

THE ARMY FOR THE SOCIETY – THE SOCIETY FOR THE ARMY IN THE PERIOD OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC OF POLAND

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Summary

The article shows the mutual relationships prevailing between the society and the resurgent army in the period of the Second Republic of Poland.

In the period of captivity, resentment and hostility toward the occupying army arose in the Polish society, which were subconsciously transferred to the resurgent Polish Army. As a result, the military did not enjoy too much popularity.

Changing the strategists' mindset, regarding the conduct of future wars, forced the leaders of the reborn Polish state to create strong ties between the army and the society.

Educational programs, undertaken by the military, combating functioning illiteracy, participating in patriotic celebrations, supporting the construction of schools and preparing didactic aids for them, feeding children in schools, assistance in the construction of roads and bridges, the fight against unemployment and helping the public in the mitigation of various disasters brought tangible benefits to the army in terms of changing the way the society perceived it.

Efforts on the part of the military were not only noticed but also rewarded by the society, which began to see the military service as an honor. As proof of this, due to the difficult economic situation in the state, the society paid generously through funding weapons and soldier's equipment for many military units, as gesture of solidarity with the army.

The outbreak of the war in 1939 showed how many positive changes occurred between the army and the society within such a short period.

Key words

image creation, perception of the military



INTRODUCTION

In 1918, the reviving Polish state faced a challenge. The World War I destroyed vast areas of the country. However, the acts of war contributed to only 4% of the total damage. The remaining 96% was the result of the invaders' activities that looted much property when withdrawing their troops from the occupied Polish lands.¹

Looting and intentional devastation of industrial centers by the retreating invaders, especially the Russians, 'evacuating' large industrial plants or in cases when the 'evacuation' was impossible, blowing them up, and destruction of industry in Polish cities done by the Germans under the pretext of war needs, led to the fact that after independence the factories often were deprived not only of machines and equipment, but also the raw materials necessary for production purposes².

The functioning of the country reviving after over a century of foreign rule was further complicated by the lack of a single currency. *After regaining independence, the Polish mark functioned next to the German mark, the Austrian crown, the tsarist ruble and the revolutionary ruble.*³

1. THE PICTURE OF THE ARMY AFTER REGAINING INDEPENDENCE

The situation of the army was similar to the situation of the state. The armament that the Polish Army possessed at the beginning of its existence, in addition to considerable wear, was characterized by a very large diversity. For a long time the infantry was equipped with 15 types of personal weapon and 10 types of machine guns. The wide range of types of weapons was the inheritance after the invaders as well as the fact that it reached Poland together with units formed abroad during the World War I. Such diversity of the assortment of weapons posed a great difficulty in training troops during peace times and threatened with complications in the event of a war, because of different ammunition required.⁴

The diversity in the newly created Polish Army concerned not only weapons. In the first months of independence, the soldiers wore uniforms of the armies of the invasive countries, and not only theirs, since: *Soldiers who arrived in 1920 from Russia via the Far East were wearing even oriental (Chinese, Japanese) uniforms, and also British ones. The so-called General Haller's Blue Army had French military outfits.*⁵ When the voluntary regiments were formed in July and August 1920, it happened that soldiers did not even have jackets and in return they got coats. Instead of trousers - pants, in place of belts for trousers – cords, they had no shoes.⁶

¹ M. Cieplewicz, P. Stawecki, *Wojskowość polska w latach 1921 – 1926*, [in:] P. Stawecki (ed.), *Zarys dziejów wojskowości polskiej w latach 1864 – 1939*, Warsaw 1990, p. 406.

² Cz. Noniewicz, *Historia gospodarcza Polski Odrodzonej*, Białystok 2004, p. 12.

³ Ibidem, p. 10.

⁴ P. Stawecki, *Polityka wojskowa Polski 1921 – 1926*, Warsaw 1981, p. 97.

⁵ F. Kusiak, *Życie codzienne oficerów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1992, p. 25.

⁶ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 23-24.



