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Score Settling: The “French Chapter” of Polish Politics in Exile during World War II

The course of military and political events in September 1939 led to a sea change in Poland’s leadership. Facing internment by the Romanians, top government posts – president, prime minister, ministers, parliamentary deputies, top civil servants, the commander-in-chief and the military top brass as such – were all transferred to people who managed to escape the invading Germans and Soviets, and find sanctuary in France, ostensibly for the duration of the war.¹ What was of the utmost significance was that in this transfer of authority, power was intercepted by miscellaneous representatives of the pre-war opposition, not necessarily the most eminent oppositionists, only those who happened to make it to France. If up to September 1939, they were all seething at being consigned to political oblivion after the May coup of 1926, and especially so in the 1930s, they were now seething for revenge when this unexpected opportunity of a comeback arose. These erstwhile oppositionists were a mixed bag brandishing prescriptions for very diverse ideological panaceas, but what united them in a super-glued bond was their determination to consign the pre-war regime’s luminaries to eternal perdition.

- 1 There is rich subject literature on the internment in Romania of Poland’s civil and military authorities – see e.g.: Anna Cieniąła, ‘Jak doszło do internowania Rządu R. P. w Rumunii we wrześniu 1939’, *Niepodległość*, 22 (1989), 18-65; Eugeniusz Duraczyński, *Rząd polski na uchodźstwie 1939-1945: Organizacja, personalia, polityka* (Warsaw, 1993), 22-30; Tadeusz Wyrwa, ‘Odbudowa władz Rzeczypospolitej w Paryżu i w Angers’ (wrzesień 1939-czerwiec 1940)’, in Zbigniew Błażyński (ed), *Władze RP na obczyźnie podczas II wojny światowej 1939-1945* (London, 1994), 8-11; Mirosław Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne wśród polskiego wychodźstwa politycznego i wojskowego we Francji i w Wielkiej Brytanii 1939-1945* (Wrocław, 1999), 24-9; Paweł Duber, ‘Okoliczności internowania władz polskich we wrześniu 1939 roku’, *Arcana*, 103-4 (2012), 187-93.

The new symbol of this *revanchist* group was to be Gen. Władysław Eugeniusz Sikorski, who took the posts of prime minister and commander-in-chief.² Sikorski was the anointed *interrex* if only because, in 1936, he formed an alliance with other malcontents, which was to take the name of “Front Morges”, Morges being the Swiss place of residence of the virtuoso and one-time prime minister Ignacy Paderewski who, too, was in opposition to the pre-war regime.³ However, the common and simplistic view that Pilsudski’s clique governing Poland before September 1939, the Sanacja regime, was removed from power altogether, is not true. Notwithstanding any divisions in this camp,⁴ the highest office of state – that of president – was taken by Władysław Raczkiwicz, a leading and active Sanacja politician (the provincial governor of Pomerania up to September 1939 and previously the Marshal of the Senate – i. e. the Upper House of the Polish Parliament).⁵ That was not

- 2 Władysław Eugeniusz Sikorski (1881-1943) – lieutenant general, politician, engineer. Co-founder of the Union for Active Struggle, a leading activist of the Commission (Provisional) of the Confederated Independence Parties. During World War I, the head of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee, then (after 1917), the head of the National Enlistment Inspectorate. Participant of Polish-Ukrainian struggles in Eastern Galicia (commander of the Polesie Group and the 9th Infantry Division) and in the Polish-Soviet war (Commander of the 5th Army, then the 3rd Army). 1921-22 – head of the General Staff of the Polish Army. 16 December 1922 – 26 May 1923 – Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs. 1923-1924 – General Inspector of Infantry, 1924-1925 – Minister of Military Affairs, 1925-1928 Commander of the Corps District no. 6 in Lviv. From 1928 – without military allocation. In September 1939, after several unsuccessful attempts to get an allocation, he went to France where he took over as Prime Minister of the Polish government (30 September 1939) and commander-in-chief (7 November 1939); he held these posts until his death in a plane crash in Gibraltar on July 4, 1943 – Marian Kukiel, *Generał Sikorski: Żołnierz i mąż stanu Polski Walczącej* (London, n. d.); *Generał Władysław Sikorski: Żołnierz i polityk* (Warsaw 1981); Roman Wapiński, *Władysław Sikorski* (Warsaw, 1982); idem, ‘Sikorski Władysław Eugeniusz’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 37/154 (Warsaw-Cracow, 1997), 468-78; Olgierd Terlecki, *Generał Sikorski*, 1-2 (Kraków, 1986); Walentyna Korpalska, *Władysław Eugeniusz Sikorski: Biografia polityczna* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Lódź, 1988); Piotr Żaroń, *Generał Władysław Sikorski: Żołnierz, mąż stanu, Naczelny Wódz 1939-1943* (Toruń, 2003); *Generał Władysław Sikorski: Szkice historyczne w 60. rocznicę śmierci* (Toruń, 2004); Henryk Hermann (ed), *Generał Władysław Sikorski – jako dowódca i polityk europejski* (Siedlce, 2004).
- 3 See Henryk Przybylski, *Front Morges* (Toruń, 2007).
- 4 See Jacek Piotrowski, *Piłsudczycy bez lidera* (Toruń, 2003); Arkadiusz Adamczyk, *Piłsudczycy w izolacji (1939-1954). Studium z dziejów struktur i myśli politycznej* (Bełchatów, 2008).
- 5 Władysław Raczkiwicz (1885-1947), independence activist, lawyer, politician. 1917-1918 president of the Polish Chief Military Committee (“Naczpól”), and then the Supreme Council of Polish Armed Forces. 1919-1920 Commissioner of the Government of the Republic of Poland in Minsk; 1920-21 delegate of the Polish government by

all, because prominent ministerial posts were occupied by other members of that camp: August Zaleski⁶ became Foreign Minister, Adam Koc⁷ (albeit short-lived), became Minister of the Treasury, and Gen. Kazimierz Sosnkowski⁸ joined the cabinet as minister without portfolio, but with responsibility

the government of the short-lived Republic of Central Lithuania in Vilnius. Minister of Internal Affairs (28 June – 13 November 1921, 14 June 1925 – 5 May 1926, 13 October 1935 – 15 May 1936). 1921-1924 Nowogródek province governor; 1924-25 delegate of the Polish government in Vilnius; 1926-30 Vilnius province governor. 1930-1935 member of the Senate as a member of the Piłsudski's BBWR (Non-Party Bloc of Cooperation with the Government), serving as Speaker of the Senate. 1935 – Cracow province governor; 1936-39 – Pomeranian province governor and from 1934 also President of the World Association of Poles Abroad (“Światopol”). 30 September 1939 – 6 June 1947 President of the Republic of Poland – *Dzienniki czynności Prezydenta RP Władysława Raczkiewicza 1939-1947*, vol. 1-2, (Wrocław, 2004); Wacław Szyszowski, ‘Raczkiewicz Władysław’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 29/123 (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź, 1986), 607-14; Andrzej Ajnenkiel, Andrzej Drzycimski, and Janina Paradowska, *Prezydenci Polski* (Warsaw, 1991); Marian Marek Drozdowski, *Władysław Raczkiewicz*, vol. 1-2, (Warsaw, 2002).

