 25.

with Lithuania and the recovery of Zaolzie. The author stated that only "Słowo" already in the first articles after the conference drew attention to the dangers of its provisions; the strengthening of Germany and the lack of benefits for Poland. The researcher also referred to the journal *Our Future*, writing that in its pages the conference resolutions were treated as a crushing of the forces of Freemasonry and an opportunity for a new order in Europe. A. Matuła presented various, often contradictory approaches of the Polish press to German foreign policy in 1938. He concludes that while the journals recognized the deterioration of Poland's situation, they did not fully understand the gravity of the situation in which it found itself after the border transformations in Central Europe. At the same time, the author noted the differences between the attitude of the various editors regarding Polish foreign policy. He concluded: 'On the other hand, there were big disputes between the editorial boards in the assessment of Poland's foreign policy conducted by Minister Józef Beck. In this field one can see the greatest dichotomy between various conservative centers, especially between the Vilnius center associated with Stanisław Mackiewicz and the Warsaw center under Janusz Radziwiłł. The former unceremoniously attacked Polish diplomacy, accusing it of acquiescing in the enormous growth of German power without adequate compensations for the Polish state. The editors of "Czas", on the other hand, associated with Warsaw conservative circles, defended Minister Beck. In its opinion, he was implementing the guidelines outlined by Józef Piłsudski and pursuing a fully independent foreign policy'¹¹.

Włodzimierz Mich also analyzed the journalism of the conservative magazine *Our Future* in the context of the Munich negotiations¹². He noted that the journal commented on the new reality brought about by the findings of the Munich Conference in 1938. He pointed out that the periodical reflected on the quality of diplomatic relations between Poland and Germany; it postulated that Poland should take the path towards superpowerhood, as its geopolitical position required it. The author pointed out that the postulates of the *New Future* changed along with the evolution of international relations: the necessity to revise the borders with Germany, the incorporation of Lithuania, the achievement of a common border with Hungary by breaking up Czechoslovakia (which was to be accompanied by corrections to the Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak borders), and the disintegration of the USSR were all raised. He noted the magazine's raising of the issue that, both in the face of the Munich Conference and when the Third Reich annexed a truncated Czech Republic,

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 85–100.

¹² W. Mich, *Publicystyka polityczna „Naszej Przyszłości” 1930–1939*, Lublin 2009.

the possibility of Poland's complicity in defending the existence of that state was excluded. The magazine believed that this was understandable insofar as from the beginning it had been regarded as an artificial creation, doomed to extinction¹³.

Janusz Czechowski's book on the political and social events of the interwar period in the press is an important voice in research¹⁴. The author analyzed nearly 130 press titles. The work includes both a characterization of the political and informational press market in the interwar period and a content analysis of the press. In the context of the Munich Conference, he examined the reactions of journals from various cities: "Kurier Warszawski", "Dziennik Poznański", "ABC – nowiny codzienne", "Dziennik Białostocki". He pointed out that the "Kurier Warszawski" positively assessed the provisions on the truncation of the territories of Poland's southern neighbor, the "Dziennik Poznański" described Czechoslovakia as a 'sick state' and the Munich decision-makers as doctors. In his reflections, the author also presented the attitude of the press to the question of Poland's takeover of Zaolzie, he claimed: 'There were increasingly frequent demands in the press for the takeover of Zaolzie'. "Dziennik Bałtycki" wrote: 'Zaolzie Silesia is ours. Ours is the Silesian land and the will of its people. Ours is the blood shed today for Poland by the Zaolzie brothers in desperate defense against rape. Blood freshly sealed for centuries the inseparability of Zaolzie with its Mother – Poland!'¹⁵. The author also cited the "Dziennik Poznański" in this context, which lamented on its columns that the problem of Zaolzie was a secondary issue during the Munich Conference. The periodical "Czas", on the other hand, is cited because it saw the problem somewhat differently. For it put forward the thesis that it should rather be realized that the conference had been called to avert a growing conflict which, because of the Sudeten Germans, could soon lead to war between England and France and Germany and Italy, and that the return of Silesia should be realized by Poland. Ciechanowski gives the title of one of the articles in the "Dziennik Bydgoski", which read 'The Munich Plan has been announced: England and France give the Sudetenland to Germany without asking the Czechs' consent. Poland and Hungary left empty-handed' as an example of yet another statement of the reality at hand. The paper also hints at newspaper reactions to the occupation of the disputed area by Polish Army troops in October 1938: 'The resolution of the Zaolzie issue, according to some press titles,

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 268–280.