The above examples of weapons and uniforms clearly demonstrate the then state of supplies of the resurgent army of the Second Polish Republic. However, even best dressed and armed soldier was not able to function and fight without the right amount of ammunition, additional supplies and equipment, as well as meals. Problems with provisioning the army affected all of its fields. Deficit areas included even haversacks, which were dirty and sewn bags where soldiers kept all their possessions.⁷

According to Marek Adamkiewicz, in the initial period when the Polish state was reviving, the Polish units taking part in the fighting were *more like militia rather than a regular army*.⁸

The variety of weapons and the scarce supply situation were not the only and most important problems of the army. As Tadeusz Hołówko writes, *together with the establishment of the Polish Army, the legions of completely russified or austried officers joined it, but they were completely imbued with the spirit prevailing in those armies, and so far from the officer – citizen's role model. If this not were enough, due to the tragic fate of the Polish nation, a significant part of the current Polish officers fought against each other while being in hostile armies for several years*.⁹

The army when being formed was the subject of careful observation on the part of society. The relations prevailing within the army, the officers' behavior towards soldiers in the rank of privates, as well as the civilian population aroused great interest among the population. Officers serving previously in the armies of invaders attempted to transfer relations existing there on the ground of the nascent Polish Army.¹⁰

The officer corps was a social group, which was often criticized by the public. It was alleged that officers do not give their seats up to women in the means of public transport, ignore orders issued by state or local governments, force service out of turn in shops and offices, and carry out attacks and lynching under the guise of protecting honor of soldiers, hinder the performance of duties by the police.¹¹

In the period of captivity, resentment and hostility toward the occupying armies arose in the Polish society. The society subconsciously transferred the feelings to the resurgent Polish Army.¹² Terrifying memories of the World War I further intensified them, sometimes also their own army's behavior - especially in the first years of independence, as well as occurring requisitions, though they were forced by supply difficulties.¹³

⁷ Ibidem, p. 23.

⁸ M. Adamkiewicz, *Z dziejów etosu wojska*, Warsaw 1997, p. 128.

⁹ T. Hołówko, *Oficer polski*, Warsaw 1996, p. 29.

¹⁰ P. Łossowski, P. Stawecki, *Społeczeństwo polskie a wojsko w okresie I wojny światowej i II Rzeczypospolitej*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1983, vol. 3, p. 62.

¹¹ F. Kusiak, *Życie codzienne oficerów...*, op. cit., p. 25.

¹² P. Stawecki, *Z dziejów wojskowości Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Pułtusk 2001, p. 305.

¹³ J. Kęsik, *Naród pod bronią. Społeczeństwo w programie polskiej polityki wojskowej 1918 – 1939*, Wrocław 1998, p. 16.



It was difficult to require people who had recently survived the wartime hecatomb to take particular interest in the development of the military force.¹⁴

The abovementioned factors caused that the emerging army did not enjoy too much popularity. As Janusz Odziemkowski writes: *A lot of young people went to the army with reluctance and fear. Significant deficiencies in the patriotic and civil education, especially in recruits originating from villages, meant that many of them were not psychologically prepared to accept the obligation of military service.¹⁵*

Nevertheless, as pointed out by T. Hołówko: *actually, not big armies, as the experience of the current war tells us, that in time of peace are a terrible burden put on the state budgets and hinder the cultural and economic development of nations, but the general preparation and adaptation of the entire nation for military service will become the basis for the organization of national defense in the future.¹⁶*

2. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ARMY AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

The situation forced leaders of the reviving state to create strong ties between the military with the society. A soldier fighting on the front had to be convinced that he was not alone, that he was backed by the entire nation, which at any moment was ready provide him with immediate assistance¹⁷.

Changes in the way the war was carried out encouraged drawing a number of conclusions. *The global reach of the clash* - as indicated by Jan Kęsik - *its duration, the scale (yet incomparable with any other struggle) of military engagement of the countries participating in the war, both at the front and beyond the front line, pointed to the need for fundamental reevaluation of the current military strategies.¹⁸* Thus, the World War I brought the completely different fighting method, which showed the importance of the elements and conditions, which were lacking in the so far existing methods of warfare. J. Kęsik mentioned the following ones among them:

- psycho - physical resistance of soldiers, as an important part of their training;
- processing of a war in the struggle of reserves;
- insufficiency of the army itself - even the most modern and largest - to defend the country;
- deciding on the ultimate success, to an incomparably higher degree than before, of elements such as: the economy and its ability to adapt to the requirements of a war, the efficiency of the entire state apparatus forced to work under extreme conditions, as well as the moral and physical condition of the society;

¹⁴ P. Łossowski, P. Stawecki, *Spółeczeństwo polskie...*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁵ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁶ T. Hołówko, *Oficer...*, op. cit., pp. 27 – 28.

