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## The dispute around national consolidation during the war menace period (1938–1939)

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The late 1930s was a peculiar period for the Second Republic of Poland. The beginning of 1938 was marked with a normalisation of the relations within the Piłsudski followers' camp, which was expressed by the replacement – not merely a symbolical one – in the office of head of the National Unification Camp [Polish, *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* – OZN]: on his 'voluntary' resignation, Adam Koc was succeeded by General Stanisław Skwarczyński. The new OZN leader was tasked with alleviating the internal tensions and completing (in fact, building from the scratch, in a number of cases) the organisation's central (the Supreme Council) and local structures. Coming to the post of leader of Poland's largest political party, Gen. Skwarczyński could not foresee the highly dynamic developments that made it necessary to incessantly respond to the changes taking place. Enough to say that OZN uncritically supported the Government's policies, constantly and consistently engaging itself in propagating its 'successful achievements' – be it the normalisation of the relations with Lithuania in March 1938 or the annexation of Zaolzie area (part of the Cieszyn Silesia west of the Olza river)<sup>1</sup> in October. Both occurrences were moreover seen as related to the triumphant idea of national unification within the society<sup>2</sup>, and even compared to the call for defence of Poland in 1920<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The action was regarded as a "miracle of coalescence and concord". See: (W.I.L.) [Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz], *Idea i życie*, 'Gazeta Polska' (hereinafter: 'GP'), 8.02.1939, No. 39, p. 1. It was also argued that it was "living evidence of coalescence and its strength". See: "Z tego co nasze nikomu nic nie oddamy". *Mowa szefa sztabu O.Z.N. płk. Zygmunta Wendy* (speech delivered by Col. Zygmunt Wenda, Head of the Staff, OZN), GP, 3.07.1939, No. 182, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Starzyński, M., *Pochód idei zjednoczenia*, GP, 1.01.1939, No. 1, p. 1. In his address to members of the Supreme Council of OZN, Marshall E. Śmigły-Rydz said that the national unification slogan was only apparently popular, for, when analysed minutely, it occurred that for its delivery "the quantity of colours of the rainbow" would not suffice. See: *Na szlaku zjednoczenia narodu. Mowa szefa sztabu O.Z.N. płk. Zygmunta Wendy* (speech delivered by Col. Zygmunt Wenda, Head of the Staff, OZN), GP, 22.02.1939, No. 53, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Polski nie stać na polityczne waśnie*, GP, 6.03.1939, No. 65, p. 1.

It should be emphasised that the slogan of national consolidation<sup>4</sup> (unification), presented – not without a reason – to the former Legionnaires<sup>5</sup> on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1936 by General Edward Śmigły-Rydz, Inspector General of the Armed Forces<sup>6</sup>, became an element in the campaign advocating a reintegration of the society, found fragmented and decomposed at the time.<sup>7</sup> The idea, as grasped by its creator and executors<sup>8</sup>, was to effectively provide a platform for a nationwide as well as in-camp collaboration<sup>9</sup>, meant to bring about a unification of a possibly largest share of the society unified through a common effort to defend the country<sup>10</sup>. The latter was to be achieved through the country's development, which path was seen as a “driver of Poland's military and economic strength” and the only road to get the nation fully mobilised in the time of a war peril.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it came out as the major premise upon which the

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<sup>4</sup> For more on this point, cf. M. Sioma, *Koncepcja i realizacja hasła konsolidacji narodowej w latach 1936-1939. Założenia ogólne*, ‘Dzieje Najnowsze’, 2010, No. 2, pp. 85-101.

<sup>5</sup> Juliusz Ulrych was of opinion that former Legionnaires set “the marching pace for the nation”, but did not ‘book’ for them any and all works (including the major ones) related to the reconstruction of the state. See: “*Legionlizacja*” *życia narodu. Wywiad z Komendantem Naczelnyim Związku Legionistów Polskich, płk. dypl. J. Ulrychem* (interview with Col. J. Ulrych, Head Commander of the Association of Polish Legionnaires), GP, 18.02.1939, No. 49, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Let us add that the national consolidation slogan, proposed by E. Śmigły-Rydz along with the postulate to organise a uniformly managed national will, was a political novelty that testified “both to the courage of thought and the decision-making skills of the One who has posed them”. See: J.M., *Nowe zasady i nowa rzeczywistość*, ‘Jutro Polski’, 22.01.1939, No. 5, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> A ‘Gazeta Polska’ columnist argued that the society's fragmentation was not astonishing to OZN, a formation that would not have been set up if not for such fragmentation, while pointing out to the fact that OZN has made this fragmentation a ‘central starting point for all the Camp's labours.’ See: (W.I.L.), *Idea i życie...*, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>8</sup> They were defined by a nationalist-oriented Piłsudski follower, who found that a national consolidation slogan could only be followed by those “in whom a synthesis of objectives has been brought about, derived from the new reality ...”. See: Z. Stahl, *Idea i walka*, Warszawa 1938, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Euzebiusz Basiński described it as a ‘small consolidation’, the basis for which, as opposed to a ‘grand’ one (coalition of political parties), was a unity of the camp that was “predestined to exercise the rule – an indivisible rule, to be sure”. See: E. Basiński, *Konsolidacja masy czy aktywu?*, ‘Jutro Polski’, 25.12.1938–1.01.1939, No. 2, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> In the opinion of Jan Kęsik, the factors that proved decisive for the society's consolidation around the task to defend the sovereignty and increase the military potential of the Second Republic was the menace of war, alongside the prevailing social-political situation. See: J. Kęsik, *Naród pod bronią. Społeczeństwo w programie polskiej polityki wojskowej 1918-1939*, Wrocław 1998, p. 102.

<sup>11</sup> J. Majchrowski, *Silni – zwarci – gotowi. Myśl polityczna Obozu Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, Warszawa 1985, p. 42. Waclaw Makowski emphasised that it was a must for the envi-

nation was to be ‘unified’, ‘consolidated’; the ‘road-sign’ was to be the *Political-ideological declaration*.<sup>12</sup> These assumptions, far-fetched as they proved, were not shared by everyone, though. The political Opposition voiced their reservations and doubts, along with the OZN-affiliated Young Poland Association [*Związek Młodej Polski*] – the latter arguing that a consolidation would turn feasible, and successful when and if a possibly largest number of people formed an elitist group of national activists.<sup>13</sup>

The first realistic description of what a national consolidation was, as based upon an analysis of assumptions and achievements, was expressed in February 1939 by a certain ‘Kar.’, on the grounds of an extensive discussion concerning not only a unification<sup>14</sup> but also the OZN as a political structure. In an opinion he proposed, this author named OZN the first ideological-political movement adapted to the political-system framework of Poland in its independence period, perceiving the organisation as a focus within which a new national ideology was getting formed (with regards to politics, society, culture and economy) for a new Poland. Such ideology was not subject to elaboration, whether theoretical or practical, as its emergence would depend upon an organised nation to which “unification is just the first necessary means ensuring the attainment of the goal of our contemporary Poland’s generation”.<sup>15</sup> Let us add that this concept initially (May 1936 to September 1938) did not enjoy the ex-

