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## Status and Prospects for Research on Relations of the Belarussian Minority with Polish Civilian and Military Administration, in Connection with the Situation before and During the Polish September Campaign 1939

*Stan i perspektywy badań nad stosunkiem mniejszości białoruskiej do polityki władz cywilnych i wojskowych w związku z bezpośrednią genezą i przebiegiem Kampanii Polskiej 1939 r.*

### ABSTRACT

The text provides an overview of research on the attitudes of Belarusians towards the Polish State in 1937–1939. It was made separately for two periods: until the outbreak of World War II and for the Polish Campaign of 1939. Within each of these sections, two categories of publications were focused on: studies (books and articles) and editions of

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sources (ego-documents and collections of archival documents). The final section presents research postulates.

**Key words:** national minorities, Belarusians, nationality politics, II Polish Republic, Polish Campaign 1939

#### STRESZCZENIE

Tekst zawiera przegląd badań dotyczących postaw Białorusinów wobec państwa polskiego w latach 1937–1939. Został on wykonany odrębnie dla dwóch okresów: do wybuchu II wojny światowej oraz podczas trwania Kampanii polskiej 1939. W obrębie każdej z tych części skoncentrowano się na dwóch kategoriach publikacji: opracowaniach (książki i artykuły) oraz edycjach źródeł (ego-dokumenty oraz dokumenty archiwalne). W ostatniej części zaprezentowano postulaty badawcze.

**Słowa kluczowe:** mniejszości narodowe, Białorusini, polityka narodowościowa, II Rzeczypospolita, Kampania polska 1939

#### INTRODUCTION

The historiography on the problem of the Belarussian minority in the Second Polish Republic and its attitude towards the authorities is quite substantial and historically meaningful. Taking into account its sources, it is possible to define their three main categories: Polish, Belarussian (after 1991), and the Soviet subject literature. As for the last two cases, publications in both Russian and Belarussian languages are available. Generally, the number of works on Belarussian and Polish–Belarussian relations is significant, but it should be noted that the topic signalled in the title of this article is unfortunately not covered well. For this publication, the starting point of the analysis is 1937. The remark on the availability of sources and publications refers mainly to the period till the outbreak of WWII, and to a lesser extent – to the Polish Military September Campaign of 1939 (especially to the Soviet invasion of Poland on 17 September 1939)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In the beginning of 1990s, mainly the decade of 1920s and the situation in Belarus and Polish–Belarussian relations have been the main focus of Polish and Belarussian historians. E. Mironowicz, *Białoruska mniejszość narodowa w II Rzeczypospolitej w historiografii polskiej*, "Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne" [hereinafter: "BZH"], 1995, 4, pp. 176–180; H. Głogowska, *Stan badań nad historią Białorusi XX w. w Polsce*, "BZH" 1996, 5, pp. 96–107; idem, *Stan badań nad dziejami Komunistycznej Partii Zachodniej Białorusi w Polsce*, "BZH" 1996, 6, pp. 100–104; В. Кушнер, *Асвятленне гісторыі Заходняй Беларусі 1921–1941 гадоў у сучаснай беларускай гістарыяграфіі*, "BZH" 2000, 13, pp. 144–157.

The main reason for such a situation was consequences of Polish policies towards the Belarussian minority. It had been gradually tightened since the beginning of the 1930s. This resulted in the disintegration of the organized, social life of Belarussians. At the turn of 1936–1937, liquidation of many key Belarussian institutions actually took effect. It affected the Belarussian School Society, Belarussian Institute of Economy and Culture<sup>2</sup>, and even the Belarussian Education Society that was perceived as an element leaning towards Poland<sup>3</sup>. In addition, even the most important conservative press release titled “Krynica”<sup>4</sup> ceased to operate. Some more economic and educational institutions suffered a similar fate<sup>5</sup>. As a result, for the period spring 1937–August 1939, historians do not have any chance and possibility to monitor the Belarussian minority through the prism of national political and social structures<sup>6</sup>.

The second element that played a similar role, mainly from the point of view of the Soviet historiography, and to a lesser extent Belarussian, was the eradication of the Communist movement within the Second Polish Republic territory<sup>7</sup>. In case of Polish North-Eastern territories (Voivodeships of Vilnius, Nowogrodek and Poleskie) and Eastern parts of Białystok Voivodeship and North-Eastern parts of the Lublin Voivodeship – in practical terms, it meant the formal annihilation of the Communist

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<sup>2</sup> K. Gomółka, *Polityka rządów polskich wobec mniejszości białoruskiej w latach 1918–1939*, “BZH” 1995, 4, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> А.С. Горный, *Белорусские национально-демократические и полонофильские организации в межвоенной Польше*, “Славянский альманах” 2020, 3–4, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> M. Moroz, „Krynica”. *Ideologia i przywódca białoruskiego katolicyzmu*, Białystok 2001, pp. 249, 253–256.

<sup>5</sup> K. Gomółka, *Białoruskie instytucje życia gospodarczego w II Rzeczypospolitej*, “BZH” 1997, 8, pp. 95–96; M. Siemakowicz, *Szkoły z białoruskim językiem nauczania na tle polityki władz polskich wobec ludności białoruskiej od zamachu majowego do końca II Rzeczypospolitej*, “BZH” 2002, 17, p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that in the most sizeable and most comprehensive work on the history of North–Eastern voivodeships of the Second Polish Republic, in the chapter on political organizations and issues, stories about activities of Belarussian organizations are described on just 35 pages, and the period 1937–1939 – in just two paragraphs. *Рижский мир в судьбе белорусского народа 1921–1953 гг.*, book 1, ed. А.А. Коваленя, Минск 2014, pp. 374–408.

<sup>7</sup> The best example is the publication from 1960s, with its formal caesura of 1939. However, it does not include too much information on 1938–1939, В. Полуян, И. Полуян, *Революционное и национально-освободительное движение в Западной Белоруссии в 1920–1939 гг.*, Минск 1962, pp. 191–221; А.А. Сорокин, *Освободительное и революционное крестьянское движение в Западной Беларуси*, Минск 1977. It is to note that such an approach was not applied to the official history of the Communist Party of the Western Belarus, as the book ends at the springtime of 1938, *Революционный путь Компартии Западной Беларуси*, eds. А.Н. Мацко, В.Е. Самутин, Минск 1966, p. 375.

Party of the Western Belarus, all during the summer of 1938, on the basis of directives issued by the Soviet political leadership. This organization had been the main reference point for the Soviet historiography on this specific part of the land. Therefore, the period just before WWII is not properly covered and discussed.