¹⁷ M. Adamkiewicz, *Z dziejów...*, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁸ J. Kęsik, *Naród...*, op. cit., p. 11.



- the need to engage the whole nation and the state in the modern war;
- changes in the relationship between the army and the society involving the disappearance of the visible in the nineteenth century caste of the army;
- patriotism and the will to fight of the whole society and the technical condition of the army, as factors equally decisive for the final victory;
- the need to spread defense tasks onto the regular army and the society;
- the necessity to improve the civilization conditions of the society, as well as the consistent development of the state and national consciousness among the public¹⁹.

The recipe for building an army capable of fighting on the modern battlefield was the inclusion and implementation of the above conditions. Given the contemporary attitude of the society to the army, the recruits' fear of military service, or its widespread avoidance in some parts of the country, illiteracy among the population, and even non-identification with the Polish state – the builders of the army faced a big challenge.

The military authorities of the state reviving after years of captivity had a short time to form an army capable to defend the country in the conditions of the collapse of industry, agriculture, artisan production, the shortage of financial resources, enormous problems with food supply and provisioning a soldier with the equipment and materials necessary to fight. To this must be added the enormous difficulties resulting from negligence in the field of education and patriotic upbringing in a significant part of the youth, which translated into indifference to the fate of the country. It all had to cause the interference of the military in various areas of social life. The aim was to consolidate the efforts to defend the country. In order to cover the most important needs, a lot of ad hoc measures were taken, which were premised upon swift and clear effects, since the chaos associated with the war and just being created the state apparatus were not conducive to long-term methodical work.²⁰

Educational work was one of the first areas, which the military gave its attention with regard to raising national awareness. Headquarters, local commands and regiments employed educational coordinators, who founded schools for illiterate and semiliterate soldiers, organized readings and lectures, reading rooms, day care centers. In addition to the military coordinators, the military also engaged civilian instructors.²¹

The military authorities also conducted training courses in the field of general knowledge for the military personnel. Non-commissioned officers who did not have basic education were obliged to complete it on training courses covering the 7 - year elementary school material, while those who had completed 7 classes could supple-

¹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 11 – 16.

²⁰ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., p. 10.

²¹ P. Stawecki, *Polityka wojskowa...*, op. cit., pp. 116 – 117.



ment education during courses transferring to students the knowledge at the level of 8 - year junior high school.²²

It is worth noting that despite the hardships of service, these courses attracted wide interest among non-commissioned officers. This was confirmed by the fact that NCOs from 10th Infantry Regiment wished to participate in such courses. As we read in the press from that time: *after the return of the Regiment from the summer camp to the garrison, as a result of professional non-commissioned officers' requests and the regiment educational officer Lt. Stanisław Bem - Stolarczyk's efforts, further education courses with reference to 7 - year elementary school curriculum were established for professional non-commissioned officers at 10th Infantry Regiment [...] Throughout the winter period until May of that year, lectures were given every day in the evening, and all this time the learners showed a lot of willingness and strong will - despite difficulties caused by professional duties*²³.