- 6 August Zaleski (1883-1972) – politician and diplomat. 1919-21 member of the Lower House and delegate of the government in Athens; 1922-26 – Polish ambassador in Rome. 15 May 1926 – 1 November 1932 Minister of Foreign Affairs. 1928-35 – Senate deputy, BBWR member. After the death of Józef Piłsudski, he favoured compromise with the opposition. In September 1939, he reached France through Romania. He was one of the candidates for the office of successor to President I. Mościcki after his internment in Romania. Two-time candidate for the office of Prime Minister recommended by President Władysław Raczkiewicz (September 1939, 18-19 July 1940). 30 September 1939 – 22 August 1941, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Critical of the provisions of the Sikorski-Mayski agreement. 1941-47, head of the civil office of President W. Raczkiewicz. 9 June 1947 – 7 April 1972 President of the Republic of Poland in exile. He did not resign after a 7-year term as protocol demanded, which caused a serious political crisis in exile: Ajnenkiel, Drzycimski and Paradowska, *Prezydenci Polski*; Piotr Wandycz, *Z Piłsudskim i Sikorskim: August Zaleski minister spraw zagranicznych w latach 1926-1932 i 1939-1941* (Warsaw, 1999).
- 7 Adam Ignacy Koc (1891-1969) – independence activist, soldier, politician. Member of the Union of Active Struggle and Rifle Association. During World War I in the Polish Legions and the Polish Military Organization (commander of the Supreme Headquarters no. 1). 1926-1928 – chief of staff of the Command of Corps District no. 6 in Lviv. 1928-36 – Lower House deputy on behalf of the BBWR; 1938-39 – Senate member on behalf of the Camp of National Unity (OZON) and president of the Bank of Poland. From 1936 ‘supreme commander’ of the Legionaries’ Union. 1937-38 – founder and head of OZON. 11 September 1939 appointed Vice Minister of the Treasury with the task of moving the gold of the Bank of Poland abroad. 30 September – 9 December 1939 Minister of the Treasury; 9 October – 9 December 1939 – Minister of Industry and Trade; 1939-40 – Vice Minister of the Treasury and also Industry and Trade. From 1940 in the USA. Adam Koc, *Wspomnienia*, ed. Janusz Mierzwa (Wrocław, 2005); Janusz Mierzwa, *Płk. A. Koc. Biografia polityczna* (Cracow, 2006).
- 8 Kazimierz Sosnkowski (1885-1969) – independence activist, soldier. Co-founder of the Union of Active Combat and Rifle Association. During World War I in the Polish

for supervising the dynamically growing underground resistance movement back home. Therefore, it cannot be said that Piłsudski's acolytes were completely marginalized, with no influence whatsoever on the direction of the new government's home and foreign policies. However, it must be added that though both Zaleski and Sosnkowski were Piłsudski'ites, they hovered on the fringes of political life throughout the 1930s.

From its very inception, Sikorski defined his cabinet as the Government of National Unity. He thereby sought to emphasise that the central authorities represented the whole of society, or at least its vast majority, with due regard to pre-war political preferences. This seemed to be the only sensible solution in face of military defeat and its ensuing consequences (which would invariably influence the international position of the new Polish authorities). The initial aims were straightforward: the recovery of national territory, the expulsion of the invader-occupiers, the improvement of the situation of the Polish population under the German and Soviet occupations. The slogan "Government of National Unity" was meant to suggest governance that was

Legions: 1914-1916 – chief of staff of the 1st Brigade, 1916 commander of the 1st Brigade, member of the Council of Colonels. 1917-18 – interned in Magdeburg, Germany. After regaining independence: 1918-1919 – commander of the General District Warsaw, 1919-1920 – Deputy Minister of Military Affairs, 1920 – commander of the Army Reserve, 10 August 1920 – 26 May 1923 – head of the ministry, and then Minister of Military Affairs, 1923 – inspector of Army no. 3 in Toruń, 19 December 1923 – 17 February 1924 – Minister of Military Affairs, 1924-1925 – general inspector of infantry, 1925-1926 – commander of the Corps District no. 7 in Poznań, 1927-1939 – Army inspector. During that time, he was successively promoted to brigadier general (21 November 1918), major general (1 June 1919) and lieutenant general (10 November 1936). In September 1939 he took command of the Southern Front. In October 1939 he reached France via Hungary. 16 October 1940 – 1 August 1944 – the nominated successor of the Polish President; 13 November 1939 – July 1941 – commander-in-chief of the Union of Armed Combat; 1939-42 member of the Committee for State Affairs (1939-41 chairman), 1940-41 – member of the Political Committee of Ministers. At the same time 16 October 1939 – 22 August 1941 – Minister without portfolio in the cabinets of W. Sikorski. 8 July 1943-30 September 1944 – commander-in-chief. From November 1944 he lived in Canada – Kazimierz Sosnkowski, *Cieniom Września* (Warsaw, 1989); Kazimierz Sosnkowski, *Historical Materials*, ed. Józef Matecki (New York-London, 1966); Kazimierz Sosnkowski, *Wybór pism*, ed. Jerzy Kirszak (Wrocław, 2009); *Kazimierz Sosnkowski myśl – praca – walka: Przyczynki do monografii oraz uzupełnienia do materiałów historycznych Kazimierza Sosnkowskiego*, ed. Stanisław Babiński (London, 1988); Maria Pestkowska, *Kazimierz Sosnkowski*, (Wrocław, 1995); Andrzej A. Zięba, 'Sosnkowski Kazimierz', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 40/167 (Warsaw-Cracow, 2001), 524-39; *Kazimierz Sosnkowski żołnierz, humanista, mąż stanu w 120 rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Tomasz Głowiński and Jerzy Kirszak (Wrocław, 2005); Ireneusz Wojewódzki, *Kazimierz Sosnkowski podczas II wojny światowej: Książę niezłomny czy Hamlet w mundurze?* (Warsaw, 2009); Jerzy Kirszak, *Generał Kazimierz Sosnkowski 1885-1969* (Warsaw, 2012); Lech Wyszczelski, *Generał Kazimierz Sosnkowski* (Warsaw, 2014).