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sioned consolidation to be creative and absorptive, and that means proactive – whilst remarking that it only could work properly under a real threat coming from the outside. See: W. Makowski, *Psychologia zjednoczenia*, GP, 23.04.1938, No. 110, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> The Central Archives of Modern Records [abbr. in Polish as ‘AAN’, as so hereinafter], Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, ref. no. 22, cc. 1-6, *Deklaracja ideowo-polityczna obozu tworzonoego przez pułkownika Adama Koca* [‘An ideological-political declaration of the camp formed by Colonel Adam Koc’]. Zdzisław Stahl argued that Adam Koc sought collaboration and consolidation with the society, rather than with some “party antiquarians”, whilst the *Declaration* was to form a new programme, meant to be the only and exclusive basis for a unification. See: Z. Stahl, *Idea i walka...*, pp. 29-30. Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz found that: “Proclaimed by Col. Koc, the Declaration of February was published not in order that masses be campaigned for but in order to create a plane for consolidation for the reflective proactive elements of the Nation.” See: W. Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz, *Deklaracja zawsze żywa*, GP, 21.02.1939, No. 52, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>13</sup> E. Basiński, *Konsolidacja masy czy aktywu?*, ‘Jutro Polski’, 25.12.1938–1.01.1939, No. 2, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Próchnik was of the opinion that the idea of consolidation, anti-Semitism, nationalism, and clericalism were the leading purposes for the Piłsudski followers’ camp, when they thought about attracting a part of the masses. See: A. Próchnik, *Czy totalizm jest ruchem masowym*, ‘Robotnik’, 16.02.1939, No. 47(7680), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> (Kar.), *Ideologia siły państwowej*, GP, 6.02.1939, No. 37, p. 1.

pected support whether from the society<sup>16</sup> or among some Piłsudski adherent camp's activists, who, "with their eyes fixed on the existing *organisational forms*, missed the deep psychical process evolving inside the nation's soul. They could not see the triumphant idea of national consolidation pave the way for itself"<sup>17</sup>. Still, the changing geopolitical situation made this idea definitely more significant, forging it into the main element of political addresses<sup>18</sup> and press enunciations on international politics extending to the Polish *raison d'état*.

The journalism, which was the main space where the consolidation was disputed, was used by the political adversaries not as a means of mutual persuasion but rather, of winning over the public opinion. The point is that there was no politically uninvolved daily press in the two decades between the World Wars, while the society's awareness and attitudes depended upon the choice of a concrete paper or magazine. Thus, OZN followers would mainly focus on *Gazeta Polska*; socialists read *Robotnik*; nationalists, apart from a whole array of local dailies, focused their attention on the *Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy* ['The Warsaw National Daily']. The whole thing formed, in an approximation, a summarised picture of the perception, and reception, of the notion of national consolidation.

In the war peril time, whose beginning should be seen as related with the German proposals to normalise the relations with Poland (*Gesamtlösung*)<sup>19</sup>, the national consolidation slogan become subject to a broad discussion and polemics for, primarily (though not exclusively), press organs of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and OZN. The planes on which the consolidation dispute went on reflected the period's polemics between the Opposition and the ruling camp. There were several elements to it of key importance – primarily, the dispute on the form and content of unification<sup>20</sup>, the Commander-in-Chief<sup>21</sup>, the political-system dimension (a polemic relat-

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<sup>16</sup> This seems all the more symptomatic that OZN, in its strife for "ploughing the nation's soul through" and "rendering it [= the nation] familiarised with the new movement and the rules", did not haste to build organisational structures, focusing instead on popularising and intensifying "the idea of unification within the society". See: M. Starzyński, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem* (italicised as in the original).

<sup>18</sup> In autumn 1938, the national consolidation motto became the major point in the speeches delivered by OZN activists to the society, on a national as well as regional level. See: the State Archives of Kielce [hereinafter, "APK"], Urząd Wojewódzki Kielecki ['the Provincial Office of Kielce'] (1916), 1919–39 [hereinafter, 'UWK'], Social-Political Section, 1935–9 [hereinafter, 'WSP'], ref. no. 3277, cc. 41, 42.

<sup>19</sup> K. Kraczkiewicz, *Jesień 1938 – jesień 1939. (Narastanie konfliktu polsko-niemieckiego)*, 'Zeszyty Historyczne', 1984, vol. 70, p. 157.

<sup>20</sup> M. Sioma, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 95.

<sup>21</sup> To the minds of *Zaczyn* editors, consolidation should have taken place on an unconditional basis, under the auspices of the Commander-in-Chief, as the army was "the only stable factor warranting the State's safety, internally and externally ...". Cf. *Rola Naczelnego*

ed to the postulate to democratise the social life)<sup>22</sup> and the social dimension<sup>23</sup>, or, the role and importance of (the) opposition<sup>24</sup>. Much less controversy was triggered by the postulate to get consolidated based upon the concept to defend the state in the face of external threat, albeit in this case OZN's 'rigid' position again incited the adversaries to contest the proposed methods of consolidation.

The propaganda action for a national unity was rendered more dynamic as Czechoslovakia was forced to return the Zaolzie Silesia area, seized by the Czechs in 1919. OZN activists and columnists made use of this peculiar 'turning point' as evidence to a strength of the army and the state, that is, factors characterising a dynamic organism, full of vitality and ready to go on taking actions. The problematic issue which was nonetheless identified was an apparent internal unity of the society, demonstrated officially and expressed in a common uncritical optimism (which was a short-lived phenomenon, though) and a support for the 'successful' army and diplomatic service.<sup>25</sup> In an address to dwellers of Kielce of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1938 at the unveiling of the Legions monument, Kazimierz Sosnkowski spoke of the need to spare no moral and physical efforts to the benefit of Poland's strength, which was derived from the resolution of a series of political and economic issues – and of social wrongs. The cure he could propose was to attract "a possibly large number of Poles for collaboration and shared responsibility", as he believed that the "desire for unity, which the Commander-in-Chief is so emphatically demanding", was commonplace

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*go Wodza w życiu państwa*, 'Zaczyn', 13.01.1938, No. 2 (59), p. 1. Zygmunt Wenda has articulated this unambiguously by stating that Śmigły-Rydz had himself resolved to pose an "outright order for the nation to get united in the name of defensive and developmental purposes". See: *Drogi odrodzenia sił moralnych i materialnych Narodu. Mowa szefa Sztabu OZN płk. dypl. Z. Wędy* (address delivered by Col. Z. Wędy, Chief of the Staff, OZN), GP, 14.02.1939, No. 45, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> T. Jędruszczak, *Piłsudczycy bez Piłsudskiego. Powstanie Obozu Zjednoczenia Narodowego w 1937 roku*, Warszawa 1963, p. 206.

<sup>23</sup> The moral-cleansing-oriented editorial staff of *Naród i Państwo* have paid attention to this aspect, observing that the national consolidation slogan, when contrasted with decomposition, could not be understood by the society, since, in that transitory period, "people actually sought for opportunities to confirm their beliefs in their slogans, in that their own personalities also had a *raison d'être*". Cf. *Oblicze konsolidacji*, 'Naród i Państwo', 21.11.1937, No. 45/46, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> The purport of a speech made by Deputy Prime Minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski in Katowice (April 1938) is worth paying attention at: he namely highlighted that disputes and sabotaging had better be discontinued while consolidation would be feasible not only without destroying the Opposition but, simply, in cooperation with it. Cf. J. Majchrowski, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> E. Kaszuba, *System propagandy państwowej obozu rządzącego w Polsce w latach 1926-1939*, Toruń 2004, pp. 216-217.

in Poland – and indeed inevitable in face of the need to ensure safety and a future to this country.<sup>26</sup> A dozen-or-so days later, Waclaw Makowski presented this very issue expressly, asking, “whom are we supposed to stand by, en masse? By those who in their incessant effort, step by step, elevate Poland upwards, or by those who exclaim, ‘You’re not supposed!’?”<sup>27</sup> The Piłsudski followers were convinced that the reply was unambiguous – and it turned into a nationwide action of meetings promoting OZN as the only movement capable of rendering the nation unified<sup>28</sup>. Followers were won over as a result<sup>29</sup>, but the society, politically diversified, passed over this lightly rather soon, following the example of the Opposition press.