However, from the very beginning, the fight against illiteracy in the army encountered a number of obstacles; for example in 1921, when, as a result of the demobilization of officers, many educators left the army and took civilian positions, or due to conditions of the barrack life, as well as the shortage of aids necessary for teaching / learning. When it was impossible to organize systematically functioning educational courses, the military units carried out talks devoted to civic and historical issues, daily life, etc. Some units also provided such talks regardless of conducting military schools.²⁴

In addition to the courses of compulsory education, during the service soldiers took part in trips, explored a garrison town, its monuments, museums, at least a couple of times was at theater performances or at the cinema, listened to the radio, used public transport. In addition, they participated in a great deal of celebrations of patriotic character, had access to newspapers, books, games at day centers, became familiar with achievements of civilization. They acquired sustainable values taken away from military service, owing to which they, as reservists, consciously or unconsciously influenced their surroundings, and thus had an effect on the attitude of the society.²⁵

An example could be the description of one such trips of the mobile battalion from Powursk to 'Polska Góra', which was attended by privates from the battalion. The author wrote in the article that after visiting, among others, fighting arenas of legions, the line of trenches or the legion cemetery: *In the evening we returned to Powursk, carrying in the hearts the established fame of the Polish Legions.*²⁶

The educational work performed by the military in the field discussed above had a direct impact on soldiers, and through them on the rest of the society. However, un-

²² J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., pp. 79 – 80.

²³ Z. Walaszczyk, *Praca oświatowa w 10 pułku piechoty*, "Wiarus" 1931, No. 26, p. 572.

²⁴ P. Stawecki, *Polityka wojskowa...*, op. cit., pp. 122 – 123.

²⁵ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., pp. 81 – 86.

²⁶ Konowalczyk, *Corporal, Wycieczka na "Polską Górę"*, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 35, p. 924.



doubtedly military ceremonies connected with the parades were the direct form of influencing the society, feelings, moods and the attitude to the army.

After the World War I the Polish Army paid a lot of attention to the ceremonial. It was to solemnize important events in the life of the military, as well as constitute an important element of education.²⁷ Frequent celebrations combined with parades turned into demonstrations of the unity of the society and the army. From the first years of independence the parades took place on 3rd May, and in 1926 military parades began to be organized also on 11th November. Parades gathering crowds of people were held not only in the larger cities, but also in all garrison towns.²⁸

They made a very strong impression on the population. Stanislaw Radomyski concluded his description of the cavalry parade with the words: *It all made strong, lasting impression on the spectators watching the parade.*²⁹

Infantry parades were very popular among the public as well. The author of 'Diary of Adjutant to Marshal Pilsudski', Mieczyslaw Łepecki, describing the parade on 11th November 1932 said: *Orchestra was rumbling, infantry soldier' legs thudded dully, and people's hearts pounded happily: Pol - ish Ar - my, Pol - ish Ar - my.*³⁰

The 3rd May Celebration in 1931 in Żory may be seen as an example in that respect: *Already yesterday evening, the town took on a festive appearance being richly adorned with banners, stickers, and was illuminated. The next morning there was a field mass in the market, participated by the squadron in the horse formation, a military training battery, military and social organizations, as well as almost the entire population of the town. The parade of the military and organizations in front of the Garrison Commander Maj. Muszyński and the Mayor of Żory, Mr Rostek, followed the mass and a significant speech by Fr. Pastor Klimek. The trot parade of the military training battery made up of very young soldiers, high school students, delighted everybody. [...] In the afternoon the course of the festival took on a different character. The residents of the town gave vent to their joy and amusement, taking a massive part in the folk local feast at the town shooting range. The feast began with the traditional parade under the leadership of the Mayor, as the host, reaching the shooting range area. Virtually the entire town together with the army attended it.*³¹

The central celebrations on 11th November, although organized in the garrisons, attracted people from across Poland to the capital. As we read in the description of the Independence Day of 1937: *The happy initiative of the organizers to celebrate the Independence Day in such a way brought the inhabitants of the capital the unseen before show of the efficiency of the army, in the form of the battle improvised on Mokotów*

²⁷ K. Madej, A. Mazur, *Historia uroczystych parad i defilad wojskowych*, [in:] L. Ratajczyk (ed.), *Historyczny rodowód polskiego ceremoniału wojskowego*, Warsaw 1981, p. 413.

²⁸ P. Łossowski, P. Stawecki, *Spółczesność polskie...*, op. cit., p. 65.

²⁹ S. Radomyski, *Wspomnienia o odrębnościach zwyczajach i obyczajach kawaleryjskich II Rzeczypospolitej*, Pruszków 1994, pp. 16 – 19.