¹⁴ J. Czechowski, *Informacja i propaganda. Spojrzenie prasy krajowej na społeczno-polityczne wydarzenia w latach 1918–1939*, Warszawa 2021.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 297.

had a double dimension'. "Głos Lubelski" mentioned: 'the catastrophe of Czechoslovakia has two sides for us – a positive and a negative side. The positive side is Zaolzie. The negative side is the unheard-of growth of German power [...] the total dislocation of the European equilibrium in favor of Germany'¹⁶. At the same time, the author reached for the London correspondence of the "Kurier Warszawski", which reassured that, as a result of the Rome talks between Mussolini and Hitler, the latter had assured the Italian statesman that the German government had no plan to settle the Czechoslovak question by violent means. German plans go in the direction of forcing a change in the system of the Czechoslovak republic to a federal system, consisting of German, Hungarian, Slovak, Polish and Ruthenian autonomous units. The author also mentioned the "Gazeta Powszechna", which presented in its pages the position of the Polish government towards the problems of Hungary, understood the need for the return of territories inhabited mostly by the Hungarian population to Czechoslovakia, and demanded a solution to the issue of Podkarpacie Rus, so that a common Polish-Hungarian border could be established¹⁷. Czechowski noted that the content of many of the outlays, which featured strongly among other information, was matters related to Polish international politics, especially European politics. He stated: 'The press, moreover, not only presented relations with the two great neighbors, but also analyzed in detail the internal situation of Germany and Soviet Russia. The reader was kept up to date on this issue, as well as on relations with England and France, resulting mainly from the Polish-German-Soviet topics. The external policy of Polish diplomacy was mostly assessed through the ideological prism of the press title. [...] The media presented in detail and extensively the Austrian, Czechoslovak and Danzig problem in the context of Polish national interests'¹⁸. The author pointed out that not all dailies presented an anti-German position. As an example of a different view of the Czechoslovak issue, he gave the Vilnius-based "Słowo", which did not see the possibility of a Polish-Czechoslovak alliance against the German threat, but instead postulated that Poland should apply for the acquisition of Cieszyn Silesia and support the initiative to return Hungary to the former historical Polish-Hungarian border. The author concluded that the magazine wanted Poland's initiative to go hand in hand with a Polish-German alliance aimed at appropriate territorial changes in the Czechoslovak state¹⁹.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 299.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 288–299.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 344.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 289.

The Sudetenland crisis described in the Kraków press was the subject of interest of Karol Matyjasik²⁰. The author argues that the ongoing negotiations between Germany and Czechoslovakia, as well as the policies of the Western states and Poland, were widely reflected in the texts published in the Krakow press, and that it was common practice for individual editors and foreign correspondents to remain anonymous, hence the sources quoted and used in the press were often without authors. Matyjasik writes that the magazine "Czas" devoted a lot of attention to the Munich conference, and texts about it were often placed on the front page. The author's reflections show that the magazine described the conference as an attempt to calm the situation in Europe, and wondered about its further fate. At the same time, it was emphasized that Polish public opinion could not be satisfied with the fulfilment of Germany's demands alone while ignoring the Polish question, and that the Western powers, if they wanted to achieve lasting peace in Europe, should take into account Poland's claims to the Czechoslovak lands of Zaolzie. The paper underlined the enthusiastic reception in the editorial board of the signing of the treaty provisions on 1 October 1938; the annexation of the Sudetenland to the Reich was regarded as a good move, saving Europe from war. A bloodless end to the dispute was considered a credit to the countries of the continent and a good move²¹. The author also presents the attitude to the Munich Agreement of such periodicals as "Głos Narodu", "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny", "Krakowski Kurier Poranny", "Krakowski Kurier Wieczorny", "Piaś", "Naprzód", "Nowy Dziennik". Each of the periodicals approached the issue of the annexation of part of Czechoslovakia differently and this was due to their political profiles.