The political Opposition’s position did not, and indeed could not, have any significant influence on the change in the perception of the national consolidation slogan. The success of the Zaolzie action outright produced a conviction whereby OZN should have intensified its action toward a broader propagation of the consolidation concept and made use of the interest from the mass media in order to successfully persuade the irresolute within the society. The task was uneasy, especially with no formal structure in place that would pose as a goal for itself to disseminate the national unity watchword. Still, its popularisation was not spontaneous, as a matter of fact.

Responsibility for the action in question, in its entirety, was assumed by the Editorial Board of *Gazeta Polska* – OZN’s official press organ, which was as if ‘ex officio’ predestined to act as a populariser of the national consolidation. The newspaper also accepted the odium of criticism and polemics coming out from various milieus (including from the Piłsudski followers’ camp). Let it be emphasised that a body of publications dealing with this particular issue included texts signed with names (or, at times, initials) or recorded occasional addresses or speeches, or interviews offered by leading politicians to *Gazeta* columnists. It was a ‘break-over point’ for polemicists who, when referring to those enunciations, did not limit themselves to confuting their adversaries’ arguments but added to the consolidation issue their own conclusions, reflections and judgements.

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<sup>26</sup> „Zjednoczenie wewnętrzne Polaków dokonane być musi i dokonane będzie... „... Przemówienie gen. broni Kazimierza Sosnkowskiego (address by Lt.-Gen. K. Sosnkowski), GP, 3.10.1938, No. 271, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> W. Makowski, *Nazajutrz*, GP, 13.10.1938, No. 281, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> APK, UWK, WSP, ref. no. 3277, cc. 41, 42.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, a meeting was held by OZN activists in the village of Gołcza, Commune of Rzeżuśnia, attended by 130 participants. Resulting from the campaigning done by Mieczysław Czekał (“this gathering is aimed at making the people aware of the need to unify within the O.Z.N.”) and Antoni Kwaśniewski, who argued that, among other things, OZN cared about the rural people’s welfare, four persons signed up with the organisation. Cf. *ibidem*, c. 41.

The first plane of combat whereon the national consolidation was made useful was the parliamentary election campaign of October/November 1938. Let us add that it was a wide-ranging action to which Government representatives contributed, including the Prime Minister himself who, as a *Robotnik* columnist put it, while damning the National Democracy, summoned “all to gather and consolidate”.<sup>30</sup> Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski’s words meant however that the Government and OZN intended to put a remarkable emphasis on the concept’s revitalisation in the society. A few days later, resumption of the dream concept of ‘harmony’ and ‘concord’ was subject to critical comments from the Opposition which blamed the OZN-affiliated newspapers for criticising those “willing to trigger confusion with a thought of class struggle”.<sup>31</sup> The phrase depicted, to quite an extent, the essence of the ongoing dispute, as the left-wing political Opposition constantly reminded of the need to first democratise the political life by calling OZN to “cleanse the house of the garbage” in the first place and thereafter think of a consolidation, which was impossible to carry out anyway, given the prevalent state of affairs in autumn 1938.<sup>32</sup> General Lucjan Żeligowski echoed these statements by accusing OZN, in the conservative daily *Słowo*, of erroneous politics practised in particular with respect to the masses, finding e.g. that “if willing to arouse enthusiasm and really unite the nation, one had better not approach it with impudence but rather, with a code of law held in the hand and with magnanimity at heart”<sup>33</sup>. Kazimierz Czapiński’s persuasions were no less powerful: he travestied the call “*All Join OZN!*” by inciting whoever could not do so to “obediently follow OZN”.<sup>34</sup>

These enunciations implied opinions uttered by exponents of the Piłsudski camp, including its nationalist members (Zdzisław Stahl coming to the fore), who argued that the Polish society had crossed out the anachronistic pre-war party-bound splits, accepting now the new programme framework – including the society’s national unity, not quite acceptable an approach to all political opponents.<sup>35</sup> One of the most ‘stubborn’ and ‘jammed’ among them was Mieczysław Niedziałkowski, editor-in-chief of *Robotnik*, the leading antagonist and critic of OZN’s actions, adherer of democratisation of the social-political life, a leading activist with PPS – the party that was meant to be eliminated from the political life of Poland, following the

<sup>30</sup> Z. Żuławski, *Dwie mowy*, ‘*Robotnik*’, 27.10.1938, No. 306 (7570), p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> ‘n.t.’ *Walka (Refleksje)*, ‘*Robotnik*’, 30.10.1938, No. 310 (7573), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> L. Żeligowski, *O co walczyć?*, ‘*Słowo*’, Wilno [Vilnius], 3.11.1938, No. 303 (5227), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> K. Czapiński, *Nasze drogi. Lud-Państwo-Kultura*, ‘*Robotnik*’, 20.11.1938, No. 330 (7594), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> (Z.S.) [Zdzisław Stahl], *Rycerz czy klapouch?*, (*Niedyskrecje*), GP, 29.11.1938, No. 328, p. 1.

1938 election.<sup>36</sup> Quite significantly, ever since OZN was formed, the Opposition was gaining in importance – not merely owing to its imminent strength: a ‘spotlight’ was lit on it, and on the society, as an appeal was made “to unify and to quit any unimportant disputes”<sup>37</sup>. OZN realised moreover that the impact of the consolidation pace depended upon the attitude of the Opposition which has ignored “the hand extended in reconciliation”, to which the society responded pejoratively by voting OZN in the parliamentary election of 1938. Thus, the national consolidation slogan appeared to be a strength, rather than a weakness, as the Opposition believed it to be.<sup>38</sup> Taken into account were also the outcomes of local-government elections, won by the Opposition, which only yielded to its opponents in some cities. OZN columnists and politicians found it satisfactory, though, for arguing that OZN had proved successful in this area as well, as what the society apparently preferred was “*the idea of concord*, the idea to come to a conciliation, to determine a single shared [candidate] list”, rather than a breakup and party-based splits.<sup>39</sup> In their appraisal, the breakup of vote<sup>40</sup> was an argument speaking for, rather than against, the idea to unite – contrary to what the Opposition claimed – as the victories of PPS or of the National Party [*Stronictwo Narodowe*; SN] had to provide a substratum for multiply intensified effort toward preventing “disastrous effects of the breakup of the Nation”.<sup>41</sup> A selection was announced on this occasion into those “who contribute to the erection of an edifice of unity and power – and those who constitute an active or passive obstacle to this labour”<sup>42</sup>, thus clearly suggesting that national unification and consolidation remained the major purpose and strife for OZN, now using different methods than those resorted to before the election.