³⁰ M. Łepecki, *Pamiętnik adiutanta Marszałka Piłsudskiego*, Warsaw 1987, p. 146.

³¹ Żoranin, *Dzień 3 Maja w Żorach*, "Wiarus" 1931, No. 21, pp. 472 – 473.



*Field. And not only the residents of Warsaw admired it, since this year's festival on 11th November drew to the capital huge crowds from all over Poland.*³²

The great significance of parades, both for the army and the society during ceremonies is mentioned by the author of the article 'Our parades and their importance' published in one of the issues of the journal for non-commissioned officers from that period: *Although the military parades are held relatively rare, they leave an overwhelming impression in the society for a long time, consolidating and reviving its commitment to the army and self-confidence as well. And at the same time, the bond of love between both sides gets tightened. This is of great importance because the military becomes two times stronger during a war, on condition that based on the society that understands it fully and harbors feelings of deep love.*³³

In addition to the major public holidays, the army celebrated other minor events, such as: handing of a unit banner, the unit's return from the maneuvers, important anniversaries, unveiling monuments, etc. All these events had at least two things in common – they were held across the country, to its most distant borders, and everywhere attracted wide interest and involvement on the part of the society.

They were - as noted by Wojciech Śleszyński - a good opportunity to demonstrate the power of the Polish state. *In some cases, it was the only opportunity to reach people with a message of propaganda. The passive participation in celebrations did not require any viewers' involvement, and was a great variety of daily activity.*³⁴

A major role in winning support of the society for the army was played by *the military's assistance in building schools, preparing appropriate teaching aids for them, providing children with school accessories, books, magazines; it was especially important in the countryside, as we read in the P. Łossowski and P. Stawecki's paper.*³⁵

A great number of examples of this type of the army activity at that time can be quoted. It always met with tremendous thankfulness from the society as well as the children themselves. Let one of them be a description of the organization of the Santa Claus event for children at elementary school in Chałupki by the Lviv military police squadron: *The joy was great when children saw gloves, warm stockings, candies, pens in their packets received from Santa Claus. [...]The poor children of Chałupki will keep in their hearts for long the memory of the pleasantly spent evening and gratitude for those who arranged the Santa Claus party for them.*³⁶

The Border Protection Corps (KOP) played a crucial role in this regard – it stationed in border villages and provided the public with assistance through dealing with poor rural schools. This support was often invaluable: *Regardless of the local work of the com-*

³² 11 listopada na polu Mokotowskim, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 47, p. 1282.

³³ J. Laskus, Gunnery Sergeant, *Nasze defilady i ich znaczenie*, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 49, p. 1372.

³⁴ W. Śleszyński, *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach północno – wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej*, Białystok – Warsaw 2007, p. 194.

³⁵ P. Łossowski, P. Stawecki, *Spółczesność polskie...*, op. cit., p. 66.

³⁶ *Dywizjon Żandarmerii ze Lwowa opiekuje się dziesiątką szkolną*, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 51 – 52, p. 1453.



*manders of guard posts, the KOP garrisons included care for all schools existing in the border strip. Officers and non-commissioned officers of KOP units as well as the KOP Social Fund hurried with prominent material help for the construction of new schools. Moreover, some of the garrisons fully equipped the interior of a number of schools with benches, tables, cabinets, blackboards, pictures; besides they provided them with teaching aids, such as maps, globes, and even whole sets of school libraries.*³⁷

The support for schools did not end with their construction, equipping and purchase of school supplies. The matter of considerable importance was feeding children from poor rural families. One of the KOP units in the Polesie region *funded meals for 945 children from eight neighboring villages throughout the year just ended. Besides, during the Christmas season it arranged a Christmas Party for 3,200 children sharing clothes, packages with food and sweets among them.*³⁸

The extremely important and also noticeable thing for the rural population was the help of the military and the Border Protection Corps in the reconstruction of damaged roads, bridges, footbridges, as well as the suppression of fires and saving belongings during natural disasters.³⁹