Due to such a situation, no stories of Belarussians, citizens of the Second Polish Republic, has resulted in publication of monographs and editions of available sources (including personal documents) on the last two years before the war. However, there are situations when in the documents on the period 1937–1939 there are just some fragments on this specific period. The different situation is on the September 1939, when, especially in the Polish historiography, there are some elements on this particular and short period. In most of the cases, the situation, activities and attitudes of Belarussians are just one of many different elements touched on in the work and they are not signalled in titles of the publications.

The analysis presented here has been prepared basing on two criteria. The first one – is the chronological. To cover the whole story, it is possible to distinguish two periods:

– The prewar period, Spring 1937–Summer 1939 (31 August 1939). It should be dealt separately, mainly due to the establishment of the Camp of the National Unity (pol. *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, OZN) at the beginning of 1937 and taking into account the situation of Belarussians in the II Polish Republic:

– The wartime period, covering the Polish September Military Campaign 1939, from 1 September 1939 till the half of October, when Soviet troops withdrew behind the new demarcation line, as established by the Soviet–German Agreement of 28 September 1939 on delimitation of occupation zones<sup>8</sup>.

The second criterion is based on types of publications. Two of them were identified: monographs and editions of sources (this includes ‘personal documents’, without recollections and archival materials)<sup>9</sup>. No comprehensive, synthetic work on the history of Belarus was included

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<sup>8</sup> The cut-off date of 14 October 1939 was applied, when the Red Army withdrew from Włodawa on the Bug River, the southernmost town bordering areas annexed to the Belarussian Soviet Socialistic Republic. J. Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.*, Lublin–Warszawa 2021, p. 186. The Soviet point of view was defined by guidelines issued by the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army to HQs of two fronts operating on the Polish territory, M. Gnatowski, *Zgromadzenie Ludowe Zachodniej Białorusi. Fakty, oceny, dokumenty*, Białystok 2001, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> The topic of émigré memoirs on the interwar period and September 1939 was presented in: <https://kamunikat.org/download.php?item=3563-2.pdf&pubref=3563> [access: 30.09.2022].

as well as doctoral dissertations<sup>10</sup>. The final part of the text is dedicated to already diagnosed historiographic deficits and to research perspectives.

Just for the record, it is necessary to note that works of Belarussian historian, citizens of the Polish State, would be considered as an element of the Polish historiography. For the purposes of this study, the research will be limited to works even fragmentarily referring to 1937–1939 and situation of the Belarussian minority. Some important works should be mentioned here as they registered some important actions and shed light on the events of the last years of the Second Polish Republic and September 1939<sup>11</sup>.

To sum up this introductory part, it should be noticed that due to the situation behind Polish Eastern borders, since the Spring 2020, it was not possible to get access to some important volumes published in Belarus on research projects connected to the 80th anniversary of events of September 1939, both to monographs and collections, and editions of source documents<sup>12</sup>.

#### SPRING 1937–SUMMER 1939

The best coverage of Polish policies towards the Belarussian minority during 1937–1939 was presented by Eugeniusz Mironowicz. He dedicated almost the whole chapter on actions and policies of the ruling Polish ‘Sanacja’ regime towards the Slavish ethnic minorities. It has been mainly based on archival materials available in Belarus<sup>13</sup>.

The situation on the Belarussian political arena in 1938–1939 was also examined by Krystyna Gomółka more than two decades ago. She described the situation of some organizations and their structures (including the Communist Party of the Western Belarus that was in the process of liquidation by Moscow). The work of this scientist from Gdansk is very condensed (only six pages) and unfortunately was based on the very

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<sup>10</sup> For Belarus, they were collected in: Г.В. Корзенко, Ю.В. Зенкович, *Аннотированный указатель диссертаций по историческим наукам, защищенных в Республике Беларусь (1991–2005 гг.)*, Минск 2006; А.А. Савіч, *Нацыянальна-вызваленчы рух у Заходняй Беларусі (1921–1939 год – гістарыяграфія праблемы*, Брэст 2012.

<sup>11</sup> For example: С. Токць, *Беларуская вёска ў эпоху зьменаў. Другая палова XIX–першая траціна XX ст.*, Минск 2007, pp. 199–267; J. Obrębski, *Polesie. Studia etnosocjologiczne*, ed. A. Engelking, Warszawa 2007.

<sup>12</sup> *Осведомительной сетью выявлены. 2-я танковая бригада в Западной Беларуси по спецсообщениям особого отдела НКВД. Сборник документов и материалов*, Минск 2019.

<sup>13</sup> E. Mironowicz, *Białorusini i Ukraińcy w polityce obozu piłsudczykowskiego*, Białystok 2007, pp. 70–125. Na ten temat w ujęciu krótszym: idem, *Obóz sanacyjny wobec problemu białoruskiego w przededniu drugiej wojny światowej*, in: *Stosunki polsko-białoruskie. Historia i współczesność*, ed. D. Michaluk, Kraków 2013, pp. 132–138.

selective research. This remark refers mainly to archival materials. The text does not include any materials from the Central Archives of Modern Records<sup>14</sup>. However, K. Gomółka touches similar problems also in some fragments of her other texts<sup>15</sup>.

The coverage of Belarussian political organizations was also delivered by Andrej Waszkiewicz, who dealt with the history of the group of rev. Wincenty Godlewski, i.e. on people concentrated in the group around the "Białoruski Front" (Eng. Belarussian Front)<sup>16</sup>. The materials on the Communist movement should be treated in a separate way. The same approach should be taken assessing the attitude of Belarussians towards Communism, especially at the end of 1930s. The latter question should be carefully taken into account as despite the liquidation of Communist structures, this Soviet operation did not eliminate pro-Soviet sentiments in Belarus. At present, this specific topic is mainly covered by the Polish historiography<sup>17</sup>. The next factor that influenced attitudes of Belarussians, in the context of the Communist Party of the Western Belarus activities, was the civil war in Spain<sup>18</sup>. Also, some references to political problems could be found in other publications on more general topics<sup>19</sup>.

The element of the German influence, with regard to attitudes of Belarussian politicians, was examined both by Polish and Belarussian historiography. It was explored by Jerzy Grzybowski in the part of his monograph on the Belarussian national movement during WWII<sup>20</sup>. Belarussian scientists also covered this specific period, also going beyond 1937–1939<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> K. Gomółka, *Ruch białoruski w przededniu II wojny światowej*, "BZH" 2000, 13, pp. 186–191.