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<sup>36</sup> (W.I.L.) [Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz], *Nieunikniona selekcja*, GP, 29.11.1938, No. 328, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Po pierwszej debacie sejmowej*, GP, 5.12.1938, No. 334, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> M. Starzyński, *op. cit.*, p. 1 (italicised as in the original); Also, see: *Polski nie stać na polityczne waśnie*, GP, 6 III 1939, nr 65, s. 1. ‘Concord and collaboration’ was triumphant e.g. in Nowogródek, where, in the election of 1938, twelve individuals – incl. Mr. Pawluć, a barrister, chairman of the local OZN Municipal Organisation, were elected councillors out of a ‘Christian-and-Muslim’ list, initiated and supported by OZN. This success was evidence, it was said, that “OZN is a milieu of people of value, who enjoy support from masses of citizens. What it also testifies to is how popular the National Unification Camp is in the field.” Cf. G. Engman, *Tryumf konsolidacji*, GP, 12.01.1938, No. 11, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> This fact was interpreted as evidence that the society was fragmented, there was no dominant political force, while OZN proved to be the major and most reputable, unsurpassable organised political structure. Cf. J. Makowski, *Wybory samorządowe*, ‘Jutro Polski’, 25.12.1938–1.01.1939, No. 2, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> (W.I.L.), *Idea i życie ...*, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> (W.I.L.), *Nieunikniona ...*, p. 1.

The thus heralded alteration in the methods was articulated by Waclaw Makowski, Speaker of the Sejm [Lower House of the Parliament] of 5<sup>th</sup> Term-of-Office, who sought internal consolidation through concordant cooperation of state institutions (parliamentary members and ministers), emphasising that the goal had been set by Józef Piłsudski as he postulated a “Poland unified”; this “essential unification”, as Makowski phrased it, referred not only to a reunification of the lands formerly seized by the partitioning powers, with a uniformity of the legal framework, but, in the first place, to brining about “an active integration of the Nation”<sup>43</sup>. This parliamentary speaker saw this postulate as “deliverable”; the head of OZN declared from the Sejm rostrum that “in the ideological area, we already have completed a national consolidation work”, against which no political force had been able to juxtapose anything of essence”<sup>44</sup>. He interpreted the unification concept as a “great fresh current” that was ravishing for the society.<sup>45</sup> Let us add that the Sejm was to join the action propagating the national consolidation, as opposed to what this body did during its preceding, fourth, term-of-office (1935–8). Yet, the optimistic attitude of the OZN leader was shared neither by the socialist *Robotnik* nor by the Christian-Democratic *Polonia* – the latter calling for accelerated delivery of the national consolidation slogan, taking into account a broad social spectrum (inclusive of the peasantry) and claiming that “nothing can possibly be smuggled here, nobody cheated, and no one can get off lightly”<sup>46</sup>.

The problem was that each of the parties to the effort followed its own concept of consolidation. The Piłsudski adherents’ group would not admit a compromise as far as the idea of ‘national unity’ was concerned, and scuttled any attempt at disavowing the concept they had outlined.<sup>47</sup> By using the epithet ‘maniacs’, they denied their political adversaries the right to understand the notion in question as compromising between the agreeing (unification-oriented) parties, particularly as the trade-off was not to be based on similar slogans but on the real political strivings appearing

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<sup>43</sup> *Zjednoczenie narodu — naczelnym zadaniem nowego Sejmu. Mowa Marszałka Sejmu, prof. W. Makowskiego* (speech delivered by Prof. W. Makowski, Speaker of the Sejm), GP, 29.11.1938, No. 328, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Kadencja V. Sesja zwyczajna r. 1938/1939, Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 3. posiedzenia w dniu 3 grudnia 1938 r.* [‘The Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 5<sup>th</sup> Term of Office: Ordinary Session, 1938/9. Shorthand Report on 3<sup>rd</sup> session of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1938’], column 9. Gen. Stanisław Skwarczyński said: “None of our political opponents has proposed anything of material importance that would have opposed our ideology; neither has none of those who desire to devoutly work for the good of the State.” See: *ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> *Po pierwszej debacie sejmowej*, GP, 5.12.1938, No. 334, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> U.W., *Zjednoczenie narodu a polska wieś*, ‘Polonia’, Katowice, 24-26.12.1938, No. 5097, p. V.

<sup>47</sup> (W.I.L.) [Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz], *Koalicja – to nie zjednoczenie*, GP, 15.01.1939, No. 15, p. 1.

contradictory.<sup>48</sup> Neither party was willing to accept the reasons of the other, which generated new planes of conflict. The debate went not as much about the principles (the need to consolidate<sup>49</sup>) or methods as about the concept and its delivery.<sup>50</sup> OZN definitely rejected a coalition of parties as an initial stage and possible prerequisite for the nation's unity, arguing that it would be "a grist to the mill of breakup, rather than a national unity".<sup>51</sup> Along with it, he protested against reducing the OZN's rank to just one among the political parties, arguing that this organisation was "genetically" rooted "in the guidelines of the Commander-in-Chief, who was responsible for preparing the Nation in a versatile manner for the ordeals and experiences it may be facing".<sup>52</sup> He only admitted a "unification of good-willed people" – which meant those who had rejected the past and former organisational structures (bonds!), *and* those who should like, "equal among the equal, share the responsibility for the State with their yesterday's opponents".<sup>53</sup> Any other consolidation would be considered undeliverable by them.<sup>54</sup> By launching and propagating the belief that a national unification was a must, the Commander-in-Chief (the originator) and OZN (the deliverer) monopolised the idea's execution.

An option to join the execution was merely proposed to the political adversaries, without a realistic influence on the shape and the methods, under the rules differing from expected.<sup>55</sup> The Piłsudski followers' camp argued that E. Śmigły-Rydz's indications, including a consolidation, were not deliverable through a resumption of old

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<sup>48</sup> *Rzeczywistość i fikcja naszej polityki*, GP, 30.01.1939, No. 30, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz emphasised that the Opposition criticised OZN and the Piłsudski followers' camp, but not the idea of national consolidation or the assumptions of the February declaration. See: W. Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz, *Deklaracja...*, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> A *Gazeta Polska* journalist argued that those columnists who called into question OZN's right to a "real" unification" refused to render the notion, and the means of its delivery, any more precise". See: (W.I.L.), *Koalicja ...*, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem* (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>52</sup> (W.I.L.) [Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz], *Koalicja a O.Z.N.*, GP, 20.01.1939, No. 20, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>53</sup> (W.I.L.), *Koalicja – to ...*, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> This was reconfirmed by Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz in his yet another article, arguing that the coalition concept, as a way toward unification, "has come across no defenders or followers at all". See: (W.I.L.), *Koalicja a O.Z.N.*, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> The Opposition was to await OZN's initiative to reconcile and, based thereupon, to arrive at a "genuine unification", expectedly shaped into a coalition or, possibly, a "conciliatory commission for the political parties". See: (W.I.L.), *Koalicja – to...*, p. 1. A congress of the Peasants' Party [*Stronnictwo Ludowe*] in January 1939 proposed a concept to "consolidate the nation's forces by way of an understanding of the parties", but OZN rejected those postulates. Cf. K. Czapiński, *Hamulec... Stanowisko OZON-u*, 'Robotnik', 28.01.1939, No. 28(7661), p. 3.

political forms.<sup>56</sup> The offer was eventually rejected; the dispute was getting intensified, alongside the increasingly realistic threat of armed conflict. Both parties endeavoured to take advantage of the consolidation watchword (Piłsudski camp sought a national consolidation, whilst the socialists placed a bet on the Nation's genuine unification) as a carrier of their own views and ideas. The press organs of both parties to the dispute tried to outdo each other in creating a picture of success (Piłsudski camp) or failures (the socialists) of consolidation<sup>57</sup>, without caring much for reflecting the situation in its reality. *Gazeta Polska* no doubt shone among them; its columnists made early 1939 the moment for analyses and summaries. Among those, one finding deserves special attention: “*the Polish nation, in its tremendous majority, is already marching obediently along the road indicated by the Commander-in-Chief. And it shall go on marching so in the year 1939.*”<sup>58</sup>

