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POLISH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE AND THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLISH STATE IN 1989-1991

Abstract. The goal of the article is to analyse the influence that the political transformation had on attitudes, decision-making and actions of Polish refugees' environments, especially those associated with Polish government-in-exile. The article describes how the process of political transformation affected the attitudes of the politicians working in the government-in-exile towards the Polish state government, and how it ended the duality of Polish government. The main research questions are: How the Polish government-in-exile judged the events of 1989 in accordance with its own main goal? What criteria were used to judge these events? Why were there differences between the actions taken by the President with his government and those of the National Council? During the research on the topic of this article, elements of the descriptive method were used alongside the analysis of archival sources.

Keywords: state political transformations; Polish government-in-exile; government election; presidential election

INTRODUCTION

The end of the 1980s and the first years of the 1990s were a very significant time in the Polish history. This period marked the beginning of the transformation of the Polish state and dismantling the prior communist regime. This process affected basically all spheres of the state and its functioning. It also led to fundamental changes in the political, economic, and social systems. Polish state's transformation resulted in a significant change in its relations with the Poles abroad, especially those living in the West. Among them, there was a special group, the so-called Steadfast, who were represented by the Polish government-in-exile

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located in London since 1940. In December 1990, in a gesture of recognition of the transformation into the Third Republic and the acknowledgement of its continuity with the Second Republic, the insignia of presidential power were returned to Poland. They had been transported out of the country in September 1939 during the invasion by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union and subsequently handed over to the government-in-exile. In this article, I will focus on the legitimacy and continuity of governmental power, and also on the elections that took place in Poland between 1989-1991.

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POLISH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE IN LONDON

Since the 19th century, the political and economic situation of Polish territories forced big groups of Poles to emigrate in search of a place to work or to find refuge. Another big wave of Polish refugees fled the country when the Nazi Germany invaded it on 1 September 1939. When Poland was about to fall, the authoritarian government of the Second Republic decided to leave the country and to rule from exile. They wanted to find shelter in France; however, during their escape, they were interned in Romania. This forced the ruling authoritarian government to seek a compromise with the democratic opposition. Thanks to reaching the so-called Paris Agreement and in accordance with the April Constitution of 1935, a new Polish President was chosen, a new government was formed, and National Council was appointed as a substitute for the parliament. Those new Polish authorities that were established in 1939 (referred to as the Polish government-in-exile) allowed to preserve the continuity and legitimacy of the state and its institutions as well as enabled their international recognition. The government-in-exile was initially located in France. However, after this country was conquered by the Third Reich, the Polish government relocated to London. It comprised politicians from the ruling Sanation movement as well as from the opposition. Their primary goal was to liberate Poland by assisting the Allies in their fight and to subsequently call for a democratic general election in the "free" country.

Unfortunately, the geopolitical situation following World War II effectively ended the plans of the Polish government-in-exile. The Yalta Conference resolutions placed Poland under Soviet Union dominance. In June 1945, the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity was established in Moscow, and it was dominated by communists. Following this, the United States and Great Britain withdrew recognition of the government-in-exile and shifted

their support to the Provisional Government. Most other countries soon followed their example. From that point on, the new government in Warsaw was the only one recognised on the international stage.

For the Polish government-in-exile and Polish society in general, the decisions of the Big Three regarding Poland constituted a betrayal by the Allies. In the eyes of Polish refugee leaders, these decisions signalled that Poland would not regain its independence and would face another occupation. Moreover, they saw the border shifts and the loss of the Eastern Borderlands as a new partition of Poland (Hładkiewicz, 1994). The new government established in accordance with the Yalta Conference resolutions was deemed illegal.

An estimated number of 1.6 million of Poles resided in West European countries (Albert, 1989, p. 526) after the World War II. The Polish political elite and opinion leaders chose to remain in exile, continuing their work outside the country. Most had been politically active during the Second Republic, fleeing the country during or immediately after the war and settling in Western nations. They represented diverse political viewpoints, including members of the so-called historical parties and representatives of new movements that emerged abroad. Additionally, approximately 0.5 million of Poles decided not to return to Poland while it remained under Soviet dominance (Friszke, 1999).

As previously mentioned, the government-in-exile resolved to continue its mission in London, considering itself the only legitimate government of Poland and striving to uphold the legal continuity of the Polish State. The Polish President, government officials, and members of the National Council chose to remain in the West, adopting a new objective: to work towards the restoration of an independent and democratic Poland (Wolsza, 1996, pp. 2-5). In this situation, a huge number of Polish refugees had to make a tough decision: to return to Poland or stay in the West. This choice may have been also greatly influenced by the belief that an armed conflict between the Western powers and the Soviet Union was inevitable and would occur soon. The alleged War World III was viewed by some Poles as a possibility for reclaiming independence for Poland (Tarka, 2003).

Andrzej Friszke noticed that those post-Yalta refugees nurtured the idea of an independent Polish Republic, free from Soviet interference, politically and culturally bound to the West but still faithful to the national tradition (Friszke, 1999, p. 6).