different to what obtained before September 1939. Before the war, Piłsudski's camp followers held onto power with the help of administrative, police and legal malpractices as and when necessary. They made life difficult for their erstwhile opponents; now their erstwhile opponents were in the driving seat, determined to consolidate their position and promote national unity. Thus, the problem was: how could the slogan of national (and hence political) unity be reconciled with criticism of pre-war dictatorial practices? Sikorski adopted a two-track approach. On the one hand, especially at the beginning of his time in office, he emphasized the need for unity, for postponing retributive justice to the post-war period, and for using any suitable person to achieve the main objectives of war. On the other hand, from the beginning of its exile in France, there were signs that an important feature of this new government would be a reckoning with the past. It was only natural that Sikorski's reliance on former oppositionists made it almost inevitable that the new government's retributive urges would be never too deep below the surface. Thus, Sikorski had to strike a balance between reining in the lust for revenge when objective merit-based criteria came into play, and giving free rein to emotions driven by personal experiences whenever the situation allowed. The desire for revenge was very much in evidence in the controversial activities of Colonel (General as from May 1940) Izidor Modelski; indeed, Modelski's behaviour was and continues to be seen as symptomatic of this revanchist syndrome.⁹ Other prominent "inquisitors" included Jan Stańczyk,¹⁰

- 9 Izidor Modelski (1888-1962) – politician and soldier. During World War I in the Polish Legions. Opposed to Józef Piłsudski's coup in May 1926. 1928-39 – president of the Association of Gen. Haller's Soldiers. In exile during War World II. 1939 1st Deputy Minister of Military Affairs; 1939-40 2nd Deputy Minister of Military Affairs; 1942-44 – undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Military Affairs/Ministry of National Defense. Brigadier 3 May 1940, Maj.-Gen. 1 March 1946. Returned to Poland in July 1945. 1945-46 head of the Polish Military Mission in London. 1946-48 – military, maritime and aviation attaché to the Polish Embassy in Washington. September 1948 received political asylum from the US government – Waldemar Bujak, 'Modelski Izidor', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 21/90 (Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow-Gdańsk, 1976), 516-19; Edward Balawajder, 'Modelski Izidor', in *Słownik biograficzny katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce*, vol. 2, (Lublin, 1994), 143-4; Sławomir Łukasiewicz, 'Generała Modelskiego ucieczki i powroty', *Więź*, 1 (2007), 98-110; Jarosław Rabiński, *Stronnicтво Pracy we władzach naczelnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na uchodźstwie w latach 1939-1945* (Lublin, 2012).
- 10 Jan Stańczyk (1886-1953) – miner, socialist politician, union activist. 1922-30 – member of Sejm. 1933-39 – deputy chairman of the Central Commission of Trade Unions. From 1937 – member of the Central Executive Committee of the Polish Socialist Party. Left Poland in September 1939. 2 October 1939 – November 1944 – served as Minister of Welfare/Labour and Welfare in the governments of Gen. Władysław Sikorski and Stanisław Mikołajczyk. 1939-41 – member of the Committee for State Affairs, 1941-43 the Political Committee of Ministers and the Economic Committee

Karol Popiel¹¹ and Herman Lieberman.¹²

of Ministers. During World War II served in the Foreign Committee of PPS (Polish Socialist Party) and was chairman of the Foreign Representation of Polish Trade Unions. On behalf of the Polish government, became a member of the Administrative Council of the International Labor Organization. In June 1945 he participated in the Moscow talks on the establishment of the Provisional Government of National Unity. 27 June he returned to the country and took over as the Minister of Labour and Welfare, and joined the National Council and the Polish delegation to the Potsdam conference. Participated in the first session of the UN in London in January 1946. In December 1948, he took part in the Congress of Unification of PPS and PPR (Polish Workers' Party), then became a member of the Communist Party – Jan Walczak, 'Jan Stańczyk', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 42/173 (Warsaw-Cracow, 2003), 244-50; Magdalena Hułas, *Goście czy intruzi? Rząd polski na uchodźstwie wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1943* (Warsaw, 1996), 143-8.

- 11 Karol Popiel (1887-1977) – independence activist, politician. 1920-1937 leading activist of the National Workers' Party, and in 1923 and from 1929-1937 president of the Central Executive Committee of NPR. 1922-27 – Lower House deputy. 1930 – arrested and imprisoned in Brest-Litovsk. Supporter of the informal opposition grouping "Front Morges" based in Switzerland. From 1937 – co-founder and leading politician of the Labour Party: 1937-1939 vice-president, 1939-1946 president of ZG SP. During World War II in exile in France and the UK. 1939-41 – undersecretary of state in the Ministry of (Labour and) Welfare; 3 September 1941-14 July 1943 – minister without portfolio; 1941-43 head of at Administrative Office; 1941-42 acting head of the Ministry of Justice; 14 July 1943-24 November 1944 – minister of the Reconstruction of Public Administration; 1940-44 – member of the Committee for State Affairs, 1942-44 – the Political Committee of Ministers, 1942-44 – member of the Economic Committee of Ministers, 1943-44 – member the Committee for Occupation. In July 1945 he returned to Poland, where he undertook legal activities independent of the Communists. 1945-46 – member of KRN. In October 1947, went into exile again; leader of the SP (Labour Party) in exile and the Christian Democratic European and world structures – Karol Popiel, *Generał Sikorski w mojej pamięci*; idem, *Na mogiłach przyjaciół*, (London, 1966); idem, 'Uwagi', in Waldemar Bujak, *Historia Stronnictwa Pracy 1937-1946-1950* (Warsaw, 1988); Teresa Monasterska, 'Popiel Karol', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 27/114 (Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow-Gdańsk-Łódź, 1983), 558-62; Henryk Przybylski, 'Popiel Karol', in *Słownik biograficzny katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce*, vol. 2, (Warsaw, 1994), 200-2; Ryszard Gajewski, *Karol Popiel 1887-1977* (Suwałki, 2008).
- 12 Herman Lieberman (1869-1941) – lawyer, socialist politician. 1901-1919 – member of the Board of the Polish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and Silesia. 1907-18 – member of the National Council in Vienna on behalf of PPSD. During World War I in the Polish Legions. 1919-1935 – member of Sejm. From 1919 in the Polish Socialist Party, member of the supreme authorities of the party: Supreme Council (1920-1939), vice chairman of the Central Executive Committee (1931-1934), representative of PPS in the Office of the Socialist International (1932-1939), chairman of the Foreign Department of the Central Executive Committee / Foreign Committee (1940-1941). 1930 – imprisoned in Brest-Litovsk; sentenced in 1932 to thirty months in prison, he went to Czechoslovakia 1933 and then to France. During War World II, deputy chairman of the National Council of Poland (23 January 1940-3 September 1941). 3 September-21 October 1941 – Minister of Justice in the government of W.