It is clearly apparent that the governmental press organ made attempts in early 1939 to persuade its readers, as well as political adversaries (using polemics as a means of dispute), that the national unity/consolidation as advocated by OZN did not lead to the society's division into two hostile camps (Hispanisation), and that the final delivery of the idea of national consolidation could be contributed to by anyone willing to do so.<sup>59</sup> For the Piłsudski camp, it was beyond any doubt (or rather, they were not willing to accept any option to the contrary) that their own concept of national unification was the only potentially successful one, with efforts contributed by those who were ready to drag the ‘chain’ lifting Poland upwards.<sup>60</sup> As evidence of proper implementation, activities were highlighted of people stemming from another ideological trunk, who, “propitiated for the idea of national unification”, not only joined OZN but quite often played a key part therein”.<sup>61</sup> The decisive factor was their qualifications, as a matter of fact. It is irresistible to conclude that preventing the al-

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<sup>56</sup> As a certain ‘J.M.’ wrote, “One cannot, in a word, go forward by making retrograde steps!”. See: J.M., *Nowe zasady i nowa rzeczywistość*, ‘Jutro Polski’, 22.01.1939, No. 5, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>57</sup> These nuances have been grasped by Witold Iphorski-Lenkiewicz, who remarked that the “true unification of the Nation” as promoted by the Opposition, arousing approval, if not fondness, has a certain identifiable “positive emotional content” to it, which would be acceptable for OZN, if not for the conviction that the “‘true unification’ expression tends to be used as the opposite of the action being run by OZN”. See: (W.I.L.), *Koalicja – to...*, p. 1 (underlined as in the original).

<sup>58</sup> M. Starzyński, op. cit., p. 1 (italicised as in the original).

<sup>59</sup> (W.I.L.), *Koalicja a ...*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> As *Gazeta Polska* columnist evocatively described this: “Everyone might stand by the chain that is meant to lift Poland toward power and glory, equal amongst the equal – but no-one can demand from those who have been bearing this chain on their shoulders that they let it go off and – that they leave.” See: (W.I.L.), *Koalicja a...*, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

legations from the Opposition eventually made Witold Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz reflectionless, for the statement claiming that ‘newcomers’ were coming to key positions is also perceivable in terms of the centre-of-gravity being moved rightwards (yes; e.g. Z. Stahl), if not in terms of a decreased importance of the ‘Legions trunk’ activists. In spite of this conviction, or perhaps in contrast to it, a *Gazeta Polska* columnist persuaded: “Could there possibly be any better proof that a national unification is being delivered indeed, and that the elected road – is the right one?”<sup>62</sup> Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, in his address to members of the Reserve Officers’ Association, stated, in turn, on their behalf, that the Association not only believed in the possibility of a broad national consolidation under the auspices of OZN but outright deemed it to be a historical necessity.<sup>63</sup>

Not everyone shared this conviction, adding that consolidation was one of the hindrances (apart from the new parliamentary and local-government regulations) OZN has ‘contracted’ in attempted defence of its privileged position<sup>64</sup>; the way to unification was to be set through OZN alone<sup>65</sup>, and was to be made by “OZN Legionnaires” backed by “mannerly” people.<sup>66</sup> This conviction has been pictured, for instance, by means of a satirical commentary (Fig. 1).

The Opposition has many a time stressed that OZN was turning totalitarian. Yet, the Rev. Ferdynand Machay argued that totalitarianism, following the Italian and German patterns, must have been rooted in a psychological substrate, which he could not identify with the “present national unification slogan”<sup>67</sup>; yet, this Senator by the will of the President of the Republic also made an appeal to Premier Składkowski for a freedom for “political parties of Poland” to express themselves, which would allow for development of a motto all the citizens would follow.<sup>68</sup> This come out as a confirmation that the national consolidation slogan did not enjoy full support from a broad spectrum of the society.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibidem (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>63</sup> *Szeroka konsolidacja narodowa jest dziejową koniecznością Polski. Przemówienie wicepremiera E. Kwiatkowskiego na radzie związkowej Z.O.R.* (speech delivered by Deputy Prime Minister E. Kwiatkowski at a Reserve-Officers’-Association union council meeting), GP, 6.03.1939, No. 65, p. 2. K. Czapiński, *Hamulec...*, s. 3.

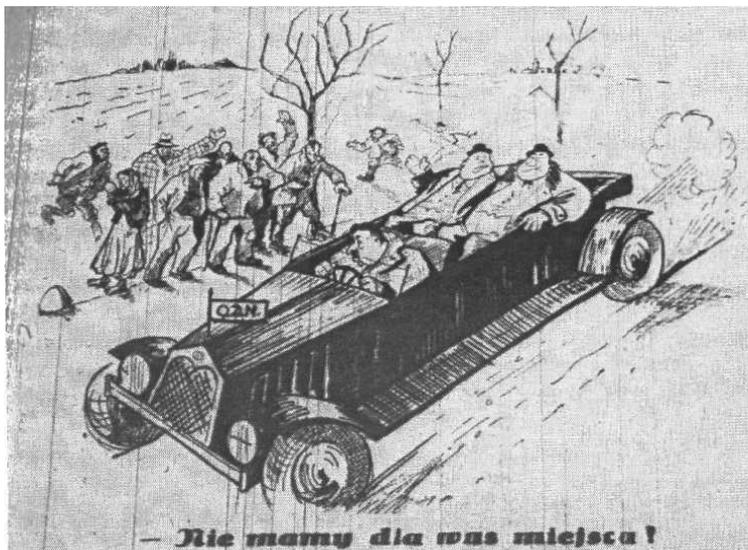
<sup>64</sup> K. Czapiński, *Hamulec...*, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> [\*\*\*], ‘Kurier Polski’, Warszawa [Warsaw], 24.01.1939, No. 24, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Henryk Kara suggested to the ‘OZN Legionnaires’ that they desist from a “forced unification of the whole nation with use of ‘mannerly’ people”, owing to the opportunism of their conduct. See: H. Kara, „Dobrze wychowani” [“The Mannerly”], ‘Robotnik’, 16.02.1939, No. 47(7680), p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> An identical position has been expressed by Z. Wenda, head of the OZN staff, who precluded national unification according to Italian or German methods, as Poland had rejected “mass-revolutionary moments”. See: *Drugi odrodzenia...*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> *Obrady Komisji Budżetowej Senatu. O partiach politycznych i o „Ozonie”* (account of a meeting of the Senate’s Budgetary Committee), ‘Robotnik’, 28.01.1939, No. 28 (7661), p. 5.



**Fig. 1: “National consolidation, according to OZN activists”**

(caption reads: “We’ve got no room for you in here!”)