From the monograph by J. Czechowski, it is possible to find out what issues were dealt with by Polish press titles in the first half of 1939. The author cites that for "Żołnierz Polski", the meeting at the beginning of 1939 between the Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Beck and Adolf Hitler was a harbinger of good relations for the future, "Gazeta Lwowska", reporting on the visit to Warsaw of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich Joachim von Ribbentrop on the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Polish-German declaration on non-violence, called it 'a historic deed, a peaceful one by both great leaders of our nations [...] it stood the test of life'. The author also included in the paper an excerpt from an article that appeared in the "Kurier Warszawski" on the truncation of the territory of the southern neighbor, noting that the newspaper assessed

²⁰ K. Matyjasik, *Prasa krakowska wobec konferencji w Monachium (1938)*, "Wieki Stare i Nowe" 2012, 4 (9).

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 252–258.

this fact positively, as a 'sigh of relief'²². Also the situation in Danzig described in the press did not escape the author's attention. He cites that various excesses were reported by "Dziennik Bydgoski", which described them as 'anti-Polish antics', as well as "ABC", where one could read that windows were smashed in Polish institutions, such as a branch of the Polish Telegraphic Agency, which had its offices in the building of the General Commissariat of the Republic of Poland, i.e. in a building subject to the law of extraterritoriality, and shops. In turn, according to the researcher, the "Goniec Nadwiślański" commented on the situation with words to the effect that Gdańsk was still warring and not respecting the constitution. The author stated: 'The attentive reader will have noticed that the end of March 1939 brought press reports indicating that more serious tensions were beginning on the Warsaw-Berlin line'. Citing "Deutsche Diplomatusch-Politische Korespondenz", the "Kurier Bydgoski" quoted a German assessment of current relations with Poland: 'there are anti-German incidents in Poland which clearly indicate that the policy arranged between Marshal Piłsudski and Chancellor Hitler in 1934 is being rejected by certain forces'²³. J. Czechowski's work on the outlook of the national press on socio-political events in the years 1918–1939 presents excerpts from the press that appeared up to 31 August 1939. Thus, it is in vain to look for newspaper reactions to the outbreak of the Second World War. The last section of the work concerns an information that appeared in the "Kurier Warszawski" the day before the outbreak of war, which was actually a statement by the Polish government: 'in the face of [...] events, especially after the entry of German troops on the territory of the neighboring state of Slovakia, the Polish government, after issuing previous orders, is forced to supplement the alert today by military orders appropriate to the situation'²⁴.

The outbreak of World War II found the national press and radio in information chaos. In their monumental work on the history of the Polish press²⁵, J. Łojek, J. Myśliński, and W. Władyka have presented the way in which periodicals functioned in the country after the outbreak of the Second World War. They rightly stated that it was the front events that had a decisive influence on the possibility of publishing magazines. They reported that quarterlies, monthlies and weeklies gradually ceased to be published as a result of the war effort. They also mentioned dailies, whose editors tried to provide readers with the latest information. They

²² *Ibidem*, p. 296.

²³ J. Czechowski, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 338.

²⁵ J. Łojek, J. Myśliński, W. Władyka, *op. cit.*

concluded: 'The September press played an important role in maintaining the will to fight in Polish society, and capitulationist sentiments were completely alien to it. It even resorted to giving information that was completely untrue, reporting on the successes of the Polish troops and the retreat of the German armies'²⁶.

An interesting study on the functioning of editorial offices and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the content of periodicals after the outbreak of the Second World War is Lucjan Dobroszycki's article²⁷. The author points out that in the particular situation in which the press and radio found themselves, the division between their political profiles disappeared: 'On the eve of the war, the press and radio were put on alert; the impending events set these institutions tasks in the field of information and mobilization for the fight against the invader'. In the face of imminent danger, the press was unanimous in its support for the government's efforts to defend the country, and in this respect, there were no fundamental differences between the government organs and the opposition press. Almost the entire press proclaimed in its pages at that time a belief 'in the strength, compactness and readiness' to 'repel the aggressor'²⁸. The outbreak of the Second World War in the Polish media is presented by the author in detail; in the morning the official announcement of the start of hostilities was made by Polskie Radio, in the afternoon there were extraordinary supplements and second editions of daily newspapers. The article pays attention to the press in the west of the country, where, partly as a result of orders from Warsaw, partly on their own, the local and civilian authorities were evacuated, and the local press soon ceased to publish. The author also presents the situation of the press in Krakow, writing: 'Krakow dailies: "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny", "Głos Narodu" and "Nowy Dziennik" suspended their activities on 3 September. The IKC press concern evacuated, its founder and editor-in-chief, Marian Dąbrowski, left for Paris a few days before the outbreak of war. Against the background of these events, a group of "IKC" employees (Ludwik Szczepański, Dr Kazimierz Szczepański, Dr Józef Flach, Włodzimierz Długoszewski, Stanisław Stwora and Stanisław Mróz) decided, based on the equipment of the "IKC" concern, to publish a new periodical entitled "Dziennik Krakowski". In the meantime, however, the Citizens' Committee for Aid to Kraków, established on 4 September, passed a resolution to publish "Gazeta Krakowska", which would represent all Polish dailies in Kraków. Journalists from the