Two issues should be emphasized when considering the factors that influenced relations between Gen. Sikorski's team and its predecessors. Firstly, Sikorski and his political and military entourage believed they had suffered repressions in pre-war Poland because of their opposition to the Sanacja regime. Harassment had taken many forms, ranging from outright dismissal or release from active duty and being left "at the disposal" of superiors (e.g. Sikorski, Modelski) when it came to army careers, to being removed from academic posts (like Prof. Stanisław Kot,¹³ Prof. Stefan Glaser),¹⁴ to imprisonment, abuse

Sikorski – Herman Lieberman, *Pamiętniki*, ed. Andrzej Garlicki (Warsaw, 1996); Artur Leinwand, *Posel Herman Lieberman* (Kraków-Wrocław, 1983).

- 13 Stanisław Kot (1885-1975) – historian, politician. 1920-34 – professor of the Jagiellonian University. From 1921 member of the Polish Academy of Art and Science. 1933 deprived of his chair due to statements opposing the Sanacja regime. In the same year he became involved with the Peasant Party. 1936-39 member of the Supreme Executive Committee of SL (Peasant Party), from 1939 – member of the Foreign Committee SL. From October 1939 – in exile. Friend and trusted co-worker of W. Sikorski. 1939-40 – undersecretary of state in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers; 10 October 1940-28 August 1941 – Minister of Internal Affairs; 28 August-September 1941 – Minister without portfolio; 1941-1942 – Polish ambassador in Moscow, then in Kuibyshev; 1942-43 – delegate of the Polish government in the East; 18 March 1943-24 November 1944 – Minister of Information and Documentation; 1940-41 – member of the Committee for State Affairs (1941 chairman). 1945 – he returned to Poland. 1945-1947 – Polish ambassador in Rome. 1947 again in exile. Since 1955 chairman of the Supreme Council of the Polish Peasant Party in exile – Stanisław Kot, 'Wspomnienia z początkowego okresu II wojny światowej', *Przegląd Polonijny*, 2 (1981), 115-31; Janusz Gmitruk, Zygmunt Hemmerling, and Jan Sałkowski (eds), *Z kraju i na emigracji: Materiały z londyńskiego archiwum ministra prof. Stanisława Kota (1939-1943)* (Warsaw, 1989); Jerzy Juchnowski, Rafał Juchnowski, and Lilla Barbara Paszkiewicz (eds), *Z archiwum politycznego profesora Stanisława Kota: Polska myśl polityczna XX wieku: Materiały źródłowe z komentarzem* (Toruń, 2013); Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Stanisław Kot 1885-1975: Biografia polityczna* (Warsaw, 2000); idem, *Stanisław Kot 1885-1975: Między nauką a polityką* (Warsaw, 2012); Alina Fitowa (ed), *Stanisław Kot – uczone i polityk* (Cracow, 2001); Grażyna Ofiara, *Profesor Stanisław Kot: Zarys biografii naukowej* (Rzeszów, 2008).
- 14 Stefan Antoni Glaser (1895-1984) – lawyer. 1920-24 – employee (1923-24 dean of Faculty of Law) of the University of Lublin (later KUL); from 1924 – employee of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. For his protest against the Brest trial, he was deprived of his chair and in 1934 moved to retire. Attorney in political trial, inter alia of W. Korfanty, S. Mikołajczyk and W. Tempka. As from 1937 member of the Supreme Council of the Labour Party. In November 1939 – moved to France. 1939-41 – head of the Department of Justice, then director of a department in the Ministry of Justice. From 1940 – chairman of the Appeal Disciplinary Commission by the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. As from 1942 – member of the Legislation Work Committee. From 1941 – Polish representative to the emigre governments of Belgium and Luxembourg. President of the Association of Professors of Allied Forces in the UK. As from 1944 – dean of the Polish Faculty of Law at Oxford University. After the end of War World II, he remained in exile in Belgium. He gave lectures at the universities in Liège, Leuven and Ghent. 1948 – founding member of the

and lawsuits (as was the part of Lieberman and Popiel). In assessing the subsequent attitudes of those who had suffered to those who had oppressed them, it must not be forgotten that their grievances were not imaginary.

The second very important issue was the refusal of exponents of the old regime to recognise the legitimacy of the new government. They accused Sikorski and his followers of staging a *coup d'état* in connivance with the top French civil-military decision-makers who used their influence to prevent the pre-war elite *en route* for France from leaving Romania, and have them interned there for the duration of the war. This allegation of a Franco-Sikorski government conspiracy remains intact to this day (see, for example, Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski,¹⁵ Leszek Moczulski¹⁶). This allegation made it all the more important for the Sikorski camp to justify its reasons for reaching for power. This need automatically upgraded the issue of calling their predecessors to account for the defeat of September 1939 to the rank of a priority factor in legitimizing the new team, and justifying the way they acquired power. In this context, the following major factors were stressed:

- the way in which the Sanacja regime maintained an authoritarian grip on society, against the will of the majority, and particularly its failure to close ranks and cooperate with the opposition in face of the coming armed conflict;

- serious mistakes in foreign policy after 1926 (especially in the 1930s), particularly on the eve of war (the occupation of Teschen, which smacked of collaboration with the Third Reich);

- errors in drawing up defence plans and in their implementation;

- the course of the September Campaign of 1939, deficiencies in modern weaponry and infrastructure, and inadequate command structures at both central and tactical levels;

- the inability to use available staff reserves (e. g. the case of Sikorski himself – his pursuit of Marshal Śmigły-Rydz in the hope of obtaining a military allocation);

- the contrast between the jingoistic tub-thumping braggadocio of the pre-war regime and the actual course of the military confrontation in September 1939;

Polish Scientific Society in Exile – Stephan Glaser, *Urywki wspomnień* (London, 1974); Grażyna Karolewicz, 'Glaser Stefan Antoni', in *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 5, (Lublin, 1989), col. 1101-2; Małgorzata Gałązka, 'Stefan Glaser', in *Profesorowie prawa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego*, ed. Antoni Dębiński, Wojciech Sz. Staszewski, and Monika Wójcik (Lublin, 2006), 81-90.