Source: *Zwrot*, Katowice, 29.01.1939, No. 4, p. 10

The problem at stake would assume a different shape if we take into account the society’s support for the issues of the country’s defence. Niedziałkowski noticed that this attitude characterised a “genuine consolidation”, doing credit to the generation in its entirety.<sup>69</sup> On this basis, not identifying the plane on which the dispute was developing, he postulated that the authority vs. the society relation be modified – which ought to be expressed through altered election regulations, rejection of totalitarian ideas, and free election.<sup>70</sup> This opinion was, in a sense, maintained by the official propaganda, drawing the attention, however, on the necessity to follow the order to build an organisation and to mobilise internal powers, so that, in case of external threat, there be an unrestrained certainty of victory. It was postulated that the assumptions be put into effect through “extracting from the man and the earth, from the will and Polish nature, a maximum of organised and disciplined force, of the utmost civic and military virtues, of the most efficient skills of flexibility”.<sup>71</sup> Anyone who would oppose the delivery of the plan proposed by E. Śmigły-Rydz was accused of jobbery, anarchistic attitude, irresponsibility, if not meanness. The reason

<sup>69</sup> A most characteristic opinion was ventured by one OZN columnist who found that the political opposition, resorting to a subtle sophistry and pretending to be adherents of the unification idea, would run the action of festering and decomposition, making use of this alibi. See: W.I.L., *Idea i życie...*, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> M. Niedziałkowski, *U rozstajnych dróg. Zagadnienie naczelne*, ‘Robotnik’, 1.02.1939, No. 32 (7665), p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> *O własnych siłach*, GP, 2.02.1939, No. 2, p. 1.

was a belief whereby the nation should struggle with theoreticians and propagators of breakup or fragmentation, opposing any doctrine that would disseminate among the masses the conviction that “it is by decomposition that Poland stands”.<sup>72</sup> In February 1939, an OZN analyst believed that the political opposition’s views on consolidation and related methods made it legitimate to state that a “victory of the increasingly ponderous and conquering idea of National Unity”<sup>73</sup> had already been the case. A similar voice was expressed by the OZN Head of Staff, as he communicated, in a radio speech on the second anniversary of the *Ideological-political declaration*, that the unification idea OZN had been serving has extended to, and overwhelmed, wide circles of the society, already having celebrated “the days of its grand triumph, several times”, given the short period in which it was delivered.<sup>74</sup> Yet, the Head Commander of the Polish Legionnaires’ Association [ZLP] called his subordinates to intensify their efforts to develop defensive capability and consolidation, stressing that a “Legionnisation of the national life” has only occurred in Poland (*sic!*).<sup>75</sup> In late March 1939, the Head of OZN, on instructing the heads of districts, postulated, among other things, that consolidation be carried on, the terrain infested, sentiments mobilised and military readiness reinforced.<sup>76</sup>

Let us note that the notion of national consolidation aroused discussions and polemics still in the first quarter of 1939. OZN’s intensified action for the sake of unification, taken and built upon the conviction that it was necessary to get prepared (integrated) in face of a possible armed conflict, doubtlessly informed this juncture. This aspect was powerfully articulated, at an OZN Supreme Council meeting in February 1939, by Gen. S. Skwarczyński: referring to the international situation, he highlighted that “the only warranty of any nation and any state is its own force, its own moral power, based upon the moral power of the entire nation”.<sup>77</sup> The round anniversary of the *Ideological-political declaration* had its say too. The dispute went on about the form and scope of consolidation, in the first place.<sup>78</sup> OZN-affiliated politicians and commentators argued that “the consolidation the Camp is to carry out to-

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<sup>72</sup> Paraphrasing the popular slogan from the late Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth period, “it is by anarchy [*resp.* unruly] that Poland stands” [*Polska nierządem stoi*]; cf. (W.I.L.), *Idea i życie ...*, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> *Na szlaku zjednoczenia ...*, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> „Legionizacja” życia narodu..., p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> *O honor narodu podejmiemy każdą walkę. Przemówienie Szefa OZN gen. St. Skwarczyńskiego na zjeździe przewodniczących obwodów OZN* (speech delivered by Gen. S. Skwarczyński, Head of OZN, at an OZN district chairmen’s convention), GP, 29.03.1939, No. 88, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> *W obliczu historycznych wypadków. Mowa szefa OZN gen. St. Skwarczyńskiego* (address by Gen. S. Skwarczyński, Head of OZN), GP, 16.03.1939, No. 75, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>78</sup> E. Basiński, *Konsolidacja masy czy aktywu?*, ‘Jutro Polski’, 25.12.1938-1.01.1939, No. 2, p. 3.

day is not blind or ‘taken on trust’ – conversely, it is being delivered upon the level of strictly defined guidelines, accepted as obligatory”<sup>79</sup>. Those guidelines were grounded, it was said, in the nation’s physical and moral values, on the ‘imponderables’, to use Józef Piłsudski’s term.<sup>80</sup>

This ascertainment came across retorts from adversaries. The National Democrats offered their own vision of consolidation, postulating to reject a unification based on the past, deeming it unfeasible and nonsensical; instead, unification was to be delivered in view of a common future and purpose. They requested that this be done “in the name of contradicting any sense to politics in general”.<sup>81</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> March 1939, Lucjan Żeligowski addressed the MPs to discontinue the parliamentary deliberations, appealing to the Prime Minister to declare “what is he intending to undertake to heighten the moral and material powers of the Homeland immediately?”<sup>82</sup> On the following day, the OZN daily, in its polemics column *Niedyskrecje* [‘Indiscretions’], informed its readers that the program in question had been delivered for three years by then, the authority implementing the slogans of E. Śmigły-Rydz (that is, the National Unification Camp) of internal unity (consolidation) and outward defensive capability having been doing so for two years.<sup>83</sup> The accompanying finding was that the society awaited a conclusion to the dispute around consolidation.<sup>84</sup> April 1939 saw Jędrzej Moraczewski persuade that the strife for a nationwide unity was common<sup>85</sup>, and yet it was blocked by OZN which could not understand that an ‘armistice’ could be the only way to accomplish it<sup>86</sup> – something the Camp did not strive for. Again, in a letter of 24<sup>th</sup> May 1939 to President Ignacy Mościcki, Mr.

<sup>79</sup> W. Ipohorski-Lenkiewicz, *Deklaracja...*, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> S. Skwarczyński, *U podstaw siły*, GP, 18.03.1939, No. 39, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Nie może być konsolidacji w imię przeszłości*, ‘Wielka Polska’, February 1939, No. 2, p. 60.

<sup>82</sup> *Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Kadencja V. Sesja zwyczajna r. 1938/1939, Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 21. posiedzenia w dniu 18 marca 1939 r.* [‘The Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 5<sup>th</sup> Term of Office: Ordinary Session, 1938/9. Shorthand Report on 21<sup>st</sup> session of 18<sup>th</sup> March 1939’], column 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Nieoczekiwane wystąpienie. (Niedyskrecje)*, GP, 19.03.1939, No. 78, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> (m.s.) [Mieczysław Starzyński], *Trzeba chcieć – przeszkody usuną się same*, GP, 28.03.1939, No. 87, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> In April 1938, A. Piątkowski, chairman of OZN’s Kalisz district, stated on his resignation: “there is a longing for the idea of national unification among the broad [social] strata, and this idea is not so difficult to accomplish”. See: the Central Military Archives, General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces [*Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych*], ref. no. 1.302.10.17 (no page numbering). In his opinion, the rhetoric used by ‘Gazeta Polska’ and ‘Wieś Polska’ was problematic: contrary to the Łódź weekly *Co słyhać?*, these journals were apparently incapable of properly interpreting the national consolidation slogan and presenting it to the society/

<sup>86</sup> AAN, the Jędrzej and Zofia Moraczewski Archive [*Archiwum Jędrzeja i Zofii Moraczewskich*], 1870–1944 [hereinafter: ‘AJZM’], ref. no. 71/11-272, c. 42: *Jakim powinno być*

Moraczewski expressed his belief that the elite governing Poland – OZN activists, primarily – were not prepared for the great effort of defence against the Germans.<sup>87</sup> His judgement was that an obstacle to the nation's consolidation was not so much a method, which could be redeveloped into a system combining obedience and imponderables creating a power<sup>88</sup>, but rather, the activists who proved incapable of delivering the task the politics had posed before them. He postulated that the process of change be started with a reconstructed Government<sup>89</sup>, finding the rescue in the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>90</sup> It was not only Moraczewski, then leader of the Association of Trade Unions [*Związek Związków Zawodowych*; hereinafter, 'ZZZ'], who realised what the outcome of the possible confrontation with the invader may be; similarly to Stanisław Mackiewicz, he called for real action, whereas OZN activists postulated an in-depth consolidation, so that the potential aggressor could be persuaded (*sic!*) that "Poland is a camp of united Polish people, males and females alike, ready to fight to the bitter end!"<sup>91</sup>

Significantly, the 'belief' shared by some Piłsudski camp members<sup>92</sup> in the accomplishment of a national unification/consolidation was identical with the conviction prevalent among the socialist Opposition, not calling this fact into question<sup>93</sup>,

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*zjednoczenie* ['What should the unification be like?'] For more, see: F.A. Arciszewski, *Patrzac krytycznie*, with an introduction by T. Bielecki, London 1972, p. 81.