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

²⁷ L. Dobroszycki, *op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

"IKC" submitted to the decision and gave up the almost finished issue of "Dziennik Krakowski". On 5 September, the first and at the same time the last issue of "Gazeta Krakowska" appeared on the streets of Krakow. The next day around 9am the Germans were in Krakow²⁹. The author explains that the turning point in the history of Warsaw's September press was the decision to fight in the capital; it was in its pages that Brigadier General Walerian Czuma, commander of the Warsaw Defence, and Major Stefan Starzyński, president of the capital, appealed for help and an immediate return to normal activities. He recalled: 'One of the first steps of the Warsaw Defence Command was to take over the Warsaw radio station, for it was only with its help that the information chaos of the million-strong city could be brought under control and the organization of defense could begin. The radio, under the leadership of the newly appointed director Edward Rudnicki, henceforth became a consciously and purposefully used element in directing the fight and the life of the fighting city'³⁰. The author reports that almost all Warsaw dailies appeared on the streets of the defending capital: "ABC", "Czas – 7 Wieczór", "Dobry Wieczór! Kurier Czerwony", "Express Poranny", "Dziennik Ludowy i Powszechny", "Dziennik Polski", "Goniec Warszawski", "Kurier Codzienny", "Kurier Poranny", "Kurier Warszawski", "Moment", "Nasz Przegląd", "Hajnt", "Polska Zbrojna", "Robotnik", "Unzer Express", "Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy", "Wieczór Warszawski", the government organ "Gazeta Polska" did not resume work. The paper was convinced that, in addition to its function of organizing life in occupied Warsaw, it was no less important to restore information and journalistic activity; the "Kurier Warszawski", which was to keep up the fighting spirit by writing that 'the Polish press does not want to die. It knows that it must not die. Awakening and fueling life – this is its sacred national and social duty'³¹. The author stresses that in the face of the war, the individual profiles of the titles blurred: 'The old divisions have disappeared. Apart from the old traditional headlines identifying the affiliation of a particular daily, it would be difficult to identify the publisher. In fact, many journals published jointly. Rather, the individual dailies' distinctiveness and their own face were emphasized by imponderables: 'style, addressee, reference to established traditions. The polemics, typical of the press, and the pointing out of errors and shortcomings to one another ceased. The dominant emphasis became a full and concerted commitment

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 154.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

to the defense of the city'³². The article discusses the state of the press during the capital's capitulation negotiations, when journalists and publishers reached an agreement to publish at least one daily newspaper jointly. To this end, a joint editorial committee of the following dailies was set up: "Goniec Warszawski", "Kurier Poranny", "Czas", "Wieczór Warszawski" and "Express". The author emphasizes that the publishers' aim in this case was not so much to continue informing the population of the capital, but above all to emphasize to the German authorities the existence of the Polish press, as there was a conviction that the occupier would allow only those papers to be published which he had found when he occupied the city. The author describes the scope of press functioning also in Lublin and in the eastern areas, where, despite air raids, the old provincial press was published: "Dziennik Polski" (Lwów), "Kurier Wileński", "Lwowski Ilustrowany Express", "Słowo" (Wilno) and, from 12 October 1939, "Gazeta Pińska", edited with the participation of journalists evacuated from Warsaw. The author mentions that the Vilnius "Słowo" and the Lwów "Dziennik Polski" were still published on 18 and 20 September, being the last dailies in the eastern territories during the September campaign. Apart from presenting the history of the Polish press in September 1939, the author also refers to its content. He explains: 'During the first eight days of the war, until the evacuation of the government from Warsaw, the method of informing the public about the situation on the fronts was predetermined. On 1 September, at a meeting of the State Information Action Committee at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, at the proposal of Colonel Roman Umiastowski, a resolution was adopted that the press and radio would provide information on the course of military operations, losses suffered by the warring parties, damage, etc., through communiqués from the Commander-in-Chief's Staff, provided by the Polish Telegraphic Agency, to the exclusion of all other sources of information. Colonel Umiastowski's suggestion that the role of internal diversion should be particularly emphasized in the press was also accepted'³³. The study makes the important observation that, from the first days of the war, the actual course of action on the Polish-German front and the information about it in the press and on the radio were in stark contradiction with each other. Official PAT communiqués were laconic and concealed the seriousness of the situation, while press commentaries were full of optimism and often unconfirmed news. In his reflections, the author goes even further, writing that an attentive reader could draw true conclusions from the communiqués of the