15 Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski, 1864-1945*, vol. 3, part 2, (London, 1960), 69-72.

16 Leszek Moczulski, *Wojna polska*, 869-75.

– the behaviour of the military and civil authorities during the September Campaign with particular emphasis on the escape of the commander-in-chief, Marshal Edward Śmigły-Rydz, to Romania.

For Sikorski and many other military men, including Piłsudski'sites, the commander-in-chief's flight while his army was still fighting the enemy was in flagrant breach of all principle of propriety, an incomprehensible decision sometimes regarded simply as desertion. This, in turn, led to the termination of any sense of duty towards the commander-in-chief (for example, the case of the military attaché in Bucharest, Colonel Tadeusz Zakrzewski¹⁷ and his role in strengthening the position of Sikorski). It is important to recognise that the opposition felt free to make changes after Śmigły-Rydz's breach of trust; indeed, the conduct of many other prominent exponents of the state's highest authorities was regarded as reprehensible to the point of their losing any moral mandate to govern. Settling past scores by the new incoming emergency authorities was set against the above background.

One of the first signs of a wish to break with the past was the issue of approval of the basis for functioning in exile and the rejection of the April Constitution of 1935 which was deemed to be undemocratic. In the delicate situation in which the Polish authorities in France found themselves, emphasizing the legal continuity of the state was of paramount importance. Nevertheless, Sikorski was not short of advisers urging him to revoke the Basic Law of April 1935 as the legal basis for the actions of the Polish government-in-exile. This went so far as to proposing abandoning the symbolic vestiges of government as decreed by the April Constitution, and appointing a Polish Committee in Paris in their place. Karol Popiel argued that the March Constitution of 1921 should be reinstated and constitute the basis of a new regime. Ironically, this resembled the solution of 1944 employed by the Soviet-sponsored communist puppet government called the Polish Committee of National Liberation. It should be remembered that before September 1939, the opposition had criticized both the content and the procedure in passing the April Constitution. Other supporters of rescinding this Constitution included Stanisław Mikołajczyk,¹⁸ Henryk Lieberman and Izydor Modelski.

17 Tadeusz Zakrzewski (1897-1964) – soldier. 1937-40 – military attaché at the Polish Embassy in Bucharest – Robert Majzner, *Attachaty wojskowe Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1919-1945: Strukturalno-organizacyjne aspekty funkcjonowania* (Częstochowa, 2011), 525.

18 Stanisław Mikołajczyk (1901-1966) – popular politician, Prime Minister of the Polish government. 1930-35 – Lower House (Sejm) deputy. 1931-1939 – Member of the supreme authorities of the Peasant Party. Organizer of a peasant strike in 1937. Supporter of s. c. Front Morges. He fought as a soldier in September 1939, then interned in Hungary. In November 1939 he moved to France. 1940-41 – deputy chairman of

However, the vast majority of politicians, including Prime Minister Sikorski and Deputy Prime Minister (the real architect of this coalition government) Prof. Stanisław Stroński,¹⁹ dismissed the arguments of the opponents of the April Constitution. Luckily, sobriety prevailed, and the desire to revise past legal and constitutional issues, however negative they may have been deemed to have been, was suppressed. Denial of the April Constitution would have undermined the legal basis for the continued existence of the Polish govern-

the Polish National Council (actually serving as acting chairman). 1941-43 – Minister of Internal Affairs; 1941-43 – Deputy Prime Minister. 14 July 1943-24 November 1944 – Polish Prime Minister. 1940-44 – member of the Committee for State Affairs; from 1940 – member of the Commission for September 1939; from 1941 – member of the Political Committee of Ministers and the Economic Committee of Ministers; from 1942 – member of the Committee of Propaganda of the Council of Ministers. 1945 – returned to Poland. 1945-1947 – member of the National Council; 1947 – member of the Lower House. 1945-1947 – Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms in the Provisional Government of National Unity. 1945-1946 – vice president, 1946-47 – president of the Supreme Executive Committee of the Polish Peasant Party. He remained in opposition to the communist authorities. In October 1947 he illegally left Poland. He settled in the USA, where he served as President of the Polish Peasant Party in exile. 1950 – founder of the Polish National Democratic Committee – Stanisław Mikołajczyk, *Polska zgwałcona* (Poznań, 1990); Janusz Gmitruk and Andrzej Paczkowski (eds), *Diariusz premiera Stanisława Mikołajczyka prowadzony przez Stefanię Liebermanową 13 XII 1944-14 VI 1945* (Warsaw, 2003); Mieczysław Adamczyk and Janusz Gmitruk (eds), *Diariusz Stanisława Mikołajczyka prowadzony przez Marię Hulewiczową* (Kielce, 2002); Andrzej Paczkowski, *Stanisław Mikołajczyk czyli kłęska realisty (zarys biografii politycznej)* (Warsaw, 1991); Roman Buczek, *Stanisław Mikołajczyk*, vol. 1-2, (Toronto, 1996); *Stanisław Mikołajczyk w dokumentach aparatu bezpieczeństwa*, vol. 1-3, (Warsaw, 2010).

- 19 Stanisław Stroński (1882-1955) – Romanist, independence activist, politician, journalist. Member of the Union of Polish Youth (“Zet”), the National Democratic Party and the National League. 1913-14 – member of the National Assembly in Lviv. 1922-1935 – Lower House deputy on behalf of, successively, the Christian-National Party, Popular National Union and National Party. Supporter of Front Morges. Professor of the Jagiellonian University (from 1919) and of the Catholic University of Lublin (1927-39). 1 October 1939 – 17 June 1940 – Deputy Prime Minister; 18 June 1940-10 October 1940 – Minister without portfolio; 10 October 1940-14 March 1943 – Minister of Information and Documentation. Member of the Political Committee of Ministers (1940-43). After War World II he remained in London. Co-founder and member of the Council of the Polish Institute and the General Sikorski Museum in London; co-founder of the Polish Scientific Society in Exile. 1949-1954 – member of the Political Council; 1954-1955 – member of the Provisional Council of National Unity. 1945-48, 1950-54 – president of the Association of Polish Writers in Exile – Stanisław Stroński, *Polityka rządu polskiego na uchodźstwie w latach 1939-1942*, ed. Jacek Piotrowski, vol. 1-3, (Nowy Sącz, 2007); Janusz Faryś, *Stanisław Stroński – biografia polityczna do 1939 roku* (Szczecin, 1990); Wojciech Rojek, ‘Stroński Stanisław’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 44/182 (Warsaw-Kraków, 2006), 381-90.

ment, and would have opened the door to hostile foreign interference in Poland's internal affairs.²⁰

While the watchword “national unity” was chanted with the zeal of a man possessed, the process of collecting materials that would enable charging those responsible for “the September defeat” with criminal liability continued relentlessly. The defeat against Germany and the Soviet Union seemed to be a convenient battlefield on which to settle old scores. As convention would have it, the allegations were to be based on substantiated and documented facts, but this did not automatically mean that there were no non-substantive motives lurking in the background. An analysis of the ways in which the institutions established to document the 1939 campaign functioned prompts the conclusion that those directing these inquiries lacked the necessary degree of detachment and were inclined to encumber their predecessors with undivided responsibility for any military or political failures.