<sup>15</sup> K. Gomółka, *Polityka*, pp. 118–119.

<sup>16</sup> A. Вашкевіч, *Вінцэнт Гадлеўскі. Насуперак часу*, Мінск 2018, pp. 109–126; idem, *Група „Беларускі фронт” і ... змаганне ў чужымі фронтамі*, "BZH" 2006, 26, pp. 69–91.

<sup>17</sup> E. Mironowicz, *Białorusini, komunizm i władze sanacyjne w latach 1937–1939*, "BZH" 2006, 25, pp. 102–115; P. Cichoracki, *Komuniści na Polesiu 1921–1939*, Łomianki 2016, pp. 197–241 [here the period 1935–1939]; A.A. Савич, *Историография и новые источники о роспуске компартии Западной Беларуси*, „Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. История” 2020, 65, 3, pp. 962–974.

<sup>18</sup> И.Ю. Воронкова, *Беларусь и война в Испании 1936–1939 гг.*, Минск 2009, pp. 126–148.

<sup>19</sup> А.Н. Вабишчевич, *Этнокультурное положение и этнополитические отношения на западнобелорусских землях накануне сентября 1939 года*, in: *Западная Белоруссия и Западная Украина в 1939–1941 гг. Люди, события, документы*, Санкт Петербург 2016, pp. 7–24.

<sup>20</sup> J. Grzybowski, *Białoruski ruch niepodległościowy w czasie II wojny światowej*, Warszawa 2021, pp. 21–33.

<sup>21</sup> У. Сакалоўскі, У. Ляхоўскі, *Нямеччына і беларускінацыянальны рух напярэдадні ў першыя гады Другое Сусветнае Вайны*, "BZH" 2000, 13, pp. 5–20; О.В. Романько, *Коричневые тени в Полесье. Белоруссия 1941–1945*, Москва 2008, pp. 69–73.



The lack and/or rather disintegration of organized Belarussian political life, at the period in question, should lead us to efforts to put more attention on some other aspects and emanations of the Belarussian social life. Firstly, the status and situation of and within the religious structures should be taken into account. Due to the confessional dualism in Belarus, researches should explore documents from and on both Roman-Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

As for Belarus subject literature, such topics, as for the period of 1937–1939, are just fragments of more comprehensive works, both for the first<sup>22</sup>, and for the second element<sup>23</sup>. Historians have also touched issues of other Churches in Belarus, during the years just before the II World War<sup>24</sup>. The picture of educational and political activities should be complemented by efforts within the information and cultural domains, especially with regard to press.

Information on 1937–1939 are dispersed within bigger and more comprehensive publications<sup>25</sup>. The only element that was approached in a structured and integrated way was the problem of education in Belarus. However, such an attempt refers only to the situation of education

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<sup>22</sup> M. Kalina, *Polonizacja Cerkwi prawosławnej w województwie białostockim (1918–1939)*, “BZH” 1995, 4, pp. 100–104; E. Mironowicz, *Polityczne uwarunkowania funkcjonowania Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce w latach 1920–1939*, “BZH” 2005, 24, pp. 144–152; A.M. Вабішчэвіч, *Паланізацыя праваслаўнай царквы ў Заходняй Беларусі ў другой палове 1930-х гг. планы і практычная рэалізацыя*, in: *Православие в духовной жизни Беларуси*, Брест 2008, pp. 221–228.

<sup>23</sup> W. Śleszyński, *Polityka państwa w stosunku do Cerkwi prawosławnej na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, in: *Kościół a państwo na pograniczu polsko-litewsko-białoruskim. Źródła i stan badań*, eds. M. Kietliński, K. Sychowicz, W. Śleszyński, Białystok 2005, pp. 355–357; I.I. Трацяк, *Беларускае каталіцкае духавенства ў сацыякультурным працэсе першай паловы XX стагоддзя*, part 1, *Арганізацыя беларускага душпастырства ва ўмовах канфесійна-нацыянальнай палітыкі 1913–1939 гадоў*, Гродна 2019; pp. 208–209, 247–248; А. Трофимчук, *Вторая мировая война в воспоминаниях и восприятии западнобеларуского населения в начале нового тысячелетия (на примере жителей деревни Большие Круговичи Ганцевичского района Брестской области)*, “BZH” 2008, 30, p. 94.

<sup>24</sup> M. Gałędek, *Organizacja i zadania administracji w sprawach wyznaniowych na Ziemi Wileńskiej w latach 1919–1939*, in: *Kościół*, pp. 377–381; T. Lisoúskaja, *Polityka władz polskich wobec protestanckich związków wyznaniowych na terenach białoruskich w latach 1921–1939*, “BZH” 2005, 24, pp. 202–203.

<sup>25</sup> M. Moroz, „Круніца”, pp. 253–256; A.M. Вабішчэвіч, *Нацыянальна-культурнае жыццё Заходняй Беларусі (1921–1939 гг.)*, Брест 2008, pp. 37–141; idem, *Паміж паланізацыяй і асіміляцыяй этнакультурная сітуацыя ў Заходняй Беларусі ў другой палове 1930-х гадоў*, <https://rep.brsu.by/handle/123456789/5123> [access: 30.09.2023]; А. Ліс, *Gloria victis!*, Мінск 2008; А. Парарэлы, „За новы тып беларуса”. *Часопіс „25 Сакавіка” (1936–1939) на фоне эпохі*, “Arche” 2014, 7–8, pp. 120–194.

in areas inhabited mainly by Belarussians and not to organic Belarussian schools and other educational structures that, at that time, had been already almost all shut down<sup>26</sup>. Another important category of works should also be taken into account. These are publications prepared by Belarussian historians on some regions and specific areas.

Some Polish Voivodeships had been quite thoroughly covered – as in the case of Polesia. That mainly happened due to military aspects of this particular area<sup>27</sup> and big volume of archival records of the Polish civilian and military administration available at the Belarussian National Archive in Brest. Some fonds are also available in the Central Military Archive and Central Archives of Modern Records, both in Warsaw. Their volume is relatively big in comparison to other records on other North-Eastern Voivodeships accessible in Poland.

As for other available texts, there are several works and fragments in monographs on some cities and regions<sup>28</sup>. The “Pamyat” publication series should be mentioned here, due to the size of this important undertaking and its completeness. These works are dedicated to the history of contemporary Belarussian regions (equivalent to Polish districts) before WWII. They were published since the beginning of the 1990s. The role and significance of such publication results from the fact of its wide geographical coverage, especially with regard to the North–Eastern areas of the Second Polish Republic that are now a part of the Republic of Belarus<sup>29</sup>.