³² *Ibidem*, p. 159.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

Commander-in-Chief, while the press commented on them in reverse, convincing that the command was acting according to plan and could not make its intentions public. In the paper, we can read that on September 2, 1939, one of the titles, in the face of detailing the losses suffered by the enemy, including, among others, 100 tanks and 34 aircraft, reported that the first day of the war had ended with the full success of the Polish army. We then read in the article that the press reported on the entry of Polish troops into German territory, the bombing of Berlin by Polish aircraft, the huge successes of the French army and its entry into the Rhineland, and the famine and unrest in Germany. Dobroszycki writes: 'With this kind of information, the shock that arose when the tanks of General Reinhardt's 4th Armoured Division approached Warsaw on 8 September and the assault on Ochota and Wola began is understandable. [...]'³⁴. The author believes that the September press disinformed the population and wonders about the reasons for this phenomenon; whether it was due to pressure from official factors, censorship orders, or the lack of a network of correspondents and the impossibility of reaching sources during the war. He concludes that a number of factors contributed to this way of reporting: the desire to keep the spirits of the Polish society up, concern for the morale of the fighting military units, as misrepresentations of real events resulting from the hopes of the population, and also as reactions to the propaganda of the enemy, who tried to sow terror and panic among the Poles. The author also puts forward the thesis that false information in the Polish media largely came from foreign agencies, such as Reuter, which distorted reality for political reasons in an attempt to appease their own public opinion³⁵.

In his monograph on life in occupied Warsaw, its author Tomasz Szarota, describing the everyday life of the inhabitants, occasionally refers to the press published in September 1939. He cites that the "Warsaw National Daily" published an interview with Stefan Starzyński. Calling on the inhabitants to participate in the rebuilding of the city. On Monday 2nd October 1939, the editors of daily newspapers issued a message to the capital's inhabitants. And here we find an appeal for help in normalizing life, as well as current guidelines for action³⁶.

A. Paczkowski in his work on the history of the Polish press in the years 1918–1939³⁷ systematized and described the most important titles of the Polish press of the interwar period, both daily papers and

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 162.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 165–166.

³⁶ T. Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, Warszawa 1988, p. 16.

³⁷ A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska*.

magazines³⁸. He also analyzed the press of national minorities as well as the Polish press abroad. In his research, he also looked at the radio of the time, press agencies, and did not omit the circle of journalists. The work is largely composed of statistics, a presentation of the publishing geography of the interwar period, and the economics of press enterprises. Andrzej Paczkowski also briefly investigated the content of the news press just before the outbreak of war, writing: 'Permanent anti-aircraft defense columns appeared in some periodicals, and all of them published advice on how to behave in the event of air raids, bombing and, above all, gas attack. No details of Polish military preparations were disclosed, nor was any information or photographs published about the country's militaries, but abundant use was made of both agency reports and the foreign-language press for presenting the armed forces of the Western Allies, especially Great Britain'³⁹. The author, like L. Dobroszycki, noted the departure of the press from truthful information, giving the example of the magazine "Dobry Wieczór! Kurier Czerwony", which a few days before the capitulation of the capital reported on the alleged defensive line Hel–Modlin–Warszawa–Zamość–Rawa Ruska–Lwów⁴⁰. In doing so, he drew attention to the mobilizing role of the press with the distinctiveness of individual titles resulting from political profiles. The author looked at the impact of the events of September 1939 on the publishing movement. The war events obviously caused the evacuation of editorial staff members from areas occupied by the German army, but also the beginning of difficulties in paper supply and the interruption of telephone and telegraph connections. Andrzej Paczkowski also drew attention to the type and role of press contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He outlined the way in which the various editorial offices in the country functioned with the shifting front. he stressed: 'As the international situation in Europe tightened in the spring and summer of 1939, intra-political issues receded into the background in the dailies and a kind of - according to the formulation of the national "Pomeranian Word" – 'a spontaneous ceasefire' in polemical clashes. There were, of course, no shortage of exceptions to this rule, even drastic ones, but already in July, matters of foreign policy and preparations for war (carried out