Chronologically, the first institution to investigate the recent past was the “Commission for the Registration of Facts and Collecting Documents on Recent Events in Poland” (in short: The Registration Commission). Significantly, it was appointed by resolution of the recently formed (ten day old) cabinet, on 10 October 1939. During the discussion in cabinet, on the scope of responsibility of the committee, the idea of apportioning blame to individuals was abandoned, limiting its work to recording facts and securing materials and documents. The commission was made up of Gen. Józef Haller²¹ – chairman (though in his post-war memoirs, he denied partici-

20 See Magdalena Hułas, *Goście czy intruzi*, 16-7; Jarosław Rabiński, *Stronnictwo Pracy*, 128-9.

21 Józef Władysław Haller de Hallenburg (1873-1960) – soldier, politician. During World War I, commander of the Eastern Legion (1914-1916), commander of the 2nd Brigade LP (1916-1918), commander of the 5th Rifle Division (1918), commander of the 2nd Polish Corps (1918), commander of the Polish Army in France (1918-1919). From 1919 – in the Polish Army. Lt. Gen. from 1 June 1919. Participant in the Polish-Soviet war (1919 commander of the Galician Front, commander of the South-Western Front, then the Southern Front, 1919-1920 – commander of the Pomeranian Front, 1920 General Inspector of the Volunteer Army, commander of the North-Eastern Front and Northern Front). 1920-1926 – general inspector of artillery, member of the War Council and chairman of the Supreme Adjudicating Commission. From 1926 retired. 1922-23 – Lower House deputy. 1920-1926 – President of the Central Committee of the Polish Red Cross Society. Patron of the ex-servicemen's organization the Association of Haller's Soldiers. 1936 – co-founder of Front Morges. As from 1937 – president of the Supreme Council of the Labor Party. In September 1939 – without allocation. 14 September 1939 he left Poland, and on 3 October 1939 reached Paris via Romania. 3 October 1939-1 May 1941 – minister without portfolio, 1 May 1941-14 July 1943 – minister, head of the Office of Education and School Affairs. Member of the Political Committee of Ministers (1940-42). After War World II he remained in London – Józef Haller, *Pamiętniki z wyborem dokumentów i zdjęć*

pating in the committee), Ministers Stroński and Aleksander Ładoś,²² Col. Modelski as Haller's stand-in in Military Affairs, and miscellaneous delegates (Janusz Ligęza-Stamirowski,²³ Alfred Andrzej Marski²⁴ and a delegate from Ładoś – Stanisław Schimitzek).²⁵ According to the available materials, just two plenary sessions of the committee were held: on 26 October and 6 December 1939. The fruit of its labours was a file of sixty-seven testimonies (or sixty-eight if we include the testimony of the Governor of Lviv, Alfred Bilyk),²⁶ on the activities of the various governing authorities before September: the majority concerned the Ministry of Internal Affairs (thirteen testimonies) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (fifteen testimonies). Polish diplomatic institutions cooperated with the commission. Its work was cut short due to various factors, not least the long-term departure of some members after the fall of France and the establishment of another commission by the National Council.²⁷

The Registration Office, a special unit at the Ministry of Military Affairs, ostensibly under the supervision of the second Deputy Minister of Military

(London, 1964); Stefan Aksamitek, *Generał Józef Haller: Zarys biografii politycznej* (Katowice, 1989); Marek Orłowski, *Generał Józef Haller 1873-1960* (Cracow, 2007).

- 22 Aleksander Waclaw Ładoś (1891-1963) – politician, diplomat. From 1913 – member of the Polish Peasant Party “Piast”. From 1919 – in the diplomatic service; 1923-26 – Polish legate in Riga; 1927-1931 – consul general of Poland in Munich. 3 October 1939-9 March 1939 – minister without portfolio in the government of Sikorski, responsible for liaison with the country; 1939 – member of the Committee for State Affairs. 1940-45 – chargé d'affaires in Bern. He returned to Poland in 1960 – Aleksander Ładoś, ‘Gabinet umiarkowanie ... sanacyjny’, in *Tygodnik Demokratyczny*, 43 (1969), 4-5; Stanisław E. Nahlik, ‘Aleksander Ładoś’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 18/77 (Cracow, 1973), 183-6; Jacek Majchrowski (ed), *Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 1994), 103.
- 23 Janusz Ligęza-Stamirowski (1891-1952) – soldier.
- 24 Alfred Andrzej Marski (1892-?) – soldier.
- 25 Stanisław Schimitzek (1895-1975) – diplomat, lawyer, publicist. From 1920 in diplomatic missions in Prague, Paris, Geneva, and Berlin. 1933-39 – head of the Administrative Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During War World II, delegate of the Polish government to Lisbon. In 1946 he returned to Poland, where he worked in the Ministry of Industry and Trade, then for the “Wiedza Powszechna” Publishers and the Western Press Agency – Stanisław Schimitzek, *Na krawędzi Europy: Wspomnienia portugalskie 1939-1946* (Warsaw, 1970); Andrzej Essen, ‘Schimitzek Stanisław’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 35/147 (Warsaw-Kraków, 1994), 490-2.
- 26 Alfred Biłyk (1889-1939) – lawyer, official and soldier. During World War I in the Polish Legions. 1936-37 – Tarnopol province governor; 1937-39 – Lviv province governor.
- 27 See Schimitzek, *Na krawędzi Europy*, 100; Hułas, *Goście czy intruzi*, 152-3; Andrzej Grzywacz and Marcin Kwiecień, ‘Sikorszczycy kontra sanatorzy (ciąg dalszy)’, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, 129 (1999), 44-125, 57-71, 123-4; Mieczysław Adamczyk and Janusz Gmitruk (eds), *Sprawcy kłęski wrześniowej przed sądem historii. Dokumenty komisji badawczych władz polskich na emigracji* (Warsaw, 2005); Rabiński, *Sronnictwo Pracy*, 151-2.