One example of the army's generosity and dedication to the village is the description of the fire in the village of Zawisty Dzikie in October 1938: *Apart from the fire protection team, all officers, non-commissioned officers, privates and inferior officers of the garrison actively participated in fighting the fire. During the fire, the responsibility for the rescue operation rested with the hands of the fire protection team Commander, which, thanks to his efforts prevented more dangerous consequences. After suppressing the fire, people tearfully thanked the army for saving their property.*⁴⁰

The aid of the military to the society was not limited only to the village. In the years of the economic crisis – as J. Odziemkowski states – the army remained the direct recipient of part of the artisan production⁴¹. In this way, it gave the opportunity to the survival and development of small craft businesses, which would collapse without having the right amount of orders provided. Another form of help for the urban population was the fight against unemployment. By its own merits the military organized help for the unemployed and their families, headquarters, command garrisons, Departments of the Ministry of National Defense, armaments plants and the Association of Military Family funded free food for children; restrictions were introduced to minimize the reduction of workers in armaments factories subject to military authorities, or hiring the unemployed, at the request of the army, in construction companies performing work

³⁷ *Żołnierz KOP – szkołom kresowym*, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 40, p. 1050.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 1050.

³⁹ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., pp. 188 – 189.

⁴⁰ W. Menchen, Sergeant Major of Cavalry, *Wojsko w akcji przeciwpożarowej*, "Wiarus" 1938, No. 45, p. 1462.

⁴¹ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., p. 167.



for the army – these are just some of the forms of combating unemployment by the military mentioned by J. Odziemkowski.⁴²

Due to the limited scope of this work the aforementioned ways of garnering the favor of the society by the military, convincing them and building with them full-value reserves ready to fight to defend the homeland, are only part of what was done in this field. In fact, it was a long-term and arduous process of changing the mentality and prejudices of the society, from the perception of the military as an army of invaders to the awareness of the unity with the reviving Polish Army with completely different standards and destiny. Not, as it was in the years of captivity, as an apparatus of oppression and exploitation, but as a guarantor of independence, freedom and national pride.

3. THE CHANGE OF THE IMAGE OF THE ARMY IN THE SOCIETY

The effort taken by the military must have brought, and it did, the desired effect. The society underwent a deep metamorphosis from independence until the outbreak of the World War II.

In witness whereof, the following words from an article published in 'Wiarus' in 1937 are cited: *Every one of us who had the honor to serve in the army of the reborn Polish Republic, from the first day of its creation, was impressed by the deep transformation and huge positive evolution that occurred in the field of the relation of our population to our armed forces. [...] Together with the new generations brought up in Polish schools and Polish military service, a completely different levels of a sense of statehood and understanding of the needs of military force have occurred, and with it, the attitude has appeared, which is not passively - friendly but actively – cooperating and manifests itself whenever an opportunity arises.*⁴³

The tangible example of the change in society's attitude to the army is a number of initiatives taken by the society in order to improve the armaments and equipment of the army.

The most notable of them is the creation of the National Defense Fund upon the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland as of 9th April 1936, which was intended for the purposes of national defense, but it could not be used to cover budget spending. The resources of the Fund were to complement mobilization stocks and strategic reserve, regardless of budget loans in force in each year. It was to ensure the continuity of the plan implementation of the material supply of the army.⁴⁴

The Fund was created from the revenues from the sale of real estate and movable property being left under the control of the army, but having no military values, as well as from public donations.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibidem, pp. 172 – 175.

⁴³ *Spółeczeństwo a wojsko*, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 47, pp. 1273 – 1274.

⁴⁴ M. Gieleciński, *Świadczenia społeczeństwa polskiego na obronność państwa przez wybuchem II wojny światowej 1936 – 1939*, Poznań 2014, pp. 68 – 69.

⁴⁵ M. Tarczyński, *Tradycje wręczania żołnierzom broni i sprzętu bojowego*, [in:] L. Ratajczyk (ed.), *Historyczny rodowód polskiego ceremoniału wojskowego*, Warsaw 1981, p. 245.