However, this publication series is not free from some problems and flaws. This has been already noticed by a number of historians. It is mainly due to the represented Soviet-centric approach. However, it is still necessary to appreciate the size of this undertaking and volume of available

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<sup>26</sup> А.М. Вабішчэвіч, *Асвета ў Заходняй Беларусі (1921–1939 гг.)*, Брэст 2004, pp. 92–102.

<sup>27</sup> A. Wabiszczewicz, *Этноконфессиональная ситуация и межэтнические взаимоотношения на Полесье в 1919–1939 гг.*, in: *Od konfliktu do współistnienia i współpracy*, vol. 1, *Bliscy i dalecy sąsiedzi*, eds. K. Grysińska-Jarmuła, T. Maresz, Bydgoszcz 2017, pp. 139–148; P. Cichoracki, *Sytuacja w województwie poleskim od kryzysu zaolziańskiego do mobilizacji alarmowej w marcu 1939 r.*, “Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy” 2009, 3, pp. 205–213; idem, *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; E. Pawłowski, *Przebieg i wyniki częściowej mobilizacji alarmowej z 23 marca 1939*, “Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny” 1995, 1–2, pp. 99–119; W. Włodarkiewicz, *Spółczesność województwa poleskiego wobec zagrożenia wojennego i wojny w 1939 roku*, “Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy” 2009, 1, pp. 95–115.

<sup>28</sup> A good example of such an approach for the period of 1937–1939: *Гісторыя Пінска. Ад старажытнасці да сучаснасці*, ed. А.М. Літвін, Мінск 2012, pp. 414–456.

<sup>29</sup> The breakdown and list of volumes: <https://ethno.by/seryi/979650390?tab=tab1> [access: 30.09.2022].



information, especially on the prewar period and the wartime<sup>30</sup>. Another significant publication effort had been taken with regard to the city of Grodno<sup>31</sup>. It should also be noted that due to mainly rural characteristics of Belarus, information on such areas available in town and bigger cities records are not sizeable. In addition, they are often dispersed among different materials. Sometimes, it is necessary to look for such elements also in parts concerning the Orthodox Church.

#### Editions of historical sources

The categories of the already mentioned so-called 'personal documents' are represented in the research projects in rather small numbers. The most sizeable is the diary of Maksym Tank, the publicist and poet linked with the Communist movement. Editions of his papers cover the period 1935–1939. Their first publication was already available during his lifetime<sup>32</sup>. The next important document were daily notes of the leading activist of the Belarussian Conservatists – rev. Adam Stankiewicz. Those diaries had many editions, in many different variants (published either in full<sup>33</sup> or only selected fragments<sup>34</sup>), sometimes with additional introductory remarks.

There had been also other collections, including letters of many other people that were somehow related with political-social problems<sup>35</sup>. During the last two decades, there had been also many efforts to record and save memories of Belarussians on the events and life in 1921–1939. Such undertakings were organized both in Poland and Belarus. They resulted in publications with testimonies of tens of people. However, parts of such works that could be linked with the prewar period are quite scattered

<sup>30</sup> Some example I.П. Крэнъ, *Беларуска-польскія адносіны на старонках гісторыка-дакументальных хронік "Памяць" на гарадах і раёнах Гродзенскай вобласці*, in: *Droga ku wzajemności. Шлях да ўзаемнасці*, У 2 ч., part 2, Grodno 2004, pp. 12–18.

<sup>31</sup> Л. Міхайлік, *Гародня ў 1939 г.: напярэдадні вайны*, in: *Гарадзенскі соцыум 2013. Гісторыя і памяць. XV–XX стст.*, eds. А.К. Краўцэвіч, А.Ф.Смаленчук, Гародня 2014, pp. 268–292.

<sup>32</sup> The last such edition is the element of the 9th Volume of Collective Works: М. Танк, *Лісткі календаря. Дзёнік 1941–1944*, eds. А.С. Ліс, У.М. Казбярук, Мінск 2008, pp. 24–351.

<sup>33</sup> А. Станкевіч, *З Богам да Беларусі. Збор твораў*, eds. А. Пашкевіч, А. Вашкевіч, Вільня 2008, pp. 837–846.

<sup>34</sup> Ц. Чырғын, *Цлоні́мская ссы́лка Адама Станкевіча, "ВЗН" 2007, 28*, pp. 193–202.

<sup>35</sup> А. Ільін, *„Українське грамадства усё больш цікавіцца беларускім рухам ...“*. *Беларуска-ўкраінскія адносіны другой паловы 1930-к г. у святле ліставання Восіпа Назарука і ксяндза Ўладыслава Талочкі*, "Arche" 2014, 7–8, pp. 249–258.

within the whole material. Despite of this, all deserve our attention<sup>36</sup>. The next important element are observations on Belarussians by Józef Mackiewicz that were printed as journalist reports on pages of the "Słowo" newspaper in Vilnius. They escape any popular stereotypes and have a reporting side, with many information and author's experiences. Mackiewicz's texts from that period have also been reedited and published in one volume<sup>37</sup>.

Editions based on fonds from different archives are much more elaborate and sizeable. One of the most interesting and important, for exploring Belarussian attitudes, is the one with documents on the March Alert Mobilisation within the area of responsibility of Corps District Commands IV and IX, which covered regions with the predominantly Belarussian population.

Documents generated by 20th and 30th Infantry Divisions as well as the reports produced by the Independent Information Section of the Corps District Commands IX allow historians to have an interesting insight into attitudes of Belarussians drafted to the Army and also of the Belarussian civilian population<sup>38</sup>.

There have also been published parts of reports of the Białystok Voivode on the religious life of his province, including elements on the Orthodox Church<sup>39</sup>. Just to note, the number of documents on the political events and plans that also touch issues connected with the Belarussian minority is very small. One of important and interesting papers that is available now to researchers is the report generated by local structures of OZN<sup>40</sup>.

As for the Belarussian subject literature, no sizeable source editions have been found, with files on the period in question. Only some single documents can be found in fonds and files covering much bigger period

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<sup>36</sup> У новай айчыне. Штодзённае жыццё беларусаў Беласточчыны ў міжваенны перыяд, ed. В. Луба, Беласток 2001; А.Л. Заерко, *История белорусского приграничья. Кровавая граница*, book 1, 1918–1939, Минск 2002; „За першымі Саветамі”. Польшка–беларускае памежжа 1939–1941 гг. у бусных успамінах жыхароў Беларусі, ed. А. Смаленчук, Минск 2019; „За польскім часам...”. Западная Беларусь в воспоминаниях современников, eds. Е.С. Розенблат et al., Брест 2015.