Affairs, Gen. Modelski, but effectively directly managed by Colonel Fryderyk Mally, is perhaps the best described unit in historiography.²⁸ Notably, Modelski also supervised the Office of Human Resources in this Ministry, which gave him almost complete control of the over-manned posts in the Polish Army in France and assured him decision-making powers over whether to accept or reject the miscellaneous Polish troops flowing into France. Needless to say, the mayhem that accompanied the formation of this refugee army gave Modelski the opportunity to effectively eliminate unwanted people from active service.

While officially, the Registration Office belonged to the Ministry of Military Affairs from November 1939, intriguingly, there is evidence of registration questionnaires already in circulation the month before. The task of the Registration Office was to collect records and documents on the September Campaign – not only on its course, but also on the preparations for it. Based on an analysis of the collected material, evidence incriminating anyone guilty of the “September defeat” was to be appropriately collated. This has been corroborated by numerous subsequent accounts of people who went through the positive vetting procedures of the Office after first being interviewed by Modelski. Officers detailed to front-line service were required to fill in a special sheet of comments and observations, as an annex to the “neutral” registration form. According to instructions from 29 October 1939, no one filling in the questionnaire could be restricted in their freedom of expression. It is, however, beyond doubt that critical, negative opinions about command methods and preparations for war were not just desired, they were expected.²⁹ Interesting traces of this can be found in Modelski’s papers in the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University and at the Sikorski Institute in London. On the one hand, in his instructions of 20 December 1939, Modelski emphasized that “This work must be so conscientious, precise and comprehensive that the true history of past events can be reconstructed on its basis.”³⁰ On the other hand, he himself admitted that the activities of the Office were to allow grabbing the Sikorski government’s opponents by the

28 Fryderyk Dominik Józef Mally (1893-1984) – soldier. In September 1939 General Staff officer. 1939-40 – head of the Registration Office of the Ministry of Military Affairs in Paris. 1940-42 – advisor of the Polish missions in Lisbon. 1942-45 – in the Ministry of National Defense in London. After World War II in exile in the UK – *Polsko-brytyjska współpraca wywiadowcza podczas II wojny światowej*, vol. 2, (Warsaw 2005), III, annotation no. 31.

29 See e.g. Stanisław Rostworowski, ‘Wśród piątej emigracji w Paryżu’, *Więź*, 6 (1961), 108-128, 112.

30 Hoover Institution Archives in Stanford, Izydor Modelski Papers, b. 1, f. 14A, Geneva powstania i działalność Biura Rejestracyjnego Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych, 25.

throat, and “uncovering their crimes and responsibility for the past”.³¹ Karol Popiel and Karol Estreicher, who were close to Modelski, held similar views on the matter.³²

During the “French” period (until June 5, 1940), the Office managed to accumulate 7,794 reports from ca. 5,000 people which were catalogued (some of them gave complementary testimonies). The Office itself did not have judicial powers, but its employees could refer cases to the military judiciary. In total the Legal Division of the Office dealt with four hundred and twenty-four cases, of which twenty-three were transferred to the Military Tribunal and eighty-two to field courts. Twenty-six cases were discontinued, thirty-three suspended, and one hundred and twenty-six were left to be settled in the country after the war.³³

Undoubtedly, Modelski was the moving spirit behind the Registration Office. Without going into the motives of his conduct here (I have tried to present them in a book about the Labour Party in exile during World War II),³⁴ it should be asked whether Gen. Sikorski supported the actions of Modelski. Initially, definitely yes. In a secret order of 12 March 1940, the Commander-in-Chief said that “the activities of the Office are necessary and useful”,³⁵ indicating not only the value of the collected material to draw conclusions on the September Campaign, but also the fact that “thanks to the work of the Registration Office, a number of serious abuses were revealed, and a number of individuals unworthy of serving in the Polish army who tarnished the national uniform were eliminated.”³⁶ (emphasis added – JR) With time, however, Sikorski distanced himself from Modelski, undoubtedly un-

31 Polish Institute and General Sikorski Museum in London (further: IPMS), ref no. A.5, vol. 8, Minutes of the meeting of the Military Commission of the National Council of Poland 29 June 1942, k. 10.

32 Karol Estreicher (1906-84) – art historian. 1939-40 in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers; 1940-1943 – head of the Office of Restitution of Cultural Losses by the Polish government. Returned to Poland after World War II. Lecturer at the Jagiellonian University, the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow and the Higher School of Fine Arts in Wrocław. 1951-76 – director of the Jagiellonian University Museum; 1957-84 – president of the Association of Friends of Fine Arts in Cracow – Karol Estreicher, *Dziennik wypadków*, vol. 1-7, (Kraków, 2001-2013); Adam Piskorz, ‘Karol Estreicher’, in Julian Dybiec (ed), *Uniwersytet Jagielloński: Złota Księga Wydziału Historycznego* (Cracow, 2000), 473-3; Zbigniew Witek, *Karol Estreicher (1906-1984)*, vol. 1-3, (Kraków, 2007-2008).

33 See Hułas, *Goście czy intruzi*, 164; Grzywacz and Kwiecień, ‘Sikorszczycy kontra sanatorzy’, 75-105; Rabiński, *Stronnictwo Pracy*, 161-7.

34 Rabiński, *Stronnictwo Pracy*, 158-1.

35 IPMS, Kol. 1: The Diary of the Supreme Commander in Chief, vol. 8a, Officer’s secret order No 13 of 12 March 1940, 86.

36 Ibid.

der the influence of Gen. Marian Kukiel.³⁷ Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that Sikorski never removed Modelski from his immediate entourage, and, in fact, kept him in his circle of closest advisers.