<sup>87</sup> Tadeusz Jędruszczak noticed that the nation was united in face of the German threat, of which OZN tried to make a use by propagating its idea of consolidation and arguing that its own role was key to the effort. Cf. *idem*, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>88</sup> The Head of OZN included in this category: sense of pride; national dignity; belief in the nation's powers; love for the Homeland; the army and its Commander – defining these as the spiritual values forming the basis for the unification/consolidation process. See: *Postępy rozwoju psychiki narodowej. Przemówienie szefa Obozu Zjednoczenia narodowego gen. St. Skwarczyńskiego* (speech by Gen. S. Skwarczyński, Head of OZN), GP, 31.10.1938, No. 299, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> AAN, AJZM, ref. no. 71/11-274, c. 15.

<sup>90</sup> Jędrzej Moraczewski, 19.05.1939, wrote a freehand letter to Edward Śmigły-Rydz, which he never sent afterwards: the significant fact is that this letter was almost identical with his letter to Mr. President. Cf. *ibidem*, ref. no. 71/11-272, cc. 17-19.

<sup>91</sup> *Hasło zjednoczenia narodowego musi być zrealizowane! Przemówienie ministra J. Ulrycha* (speech of Minister J. Ulrych), GP, 17.10.1938, No. 285, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Attention is doubtless deserved by the conviction expressed by Prof. Antoni Deryng, MP, Chairman of OZN Commission's Academic Team for the Youth Affairs, who concluded his speech to students by stating that "the unification of the entire Nation is no more a request or indication, or a need that could still be made subject to discussion and consideration; instead, unification of the entire Nation is a firm order cast by the history." See: A. Deryng, *O zjednoczenie Młodzieży Akademickiej*, 'Jutro Polski', 26.03.1939, No. 14, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> A commentator argued in 'Gazeta Polska' that it was "the onrush of this sound instinct of the masses" that made the Opposition leaders change their minds as regards the idea of unification, also changing the language of their expression. See: (m.s.) [Mieczysław Starzyński], *Trzeba chcieć...*, p. 1.

and among certain foreign observers.<sup>94</sup> Those who challenged it, in turn, was the right-wing Opposition, focusing on the circumstance that in order for the nation to get united, it should have to be aware in the name of what, and by what ways, such consolidation would go.<sup>95</sup> The parties to the dispute, the OZN and the socialists, differed however in their belief as to who, and in what a way, has accomplished this. OZN politicians and commentators ascribed the goal's achievement to their own actions and policy-making; their adversaries, not sharing this view, noticed that the credit went, well, to Adolf Hitler, as the one who had united the Polish nation as he seized Bohemia and Moravia, in spite of Poland's position.<sup>96</sup> Hence, the consolidation came out as a consequence of the international occurrences, rather than OZN's activity; on the domestic soil, the aftermath was a common front, within the notion of 'unification' (extending to 'surviving' communists, PPS, through to the extreme right-wing). A challenging question was formulated on this occasion about the sense of the Camp's existence – once the national unity has become a fact.<sup>97</sup> But no reply was awaited! In a sense, one was given by Gen. S. Skwarczyński who said that no change had been needed whilst OZN fully trusted the actions taken by the President of the Republic and the Commander-in-Chief. The discussion was not completely concluded at that point, all the more that it was being heated up by the events taking place in the international politics forum, unambiguously indicating that that the German-Polish conflict turned, from its incubation phase (24<sup>th</sup> October 1938–15<sup>th</sup> March 1939) into a real menace. This state was extremely dangerous – to Poland in general and to OZN in particular: with its monopolistic political concepts, it got exposed to an even more severe criticism from the Opposition Adam Próchnik stated outright that the conviction whereby a “monoparty was tantamount to a unity of the nation” was but a legend: for a unification to be of an appropriate nature, it was necessary that it be an “act of conscious will”<sup>98</sup>; thus, the consolidation action carried out by OZN was disavowed, on the whole. The reply came immediately, expressed through the conviction that the national consolidation concept was an imperative of the Polish internal politics, grounded in “the premises unchangeable to the extent that the

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<sup>94</sup> Gaston Martin, head of the office of Minister Anatole de Monzie, found that an “internal unity of Poland” occurred that was striking to foreign observers”, as was the pace at which it was being achieved. Cf. *Prasa francuska o zjednoczeniu narodowym w Polsce* [‘The French press on the national unification in Poland’], GP, 26.04.1939, No. 114.

<sup>95</sup> *O wspólny front*, ‘Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy’, 26.03.1939, No. 85, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> A. Zdanowski sarcastically recapitulated the attitude of *Gazeta Polska* publicists toward the newly appearing fact, stating that: “It may be concluded that only marching under the wings of the National Unification Camp – would give the *Gazeta Polska* Editors a full satisfaction.” See: A. Zdanowski, *Komu to potrzebne?*, ‘Robotnik’, 16.04.1939, No. 106(7739), p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> X.Y.Z., *Naród zjednoczony*, ‘Robotnik’, 29.03.1939, No. 83 (7716), p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> A. Próchnik, *Monopartia jest czynnikiem słabości*, ‘Robotnik’, 2.04.1939, No. 94 (7726), p. 5.

geographical elements of the Polish reality prove unalterable”, with OZN being supposed for struggle for them up to the moment they became an integral part of “the blood and brains of the whole Nation”.<sup>99</sup> An exemplary action of this sort was e.g. the billing by the Metalworkers’ Union (part of the ZZZ), in Warsaw and some other towns, of a manifesto calling for abandonment of internal struggle and integration of “all the good will” under the aegis of OZN. Such common accession would moreover put an end to a party- and job-related decomposition. *Robotnik* came with an immediate response, focusing in conclusion on the unification methods (common enrolment with OZN) it found typical to OZN-ers’ mentality and psychology – typical to those who would not ever intend to quit their privileged position.<sup>100</sup> Such words could only trigger a polemic.