<sup>37</sup> J. Mackiewicz, *Okna zatkane szmatami*, Londyn 2002.

<sup>38</sup> *Wojskowe Teki Archiwalne*, vol. 2, *Mobilizacja marcowa 1939. Dokumenty i relacje*, eds. A. Wesolowski, K. Stepan, Warszawa 2012.

<sup>39</sup> G. Sosna, *Kościół prawosławny na Białostocczyźnie w ocenie władz II Rzeczypospolitej: wybór dokumentów. Sytuacyjne sprawozdanie Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Białymstoku z lat 1928–1939*, Ryboły 1991.

<sup>40</sup> J. Januszewska-Jurkiewicz, *Koncepcje programowe działaczy Obozu Zjednoczenia Narodowego Okręgu Wileńskiego i Nowogródzkiego w kwestii białoruskiej*, "BZH" 2005, 23, pp. 192–212.

of the time and very different topics, such as the posture and activities of Belarussian emigration circles<sup>41</sup>. We can also find cases of themed layout eclecticism, where documents are in the form of annexes to particular chapters of prepared historical publications<sup>42</sup>.

It also should be mentioned that quite often we can experience quite paradoxical situation. Belarussian archives have big collections of documents, also for the period of 1937–1939. But in the subsequent historical publications there are references to always the same papers<sup>43</sup>. Also, some quasi-source editions could be found (with no or negligible signs of any archival or historical work) that include only small elements of archival materials, mostly related to a particular town or settlement<sup>44</sup>. The “Pamyat” publication series is a good example of such an approach in Belarus.

## SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 1939

### Monographs

The Polish historiography on North-Eastern parts of the Second Polish Republic in September 1939 is quite sizeable in volume. The most important work on analysis of attitudes of Polish citizens of the Belarussian ethnicity during that specific period is the monograph of Marek Wierzbicki<sup>45</sup>.

Such a topic was also taken up by other researchers and results published in more comprehensive works on different aspects of the Polish September Military Campaign of 1939 in the North-Eastern Voivodeships of Poland, mainly on different elements related to the internal security

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<sup>41</sup> *Беларусь в політыцы суседніх і заходніх дзяржаў (1914–1991)*, vol. 1, 19 сакавіка 1921–31 жніўня 1939, ed. M.S. Martynau, Minsk 2012, pp. 363–369.

<sup>42</sup> *Рижский*, pp. 326–371, 448–476, 591–592 [11 documents in total].

<sup>43</sup> *Польша–Беларусь (1921–1953). Сборник документов и материалов*, ed. А. Коваленя, Минск 2012, pp. 154–182 [docs 54–62].

<sup>44</sup> В.Н.Черепица, ... *Не потеряйте связующую нить: История Гродненщины XIX–XX столетий в событиях и лицах (исследования, документы, комментарии)*, Гродно 2003, pp. 288–295.

<sup>45</sup> M. Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-białoruskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 35–127. This scientist published also some works on that topic earlier, i.e. M. Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini wobec procesu tworzenia podstaw władzy radzieckiej (wrzesień–październik 1939 r.)*, “BZH” 1998, 9, pp. 78–96; idem, *Ludność białoruska i polska wobec Armii Czerwonej po 17 września 1939 r.*, “BZH” 1999, 11, pp. 148–164; idem, *Stosunki polsko-białoruskie pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)*, “BZH” 2003, 20, pp. 176–182.

issues<sup>46</sup>, and in publications that had been an effort of a synthetic approach to September 1939 problems<sup>47</sup>. Due to the limited space available for the analysis, no work related just and only to military issues and their different aspects will be mentioned here. However, this special category of publications should also be considered as an additional and special area of research which would serve to complement other exploration studies.

There had also been some efforts to evaluate the attitudes of Belarusians within files and ranks of the Polish military. That was carefully and accurately done by M. Wierzbicki<sup>48</sup> and J. Grzybowski<sup>49</sup>. Works of these two authors are very well documented and supported by archival materials. Some of them are of émigré provenance (reports of Polish officers stored in IMPS), and to an extent – from Soviet institutions. This makes such publications even more important and valuable, also for other scientists.

This is not the case for the Belarussian subject literature. There is no publication in this country that could be compared with the monograph of M. Wierzbicki. The two-volume publication, issued there in the last decade, could be considered as an effort to prepare a synthesis of history of regions that were a part of the North-Eastern Voivodeships of the Second Polish Republic. However, especially in the part on the September 1939, it does not meet any criteria of scientificity. It is a typical Soviet historiography and includes many elements of falsification, mainly with regard to facts and their interpretations (for example, allegedly the Polish Government left the Country on '16 September!')<sup>50</sup>. However, one can find quite interesting elements but they are dispersed in many other texts and works of Belarussian authors, but again – based to a great extent

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<sup>46</sup> R. Oleszkowicz, *Kontrwywiad kresowy. Działalność polskie kontrwywiadu wojskowego na obszarze Dowództwa Okręgu Korpusu nr IX w Brześciu nad Bugiem w okresie międzywojennym*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 342–352; W. Śleszyński, *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 331–345.

<sup>47</sup> H. Głogowska, *Nadzieje i rozczarowania Białorusinów we wrześniu 1939 r.*, „Rocznik Centrum Studiów Białoruskich SEW” 2020, 6, pp. 106–120; W. Śleszyński, *Postawy mniejszości białoruskiej w Polsce (marzec–październik 1939 r.)*, in: *Kampania polska 1939 r. Polityka–społeczeństwo–kultura*, vol. 2, *Polityka i społeczeństwo. Imponderabilia, pamięć, kultura*, eds. M.P. Deszczynski, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2014, pp. 157–164; J.J. Milewski, *Początek okupacji sowieckiej ziem północno-wschodnich Polski (wrzesień–październik 1939 r.)*, in: *Kampania polska 1939 r.*, pp. 363–375.

<sup>48</sup> M. Wierzbicki, *Białorusini w Wojsku Polskim w czasie kampanii wrześniowej 1939 r.*, „BZH” 1996, 6, pp. 65–81.

<sup>49</sup> J. Grzybowski, *Białorusini w polskich regularnych formacjach wojskowych w latach 1918–1945*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 141–167.