³⁸ For more on the Warsaw press of the interwar period, see: A. Paczkowski, *Prasa codzienna Warszawy w latach 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1983, in which the author systematises the press of the capital city, especially as regards its differences in world-view profiles. A separate monograph by the same author was devoted to the political press of the peasant movement (A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polityczna ruchu ludowego (1918–1939)*, Warszawa 1970).

³⁹ A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska*, p. 230.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 236.

all over Europe) drove out all other matters, not only from the news and information sections, but also from the journalistic columns and commentaries. The press followed the ongoing diplomatic game closely, and with particular care – which does not mean that the information or interpretations were always correct – dealt with the situation in the flashpoint, i.e. the Free City of Danzig and the growing wave of German provocations, as well as the position taken by the press and organizations of the German minority living in Polish lands⁴¹.

On the basis of the 1939 issues of the *Warsaw Courier*, Adam Rozmysłowicz analyzed the content of the paper against the background of the historical events of the country, meticulously giving examples of articles, among which the most important part were proclamations to the population and battle-warming and uplifting announcements from the front⁴².

It should be stressed that despite the rich literature on studies of the press of the interwar period, little information can be found on the reaction of the national press to Poland's international position in the period from the Munich Agreement in 1938 to the end of the September campaign in 1939. Studies taking into account the content of the press from this period selectively and sparsely present this picture. The readings show that the press commented on the Polish situation during the Sudetenland crisis with different voices, and this was usually due to the political profiles of the individual titles. In the face of the external threat of the outbreak of the Second World War, the national press was put on high alert, so it unanimously supported the government's actions in defending the country, and significant differences between the government organs and the opposition press were marked. Almost all the press propagandized in its pages at the time a belief 'in the strength, compactness and readiness' to 'repel the enemy'⁴³.

Unfortunately, only rudimentary information can be found on how the press presented Poland's international situation between the Munich Conference and the end of the September campaign. This is all the more incomprehensible as, after all, extremely important events for Poland took place at that time, such as the Polish-British negotiations just before the outbreak of the Second World War, or the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

⁴² A. Rozmysłowicz, „*Kurier Warszawski*” we wrześniu 1939 r., „*Rocznik Historii Prasy Polskiej*” 2015, 18, 1 (37), pp. 47–49.

⁴³ L. Dobroszycki, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

A comprehensive study of the subject, which would present Poland's role and position on the international arena in the extremely important period from 29 September 1938 until the end of the 1939 September campaign, therefore seems justified.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Agata Fijuth-Dudek – PhD in social sciences in the field of media sciences, assistant professor in the Research Laboratory of the Literary Institute in Paris at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. Main research interests: history of post-war emigration, especially the thought and achievements of the Literary Institute in Paris and “Kultura”, history of the media, studies of contemporary journalism. Author of the monograph *Bez złudzeń i bez maski. Leopold Unger’s journalism in the Parisian „Culture” in the years 1970–2000*. Finalist of the Professor Tomasz Strzembosz Award 2020 competition.

NOTA O AUTORZE

Agata Fijuth-Dudek – doktor nauk społecznych w zakresie nauk o mediach, adiunkt w Pracowni Badań nad Instytutem Literackim w Paryżu na Wydziale Politologii i Dziennikarstwa UMCS. Główne zainteresowania badawcze to: historia emigracji powojennej, szczególnie myśli i dorobku Instytutu Literackiego w Paryżu i „Kultury”, historia mediów, studia nad współczesnym dziennikarstwem. Autorka monografii *Bez złudzeń i bez maski. Publicystyka Leopolda Ungera w paryskiej „Kulturze” w latach 1970–2000*. Finalistka konkursu o Nagrodę im. prof. Tomasza Strzembosza 2020.