The one to respond was the leading OZN/nationalist commentator who, using the example of the Metalworkers’ Union on an auxiliary basis, argued that the unification idea was winning increasing understanding and acceptance among the workers, for the unity programme was a “viable and zestful striving of all the Polish strata toward a unity and power”.<sup>101</sup> These assertions should be regarded as a peculiar breakage of the taboo with respect to OZN members’ having recourse to, or seeking support from, the society’s lower layers (workers and peasants). As it is clear, as the war was becoming increasingly real, or even certain (just to refer to the Sejm speech of Foreign Minister Józef Beck of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1939), OZN politicians endeavoured to mobilise those environments even more strongly.<sup>102</sup> Two days after Mr. Beck’s address, the OZN Head of Staff found that a complete unity of the nation and implementation of the social justice rules had been the only ways to mobilise all the nation’s powers. In this labour, workers and peasants should have regarded the “order of national solidarity, and that is, unity” as binding<sup>103</sup>, from which a possibility to attain a social justice stemmed. The way to do it was merely to quit party or class

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<sup>99</sup> (W.I.L.) [Witold Iphorski-Lenkiewicz], *Polityka i przewidywanie*, GP, 3.04.1939, No. 94, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>100</sup> S. K., *Metody „jednoczenia”*, ‘*Robotnik*’, 25.04.1939, No. 115 (7748), p. 3. The conclusions presented in the column *Refleksje* [‘Afterthoughts’] read: “The present ‘unifying’ action of the O.Z.N. and the foolhardy solidaristic proclamations are more noxious than ever today – and more than ever do they vigorously oppose the interests of the state and the nation’s defensive capability.” See: ‘n.t.’, *Zjednoczenie wysiłków obrony. (Refleksje)*, ‘*Robotnik*’, 27.04.1939, No. 117B (7750), p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Z. Stahl, *„Proletariusze wszystkich krajów łączcie się...” – Polacy klóćcie się między sobą!*, GP, 27.04.1939, No. U 5, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> The goal was achieved on 28.08.1939, the moment a deed of consolidation of Polish workers’ organisations, founding an Inter-Organisational Workers’ Council, was signed, in presence of Gen. S. Skwarczyński, Head of OZN, and Col. Z. Wenda, head of the OZN staff. Cf. *Konsolidacja polskiego świata pracy*, GP, 29.08.1939, No. 240, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> *Jedna droga. Mowa szefa sztabu OZN płk. Z. Wendy* (speech of Col. Z. Wenda, Head of Staff, OZN) GP, 8.05.1939, No. 127, p. 1 (highlighted as in the original).

struggling, to the benefit of compliance with the Commander-in-Chief's directives "within a single mass-scale patriotic labour union", as he perceived the Association of Polish Trade Unions.<sup>104</sup>

There is no doubt that the permanent external threat implied an increasing national consolidation. The term was understood in different ways by various milieus, but it is doubtless that the nation's majority definitely stood for implementation of the Government's policy opposing Germany's demands. The success of the National Defence Fund and the Air Defence Loan was evidence that the programme to reinforce of the state's defensive power enjoyed common support but did not ultimately prove that a national consolidation has been completed. This is how these issues were seen by Opposition representatives; in Zdzisław Stahl's opinion, however, a programme for the future needed being formulated – one of "a still further fetched, deeper, more solid and thorough internal unity".<sup>105</sup> This analysis was rooted in the assumption that unity and unanimity of spirits in the face of a menace could not constitute a foundation or a factor decisive for a strength of the state, being but a succor of the existing force and a 'raw material' transformable into a durable value. These findings seem to be an intelligent and logical consequence of the striving for implementation of the idea of a single, great and common political camp, embracing all the areas of the Polish society's life, including the society itself. Such conclusions were formulated as OZN regarded what was going on in the society to be a levy-en-masse whereupon the state's (and the nation's) tomorrow or strength could not possibly be founded. Disbelief in a transformation of the Opposition parties had a say there too. Therefore, the aim should be, it was claimed, to strive for extended and deepened unity of the society for a future, while denying the Opposition's legitimacy to have a resolving voice.<sup>106</sup> These conclusions came across a definitely negative comment three days later from a *Robotnik* commentator, signed with an initial, who punch-lined it thus: "Privileges for OZN – greater than so far, perhaps? Add to it a monopoly in pursuance of politics in the State, how about that?"<sup>107</sup> This passage may serve as a model example for the level of conversation between columnists of both involved currents – a proof that national consolidation constantly formed an element of political journalism. And, it may make us aware of how fierce and hard-line the dispute was.

The last summer-holiday months of the last year of peace saw no modification in the rhetoric applied. Official enunciations, emphasising the nation's warlike read-

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<sup>104</sup> Ibidem (highlighted as in the original).

<sup>105</sup> Z. Stahl, *Wnioski i zastrzeżenia*, GP, 4.06.1939, No. 153, p. 1 (emphasised as in the original).

<sup>106</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>107</sup> (jmb.) [Jan Maurycy Borski], *Nieodpowiedzialna robota*, 'Robotnik', 7.06.1939, No. 157 (7790), p. 1.

iness for great deeds and no errors made by OZN in the preparations<sup>108</sup>, along with a “truth of the society’s own force” penetrating deep down the consciousness of the society at large<sup>109</sup>, plus the application of a “standby culture” were instantly evaluated and commented<sup>110</sup>. The interlocutors stressed the anti-democratic quality of OZN’s policies and its contradictoriness to society’s strivings for unity, in defence of its vital interests.<sup>111</sup>

Let it be added that this state of affairs lasted till the outbreak of the German-Polish war on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939. The fact that both parties really wanted to have ‘the last say’ on it was not of the least importance.<sup>112</sup> Hence, what they endeavoured to do was to make use of any arising opportunity to inform the readers of the topical occurrences having to do with the progressing national consolidation. The polemic had, let us point out, the initiating party (OZN-affiliated *Gazeta Polska*) and the commenting party (*Robotnik*) to it. The whole possibly forms a (rather incomplete) picture of perception of, and course taken by, the national consolidation process; I believe, though, that it suffices for proposing a few key conclusions.

First, the concept of the national consolidation slogan has been delivered, since its initiation in 1936 by E. Śmigły-Rydz, by the National Unification Camp – from the moment the organisation was set up, until the outbreak of the war with Germany. Against the various phases of delivery, the idea maintained its constant and permanent goal – the care about “the future of the Nation that will have to face the impending tempests” one day<sup>113</sup>, its amplitude rising as the external threat was growing real. The underlying assumption was that the ideology which had given rise to the slogan and concept of national consolidation was based upon the instructions and recommendations given by Józef Piłsudski, who made the belief in the nation’s own powers the foundation of the nationality and nationhood.

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<sup>108</sup> „Z tego co nasze nikomu nic nie oddamy”. Mowa szefa sztabu O.Z.N. płk. Zygmunta Wandy (speech of Col. Z. Wenda, OZN’s Head of Staff), GP, 3.07.1939, No. 182, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup> (z.s.) [Zdzisław Stahl], *Wielka idea i wielka zasada*, GP, 6.07.1939, No. 185, p. 1.

<sup>110</sup> K. Czapiński, *Pogotowie a zaufanie. Głos „OZON-u”*, ‘Robotnik’, 17.07.1939, No. 167 (7800), p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> ‘N.t.’, *Zjednoczenie (Refleksje)*, ‘Robotnik’, 27.07.1939, No. 207 (7840), p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Zdzisław Stahl was seemingly the one to utter it. On 5.08.1939, in a comprehensive introduction to his basic argument, he observed the society’s growing understanding of the fact that the ideology instilled by Józef Piłsudski – “the belief in [the society’s] own powers, as the foundation for the nationality and nationhood” – was *the* proper one. See: Z. Stahl, *Idea wyższego rządu, czyli „orientacje” a polska idea państwowa*, GP, 5.08.1939, No. 215, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> “The objective behind it”, as Witold Iphorski-Lenkiewicz put it, “was not a care for the tomorrow of the Legions camp but rather, the care for the future of the State”. See: (W.I.L.), *Koalicja – to...*, p. 1.