<sup>50</sup> *Рижский*, pp. 5–22 [as for the information mentioned, p. 9].

on Soviet documents. There had also been some other cases in Belarus to make a comprehensive synthesis of events for the period<sup>51</sup>.

The most important and noticeable trend in the modern Belarusian historiography are the efforts to prepare a kind of historical reflection in September 1939 and role of this period with regard to the 'fate and history of the Belarussian nation'. Available texts, presenting such a point of view are somewhere between affirmation of consequences of the Soviet aggression of Poland ('liberation')<sup>52</sup> and an ambivalent approach that takes into account both positive and negative impact of the invasion – of course all from the Belarussian point of view. In both cases, there are many references to the Polish historiography, but they were mainly critical if not totally negative<sup>53</sup>. The most important and interesting, from the scientific point of view, could be records from the discussions of Polish and Belarussian historians<sup>54</sup>.

To finalize the evaluation of works that have the general character, a few remarks should also be done on publications from the times of the Soviet Union. Their structure and tone have been classical for the Soviet propaganda. However, they could be of interest from the epistemological perspective, especially if we make an effort to analyse the final chapter of the 'canonical' and synthetic history of the Communist Party of the Western Belarus titled *Unification of the Western Belarus with the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic*). Going through all the references and annotations, it is possible to note that most of the sources that had been used were

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<sup>51</sup> Р. Лазько, *Паход Чырвонай Арміі на Захад у верасні 1939 года: погляд з Усходу*, "ВЗН" 2000, 13, pp. 21–32.

<sup>52</sup> Ф.У. Ладысеў, *Паміж Усходам і Захадам. Станаўленне дзяржаўнасці і тэрытарыяльнай цэласнасці Беларусі (1917–1939 гг.)*, Мінск 2003, pp. 189–198.

<sup>53</sup> For example: В. Гарматны, *Верасень 1939 года ў лёсе беларускага народа*, "ВЗН" 2009, 32, pp. 278–289; А. Вялікі, *Вересень 1939 г.: завяршэнне ці пачатак Вересень 1939 г.: завяршэнне ці пачатак працэса кансалідацыі беларускай нацыі?*, in: *Wyzwolenie czy okupacja? Stosunek społeczności zamieszkujących pogranicze polsko-litewsko-białoruskie do zmieniających się w XX wieku systemów państwowych*, eds. M. Kietliński, W. Śleszyński, Białystok 2006, pp. 123–127; У.Е. Снапкоўскі, *Беларуска-польскія адносіны (1918–1989 гг.). Даследаванні, дакументы, ілюстрацыі і карты*, Мінск 2013, pp. 57–62; А. Трафімчык, *Ленін і Сталін думаюць пра Беларусь*, Мінск 2013, pp. 63–97; И.А. Украинец, *Сентябрь 1939 года – судьбоносный момент в истории Западной Беларуси*, in: *Заходні рэгіён Беларусі вачыма гісторыкаў і краязнаўцаў*, Гродна 2006, pp. 197–199.

<sup>54</sup> *Różne wizje Września '39 na Białorusi*, in: *17 września w ocenie historyków polskich i białoruskich*, pp. 12–15 [in: [http://kamunikat.org/katalogkamunikat.html?pub\\_start=40&pubid=34717&lang=PL](http://kamunikat.org/katalogkamunikat.html?pub_start=40&pubid=34717&lang=PL) access: 30.09.2022].

the Soviet press of 1939/1940. This is of course of some value but it still requires thorough and detailed historical verification<sup>55</sup>.

The significant source are also texts on local events, on specific regions and even town and/or villages<sup>56</sup>. However, the number of elements covering the period of 1921–1939 is very limited and sometimes even there are no mentions on events of the September 1939 or even on the whole period of 1939–1941. It is the situation of the new and extensive Nowogrodek's monograph<sup>57</sup>. Some episodes of the Polish September Military Campaign, also those related to the attitude of the Belarussian population, are quite well described and presented.

Some cases of anti-Polish hostilities were also presented, as for Skidel. This has been done in the form of a monograph<sup>58</sup> and also in a number of mentions in bigger works<sup>59</sup>. Belarussian and Polish historians extensively covered these tragic events in the property of the Skirmunt Family – in Molodowa and Porzecze where owners were murdered and their property robbed<sup>60</sup>. If we skip the Soviet subject literature, the international context of Belarussian attitudes in September 1939 was touched only in fragments, within the bigger and general publications. The similar situation exists in the case of the Lithuanian societies in Belarus<sup>61</sup>.

#### Source editions

As for the attitude of Belarussian population towards fighting Polish troops, we have a unique opportunity to conduct effective research due

<sup>55</sup> *Революционный путь Компартии Западной Белоруссии*, eds. А.Н. Мацко, В.Е. Самутин, Минск 1966, pp. 376–383.

<sup>56</sup> For example: С.В. Донских, *Щучин. Локальная история в контексте региональных процессов*, Минск 2019, pp. 231–234; Texts in the collective work: *Восень 1939 года ў гістарычным лёсе Беларусі*, ed. А.А. Каваленя, Мінск 2010, pp. 233–240, 259–265, 266–274.

<sup>57</sup> *Гісторыя Навагрудка – з глыбінь вякоў да нашых дзён. Історыя Навагрудка – из глубин веков до наших дней*, eds. М.П. Касцюк et al., Мінск 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Ц. Токць, *Скідзелскае паўстанне 1939 г. ва ўспамінах жыхароў Скідзельшчыны*, in: *Восень 1939 года ў гістарычнай і вуснай гісторыі*, ed. А. Смалянчук, Мінск 2015, pp. 63–80; M. Wierzbicki, *Powstanie skidelskie 1939 r.*, "BZH" 1997, 7, pp. 75–99.

<sup>59</sup> С. Токць, *Лёс беларускага настаўніка*, "BZH" 2004, 21, p. 213.

<sup>60</sup> M. Nowak-Kielbikowa, *Konstanty Skirmunt. Polityk i dyplomata*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 329–337; А. Смалянчук, *Раман Скірмунт (1868–1939). жыццяпіс грамадзяніна краю*, Мінск 2018, pp. 647–664.

<sup>61</sup> T. Błaszczak, *Białorusini w Republice Litewskiej 1918–1940*, Białystok 2017, pp. 311–313; M. Iwanow, *Sprawa przynależności Wilna i problemy narodowościowe na Białorusi*, in: *Spółczesność białoruska, litewska i polska na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej (Białoruś Zachodnia i Litwa Wschodnia) w latach 1939–1941*, eds. M. Giżejewska, T. Strzembosz, Warszawa 1995, pp. 85–92; J. Grzybowski, *Białoruski*, pp. 37–41.



to a survived big part of documentation of the Independent Operation Group "Polesie".