The Registration Office only operated in France. Upon the exiled government's evacuation to the UK in June 1940, its activities were not resumed, and any documentation generated by it was handed over to the September Campaign investigation commission. Indeed, another commission was appointed to investigate the root cause of the defeat in 1939, this time not upon the initiative of the government, but by the newly appointed, quasi-parliament-in-exile: the National Council of the Republic of Poland. From the beginning of its activities (the first meeting was held back in France, on 23 January 1940), sharp anti-Sanacja sentiment dominated the speeches of its members and by 9 March, it adopted a proposal for the appointment of this extraordinary commission to clarify the causes of the "September defeat". Council members who signed the request not only demanded that they be allowed to collect any materials that would apportion responsibility for the consequences of the clash with Germany and the Soviet Union, and, based

37 Marian Włodzimierz Kukiel (1885-1973) – independence activist, soldier, military historian. From 1904 – member of the Polish Socialist Party, then the PPS-Revolutionary Faction. From 1908 – member of the Union of Active Struggle, from 1910 – Rifle Association. 1914-1915 – in the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee. 1915-1918 – in the Polish Legions. 1918-1919 – Deputy Chief of Staff of the Polish Army; 1919-1920 – inspector of infantry schools; 1920-1923 – head of the 3rd Division of the Staff of the Ministry of Military Affairs (Brigadier from 1 July 1923); 1923-1925 – Commander of 13 Infantry Division; 1925-1926 – head of the Historical Office of the General Staff (Military Historical Office). In May 1926, he sided with the government, actively participating in the fighting. From September 1926 at the disposal of the Minister of Military Affairs. From 1927 – he taught military history at the Jagiellonian University. 1930-39 – curator of the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow. From 1932 – member of the Polish Academy of Art and Science. From 1936 he managed the Cracow Centre of the Anti-Sanacja Association of the Rebirth of Poland. In 1937 he became a member of the Supreme Council of the Labour Party (which he left in 1939 due to returning to active military service). From October 1939 in exile. 1939-1940 – 1st Deputy Minister of Military Affairs (Major-General as of 3 May 1940); 1940-1942 – commander of the 1st Polish Corps in Scotland; 1942-1949 – Minister of Military Affairs / National Defense in the governments of Władysław Sikorski, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, Tomasz Arciszewski and Tadeusz Komorowski. After 1945 co-founder and president of the Polish Historical Association abroad, the Board of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, Polish Scientific Society in Exile, the Polish University Abroad – Marian Kukiel, *Generał Sikorski: Żołnierz i mąż stanu Polski Walczącej* (London, 1970); idem, *Historia w służbie teraźniejszości i inne pisma emigracyjne*, selected and ed. by Habielski (Warsaw, 1994); Janusz Zuziak, *Generał Marian Kukiel 1885-1973: Żołnierz, historyk, polityk* (Pruszków, 1997); Rafał Habielski and Marek Jabłonowski (eds), *Marian Kukiel: Historyk w świecie polityki* (Warsaw, 2010).

on this information, indict anyone guilty of negligence. After a two-month period of preparatory work, on 8 May, the government adopted a draft presidential decree on the matter which the president signed on 30 May – that is, during the German offensive against France. The commission (Prof. Bohdan Winiarski³⁸ as Chairman, S. Mikołajczyk, H. Lieberman, K. Popiel and I. Modelski) convened, still on French soil, on 8 June. When Lieberman died, his place was taken by Jan Kwapiński in 1942.³⁹ The commission was disbanded in June 1945.⁴⁰

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that all of these activities took place in the early, French period of exile of the Polish government. The defeat of France, whose speed and extent put the Polish defeat of September 1939 into perspective, went a long way in moderating the more vociferous critics of the previous regime. The new problems that the Polish authorities in London had to handle pushed the issue of settling old scores into the background. The Soviet-German war and reactions of the Polish exiled community to the Sikorski-Maysky Agreement brought new divisions in Polish politics. This time it was the policy of Sikorski's government-in-exile that attracted critical attention by dint of which the pre-war divisions were tacitly put aside.

This does not mean that in the UK, Sikorski's closest acolytes, men like Modelski, Popiel and Mikołajczyk, changed their attitude to the Piłsudski camp. However, it is difficult to see any attempts to bring to account the exponents of the Sanacja regime after the summer of 1940. Efforts to curtail the resurgent influence of Piłsudski'ites on political life in exile and on the military underground back home were made, typically by ousting them from the Polish Armed Forces in the West. Efforts were made to draw the British into anti-Sanacja machinations and, indeed, some "undesirables" were even deprived of freedom of movement and kept in special camps, such as in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. All available propaganda tools were used to paint a negative picture of Piłsudski'ites for public consumption (though it

38 Bohdan Winiarski (1884-1969) – lawyer. 1922-1939 – lecturer in international law at the University of Poznań (1936-1939 Dean of the Faculty of Law). 1928-1935 – Lower House deputy of the National Party. 1946-1967 – judge in the International Court of Justice in The Hague (1961-1964 Chairman).

39 Jan Kwapiński, actually Piotr Edmund Chałupka (1885-1964) – socialist politician. 1922-30 – Lower House deputy. 1942 – minister without portfolio in the government of Gen. Sikorski; 1942-43, 1944-47 – Minister of the Treasury and Industry, Trade and Navigation in the cabinets of Władysław Sikorski and Tomasz Arciszewski – Jan Tomicki, 'Kwapiński Jan', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 16/70 (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk, 1971), 334-5.

40 See Hulaś, *Goście czy intruzy*, 154; Andrzej Grzywacz and Marcin Kwiecień, 'Rada Narodowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w walce z sanatorami 1939-1941', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, 131 (2000), 10-43; Adamczyk and Gmitruk (eds), *Sprawcy klęski wrześnieowej przed sądem historii*.

should be added that this was not without Piłsudski's (ites paying them back in kind).

To recapitulate, after the evacuation of the Polish government to Britain, it is difficult to identify any attempts at revenge *qua* legal punishment of the old pre-war regime by the new wartime authorities. Even in the "French" period, such urges were subject to restrictions. But that is not to say that Sikorski did not consent to documenting the responsibility of his predecessors (contrary to his public assurances about letting bygones be bygones or at least putting them on the back-burner for the duration of incalculably greater priorities). To be sure, his closest collaborators did not ease up in their efforts to gather material incriminating opponents, and in establishing institutions for that purpose. Of course this drive stopped short of seeking to mete out summary justice on dubiously defined grounds of penal liability; there, some kind of line was drawn and the exclusive domain of the professional judiciary was recognized. They performed their duties conscientiously, some might even say with ingratiatingly excessive zeal. Sikorski's legal experts also took care to ensure that the activities that were undertaken complied with the binding law. Reckonings of the Polish authorities in exile with the past never turned into a lawless vendetta against exponents of the old system, with open violations of legal standards.

There can be no doubt that the sensitive process of settling scores with the previous government was a crucial factor in the claim to legitimacy of the new government. Without any evidence of the guilt of its predecessors, it was not easy to explain the seizure of power in wartime conditions, when only continuity of government could ensure internal stability and the continued recognition of international agreements. The dissonance between the pre-war regime's assurances of the country's security and its total collapse could only legitimize the opposition's opportunism. Hence the importance the new regime attached to highlighting the culpable errors of its ousted predecessors.