Handing over of the military weapons and equipment purchased from the Fund contributions had a very solemn character. The goods were gathered at a specific location, and then, with the presence of the public, representatives of the administrative authorities and local citizens' committees civic were handed to unit commanders or central military authorities. Acts of making donations were preceded by patriotic speeches.⁴⁶

Due to the fact that the society's generosity exceeded all established boundaries, the examples of donating equipment could be multiplied for a long time. Further, that donation campaigns for the Fund covered the whole country and all social strata. Small, but heartfelt, amounts from the poorest, as was the case in the rural municipality of Radogoszcz on 7th November 1937 where: *a local worker, who lives on modest earnings in Łódź factories, gave a proof of love for the fatherland on that day. He showed understanding for the enhancement of the national force. For behold, from the penny contributions he purchased for the army a completely equipped heavy machine gun. And the children of his - students of primary schools, for pennies received for a piece of bread, bought a rifle.*⁴⁷ Great and significant amounts of equipment or money were donated by the towns / cities, crews of factories, associations, schools, etc. For instance: *railway men and tram drivers from Poznań and the workers and officials of many workplaces, including Cegielski Factory, offered a total of PLN 900 thousand. Students and teachers of schools in Wielkopolska showed great generosity by organizing permanent fund-raisers. The overall share of the Wielkopolska society in the support for the Fund must be estimated at PLN several million.*⁴⁸

Also very personal and perhaps most valuable properties possessed by donors were sacrificed for the Fund purposes. This may be exemplified by the society of the Kalisz county, where: *Until 25th July 1939 in the county there was collected a total of PLN 250 thousand in cash and PLN 20 thousand in securities, about 3 kg of gold and about 140 kg of silver articles. In addition, about 1 300 kg of copper and about 300 wedding rings.*⁴⁹

The fact that people offered silver and gold items or even wedding rings, most probably the only and most valuable objects that they had, evidenced one thing - the great and boundless devotion of the public to the army.

The Polish countryside also did not stay away. Apart from raising funds for the Fund, as indicated by J. Odziemkowski, in 1938: *Rather rare were the cases of avoiding conscription or hiding better horses. It proved not so much the reduction of the farmers' concerns as their patriotism. In the face of the threat of the outbreak of war, the vast majority of peasants considered it their duty to provide assistance to the military. The conscription in 1939 was carried out in a similar atmosphere.*⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 247.

⁴⁷ Podboraczyński, Sergeant Major of Cavalry, *Robotnik i dzieci jego z wojskiem i dla wojska*, "Wiarus" 1937, No. 47, p. 1299.

⁴⁸ M. Gieleciński, *Świadczenia ...*, op. cit., p. 101.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 101.

⁵⁰ J. Odziemkowski, *Armia i społeczeństwo...*, op. cit., p. 191.



CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the relations the army - the society and the society - the army in the period of the Second Republic of Poland underwent a profound metamorphosis. The incredibly tough situation of the resurgent military force reflected in the lack of supply of basic weapons, ammunition, uniforms and equipment necessary for soldiers in peacetime and in warfare, the public criticism of the officer corps and the relations prevailing in the army, a large percentage of illiterates among the soldiers and the general reluctance of young people towards the conscription – these were difficulties which encountered the resurgent Polish Army.

The aforementioned factors meant that the military in the reviving state did not enjoy too much popularity. In the beginning it was a point of more criticism rather than pride or approval on the part of the public.

As a result of this situation, it was necessary for the military authorities to take every effort to improve the relations with the public. Trying to gain popularity among the citizens, the army had to come close to the society, win their hearts, dedicate to people's affairs.

Educational work, the fight against illiteracy, training courses, organizing ceremonies attended by the military and parades for the population, help for schools, children and the poorest social strata were intended to achieve the desired effect in keeping the society on the side of the army. The society paid off in a way that ultimately was beyond the wildest dreams of the military authorities, and the society itself. Even if only a massive success of the Fund of National Defense proves the great sympathy and affection of the Polish population to their Army.

The proximity was possible, as P. Łossowski and P. Stawecki claim in their paper, due to the external threat in the years prior to the outbreak of the World War II. However, the cooperation of the society and the army during the War⁵¹ was certainly the best indicator that the relations with the public earned by the soldiers had a very serious and profound dimension.

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BIUOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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