Sections of these documents have already been published and several times in different works. One of the most important and quite fundamental for the history of this military grouping is the series of publications issued in 2013–2015 under the auspices of the Central Military Archive. However, this is still an unfinished job<sup>62</sup>. Looking through all the material from the perspective of the Belarussian, the historical value of available volumes varies from page to page, from the document to document. It is mainly due to the fact that some of the units from this Group marched and operated in areas inhabited mainly by Ukrainians, not Belarussians. Nevertheless, with just a basic knowledge, orientation in local relations and geographical distribution of ethnicities, it is still possible to find interesting and useful elements.

Thanks to the efforts of Czesław Grzelak, we also have at our disposal several volumes of the Soviet military documents. They could moreover be very helpful in reconstructing stances of the Belarussian population<sup>63</sup>. As for the first days and weeks of Soviet occupation – the most useful is the first volume with papers on the situation in North-Eastern Voivodeships from 1939 till 1941. This edition of sources includes Soviet documents from mainly Belarussian (including the Belarussian KGB) and Russian archives<sup>64</sup>. As for the Belarussian historiography, sources editions with documents on the Polish September Military Campaign of 1939 are, in most of the cases, published in publications covering much longer period of time<sup>65</sup>. From this project's point of view, their value varies as they mainly include information on Soviet military, diplomatic and

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<sup>62</sup> The title of the series: *SGO „Polesie” w dokumentach i wspomnieniach*. The main editor – A. Wesołowski. Publications available: part 1, *Dowództwo*, Warszawa 2013; part 2, *Stużby. Obrona Brześćcia. Dywizja „Kobryń” (dowództwo)*, Warszawa 2014; part 3, *Dywizja „Kobryń”*, Warszawa 2014; part 4, *Dywizja „Brzoza”*, Warszawa 2015; part 5/1, *Podlaska Brygada Kawalerii*, Warszawa 2015; part 5/2, *Suwalska Brygada Kawalerii. Dywizja „Zaza”*, Warszawa 2015.

<sup>63</sup> *Agresja sowiecka na Polskę 17 września 1939 r. w świetle dokumentów*, vol. 3, *Działania wojsk Frontu Białoruskiego*, ed. C. Grzelak, Warszawa 1995; *Dziennik działań bojowych Frontu Białoruskiego we wrześniu 1939 roku*, ed. C. Grzelak, Warszawa 1998; *3 Armia sowiecka w agresji na Polskę 1939 r. (dokument sprawozdawczy)*, ed. C. Grzelak, Warszawa 2003.

<sup>64</sup> *„Zachodnia Białoruś” 17 IX 1939–22 VI 1941. Wydarzenia i losy ludzkie. Rok 1939*, eds. B. Groniek et al., Warszawa 1998, pp. 67–225 [docs 1–41].

<sup>65</sup> *Беларуская нацыя - узьднанне. Верасень 1939 г.–чэрвень 1941 г. Зборнік дакументаў і матэрыялаў*, ed. У.Ф. Ладысеў, Мінск 2004, pp. 46–88 [docs 11–42]; *История Беларуси в документах и материалах*, eds. И.Н. Кузнецов, В.Г. Мазец, Мінск 2000, pp. 502–507; *Рижский мир в судьбе белорусского народа 1921–1953 гг.*, ed. А.А. Коваленя, book 2, Мінск 2014, pp. 48–57 [docs 1–7].

administration activities, such as decisions taken by Soviet authorities (including organs of the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic).

One of the most interesting is the publication with a selection of NKWD documents covering the period September–December 1939. It contains about 40 documents, mainly from the National Archive of the Republic of Belarus, but also from almost inaccessible for researchers archives of Russian and Belarussian KGBs<sup>66</sup>.

The next interesting item is the newest source edition edited by Aleksandr Smalyanchuk<sup>67</sup>. This publication would certainly be very helpful as access to editions from the Soviet era is difficult if now not impossible. However, after initial evaluation of this selection of documents on the North-Eastern Voivodeships, it should be stated that its editors were guided by the same bad principles as authors of above-mentioned synthesis of the history of the Communist Party of the Western Belarus. In the chapter on September 1939 events and their implications only already known manifests and announcements published by the Soviet press could only be found. This does not allow to consider them as an important historical source, especially with regard to assessing attitudes of Belarussians in 1939<sup>68</sup>. A number of documents from this edition refers also to plans and activities of some Belarussian émigré groups<sup>69</sup>.

In all above-mentioned editions and publications there is a number of testimonies on relations between ethnicities during the prewar period, recollections on first days of September 1939 and first week of Soviet occupation. It is also possible to find smaller pieces of information directly related to military situation of the time<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> НКВД в Западной Беларуси. Сентябрь–декабрь 1939. Документы и материалы, eds. Д.Ф. Воропаев et al., Минск–Москва 2019, pp. 13–119 [docs 1–40].

<sup>67</sup> „Вывалення” і зняволеныя. Польшка-беларускае памежжа 1939–1941 гг. у дакументах беларускіх архіваў, ed. А. Смалянчук, Минск 2021, pp. 25–60 [docs 1–16].

<sup>68</sup> Борьба трудящихся Западной Белоруссии, за социальное и национальное освобождение и воссоединение с БССР, eds. А.Н. Мадзинко, В.Н. Жугалов, Н.С. Орехво, vol. 2, Минск 1972, pp. 484–493, [docs 304–313]

<sup>69</sup> Беларусь у палітыцы суседніх і заходніх дзяржаў (1914–1991 гг.). Зборнік дакументаў і матэрыялаў: у 4 т., vol. 3, 1 верасня 1921–3 ліпеня 1944, ed. M.S. Martynau, Minsk 2010, pp. 68–69.

<sup>70</sup> П. Гурыновіч, Заходняя Беларусь у 1921–1939 гг. і ўз’яднаньне з БССР паводле ўспамінаў Камянецчыны. Конкурсная праца, in: Восень 1939 года ў гістарычнай і вуснай гісторыі, ed. А. Смалянчук, Минск 2015, pp. 282–287.

### Research perspectives

To make an effort to evaluate so-called 'research perspectives' with regard to Belarussian political, social and ethnic attitudes from 1937 till 1939, it is necessary to start with pointing out at the destructive role of the contemporary political events – due to the acute crisis within the Eastern Europe since 2020. This situation brought, in practical terms, a halt to all research activities in Belarus, especially for Polish historians. It is also necessary to inform about a new trend of building by Minsk national and official academic historiography with a network of different Belarussian scientific institutions.

The first signs of this new trend have been already noticeable in the mid-1990s, with the Belarussian 'historical policy' starting to wander around, trying to find a new way<sup>71</sup>. In 2019, the Presidential Administration announced officially the change of the course. This would have a great impact on any modern research on the period of 1937–1939. One of official, published documents should be mentioned as it was signed not only by representatives of the National Academy of Sciences but also functionaries of the State security apparatus. It was a kind-of manifesto, with a clear message on a new legitimate direction of research. In practical terms, it would be a new but quasi-Soviet perspective applied to modern historical explorations<sup>72</sup>.

If we are sketching plans to make some progress the area of interest, it must be said that Polish scientists will not be able in a foreseeable future to conduct full-fledged and well-organized research abroad. All such activities will most likely be limited to documents available in Poland, in Lithuania, and also in archives in the Western Europe (mainly in Polish and Belarussian institutions operating in the United Kingdom). Access to resources in Belarus will be possible only in a very indirect way, for example, with an engagement of local historians who are not linked and do not cooperate with state institutions. This means that scientists will face many problems and difficulties and to an unprecedented extent, unheard in the previous three decades.

However, there are still actions that could be taken in order to construct a complete picture of attitudes of Belarussian towards the Polish war effort and military operations. They can be divided into two segments:

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<sup>71</sup> W. Śleszyński, *Historia w służbie polityki. Zmiany polityczne a konstruowanie przekazu historycznego na ziemiach białoruskich w XX i XXI wieku*, Białystok 2018, pp. 293–385.

<sup>72</sup> А. Коваленія et al., *К вопросу об исторической политике, "Беларуская Думка"* 2019, 8, pp. 3–11.

defining the themes for future monographs under the circumstances and identifying possible new source editions.

As indicated in the introductory part of the article, organized social, political and cultural Belarussian life in 1935–1937 was eradicated to a significant extent. However, in 1938–1939, this still did not bring the society into a state of full agony. In 1939, there had even been even some signs of the recovery. Therefore, it would be useful to submit research questions on the possible corrections of Polish administration policies at that time.

It should also be assumed that the relations of Belarussians, as an ethnic and social group, with the Second Polish Republic was to a great extent defined by provisions and methods of instituting the agrarian reform. Therefore, it would be necessary to find relations between the ethnic (religious) factors and ways of shaping group of beneficiaries of the parcellation in the second half of 1930s<sup>73</sup>. It should be noted here that the Polish historiography has still not properly and fully exploited the Belarussian émigré memoirs. Such publications are difficult to find but such an effort should be taken to construct the full picture.

Presented comments refer only to Polish and Belarussian perspectives. It would also be useful to include to future research also other ethnic groups of the Second Polish Republic, mainly those neighboring Belarussians – Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Jews. Press research could be an option along with the archival research in Ukraine as this is a country where materials on Belarussian-Ukrainian relations during the inter-war period are also available.

As for the period of 1938–1939, the key task is to interpret the change in attitudes of significant parts of the Belarussian population that happened in the first months of 1939 – from open hostility to acceptance of the decision of the Polish Government to put up armed resistance against the Third Reich.

Another element is the tempo and scope of Soviet propaganda activities directed at Polish citizens living in the Eastern voivodeships. A good entry point for assessment of such elements could be Russian historical assessments of the Soviet press of the time<sup>74</sup>. The next items that should be taken into account are results of local elections that had been successively organized from the autumn 1938 till the springtime of the next

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<sup>73</sup> The analysis of particular cases, also with regard to particular facts of parcellisation of the land: S. Iwaniuk, *Rządowa parcelacja majątku pocerkiwnego w Szczytach-Dzięciołowie w latach 1938–1939*, "BZH" 1996, 5, pp. 82–95.

<sup>74</sup> В.А. Токарев, *Польша в советской пропаганде (октябрь 1938–август 1939 гг.)*, in: *Kampania polska 1939 r. Polityka–społeczeństwo–kultura*, vol. 2, *Polityka i społeczeństwo. Imponderabilia, pamięć, kultura*, eds. M.P. Deszczyński, T. Pawłowski, Warszawa 2014, pp. 244–257.

year. Next piece of the puzzle can be prepared after court judgments have been examined, mainly those based on the Article 152 of the Penal Code. This specific article penalized the maligning and defaming of the Polish State, its institutions and officials<sup>75</sup>. Some new areas could also be opened with testimonies and recollections of people who remembered those times, including September 1939. They have been collected for almost two decades.

However, a Belarussian scientist, A. Smalyanchuk, who initiated a new research project, still insists that such sources are not giving us too much and will not allow to build new historical constructs on September 1939 from the Belarussian perspective<sup>76</sup>. However, their effective exploitation would allow us to detail the assessments further and deepen the knowledge on the topic.

As for potential new source editions, from the perspective of efforts to enrich the research on attitudes of Belarussian in September 1939, one more option seems quite encouraging. This should be an effort to finalize publication of source editions related to the Independent Operation Group "Polesie".

Referring to the announcements on book covers of all already available volumes, last two have still not been published. Second to the last was supposed to be on Pinsk Flotilla (pol. Flotyła Pińska) and the last – on the Corps of the Border Security (pol. Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza, KOP). Due to the situation that retreat routes for some KOP units had their start on the territory of the Nowogrodek Voivodeship (i.e. "Kleck" Battalion<sup>77</sup>), such volumes would bring a substantial source to the circulation and it could result in very interesting and new area of scientific knowledge. As for the civilian dimension of the project, one of the main priorities with regard to archival document of the civilian provenance could be publication of periodical reports (for example monthly reports) of voivodes of the North-Eastern Voivodeships for the years 1937–1939.

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<sup>75</sup> At the margin of the main topic such an event was signalled, although without any reference to the legal basis, by E. Mironowicz: idem, *Dekada oczekiwania na zmiany. Białorusini wobec zmieniających się systemów politycznych w latach 1939–1949*, in: *Wyzwolenie*, p. 116.

<sup>76</sup> 1939: *New Soviet „masters” started absorption of another internal colony*, "Belarusian Review" 2015, 27, 3–4, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> J.R. Prochwicz, *Formacje Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza w 1939 r.*, Warszawa 2003, p. 249.

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