This post-Yalta emigration was therefore political in nature. Legitimacy of the Polish government-in-exile was based on the provisions of Articles 24 and 79 of the April Constitution in the same way as it was during the war. In Wiesław Hładkiewicz's opinion, politicians "that were part of the political institutions

of the government-in-exile considered themselves as guardians of unity and entirety of the Polish Republic's legal system and also as leading representatives fighting for the vital interests of Poland and Polish nation"[1] (Hładkiewicz, 1994, p. 121). They treated their legitimacy as a "weapon" in the fight for Poland's independence and considered themselves as people who continued the idea of the "Polish government-in-exile" with its main political headquarters in what was called the "Polish London." Their attitude referred also to a division of work between the Polish refugees and those who stayed in the country. Those in exile were to continue their fight for the independent state, and the society at home had to survive until their success (Machcewicz, 1999, pp. 11-12). However, the emergence of the Cold War and the subsequent consolidation of a bipolar world order shattered any hope for an imminent conflict between the West and East that could overturn the Yalta Conference resolutions and enable the return of political refugees to their homeland. This new geopolitical reality forced "Polish London" to reevaluate its initial assumptions regarding the role of the exiled community and Polish society within the country striving for national independence. In the end, it was assumed that a pivotal role in this struggle would be played by the society remaining in the country. Despite political conflicts, the government-in-exile was observing and analysing the situation in Poland, especially during social and political crises. Between 1956 and 1988, it assessed that the country was still not sovereign and that the work needed to be continued.

2. GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE AND ITS VIEW OF THE ROUND TABLE AGREEMENTS

The leaders of the government-in-exile were up to date with the current events in Poland in 1989. They were cautious when they learned about the Round Table Talks. On 4 March 1989, during his name day party, the Polish President-in-exile Kazimierz Sabbat made a speech in which he referred to the situation in Poland: "What an unusual change! After decimating the Solidarity, after the martial law and after eight years of persistent and ruthless persecutions, secret killings, the communist government invites the opposition, or as they called them the 'constructive opposition,' for talks." He also stated that this marked a significant change in Poland's internal and international situation. The President inquired about the factors that compelled the communist government

[1] All translations are by the author.

to initiate these changes. Sabbat attributed this shift to several aspects: the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the devastated economy, the outdated and inadequate industrial sector, crippling foreign debt, widespread shortages, societal poverty, rampant inflation, and frequent workers' strikes. He also emphasised that the Solidarity movement "did not break." Sabbat highlighted several external factors as well, including the increasingly precarious political situation for the Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the diminishing threat of Soviet intervention in Poland. He further argued that a conditional link of further loans with the respect for human rights by capitalist countries also played a significant role. The President acknowledged that the Round Table Talks had granted Solidarity the right to legal existence, marking a crucial break in the Communist Party's absolute and exclusive rule. Sabbat suggested that this might signify the beginning of the end of the totalitarian system and the emergence of political pluralism. He also pointed out, however, that the communists had gained considerable advantages from the talks: recognition and legitimisation of the Communist Party's leadership role through the opposition's participation, respect for the People's Republic of Poland's constitutional order, and support for the concept of "non-confrontational" elections. Sabbat outlined the government-in-exile's stance on the Round Table Talks as well, acknowledging the patriotism and genuine desire for an independent Poland among the participants. However, the Polish authorities in London would not intervene at this stage, choosing to await the conclusion of the talks and observe their outcomes. He affirmed that the government-in-exile's "role, political stance and legal perspective does not change" (Sabbat, 1989).

When the Round Table Agreements were signed, the "Polish London" have met to discuss what to do next. At the initiative of the President, members of the government, representatives of political parties, and social organisations took part in this discussion. President Sabbat thought that thanks to the agreement, the opposition in Poland gained rights to legally exist and operate (Sabbat, 1989). Participants of the debate determined that the society in the country would expect "furthering of the process of liberalisation and democratisation," and their opinion on the agreement would be based mostly on the economic changes and progress (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 35). They did not accept the Round Table compromise regarding elections. President Sabbat called it later an "election without choice" (Sabbat, 1989). The final conclusion of the deliberation was as follows: "the Round Table Agreements do not fulfil the goals of the government-in-exile for which it exists, works for and will be still working" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 35).

3. THE 4 JUNE 1989 ELECTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

On 4 June 1989, elections of the Sejm and – for the first time since World War II – the Senate took place in Poland, according to the Round Table Agreements. The new National Council in London discussed this event at its first meeting. The Prime Minister of the government-in-exile Edward Szczepanik found them undemocratic and was cautious about the changes taking place in the country. He said: "unfortunately, Poland still does not have a government that was elected in a free, democratic election, and the authorities will not represent the unhindered will of the nation" (*E. Szczepanik na Radzie Narodowej*, 1989). He also emphasised that the Polish government remained heavily reliant on the Soviet Union, a dependence underscored by the continued presence of Red Army units stationed within Poland. This military presence afforded the Soviet Union the potential to directly intervene in Poland's internal affairs. After a debate, members of the National Council decided that: "[the mission] remains the same, although our political tactic to achieve it may to be changed due to any new agreement between the regime and 'constructive opposition' in Poland" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 36).

The year of 1989 was also a year of change in the structures of the "Polish London." As mentioned, a new National Council was established in June, and in July, President Sabbat passed away. Before his death, he chose Ryszard Kaczorowski as his successor.

The situation in Poland, however, was changing rapidly, and the "Polish London" had to be up to date with every event and verify their stand on it. During the first meeting of the newly elected Parliament as the National Assembly, General Wojciech Jaruzelski was sworn in as the Polish President according to the Round Table Agreements. The government-in-exile never accepted this decision, calling Jaruzelski "a loyal servant to Kremlin" and demanding that he should retire from politics (Turkowski, 1995, pp. 84-87). Surprisingly, an opposition activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki was nominated as Prime Minister, which was not included in the Round Table Agreements. The authorities in London were very sceptical towards Mazowiecki and his cabinet at the beginning of his tenure.

The government-in-exile's attitude towards Mazowiecki underwent a shift following his speech outlining his intention to engage with Polish refugees. This pronouncement prompted a reassessment of the situation within Poland by the authorities in "Polish London." It can be seen in another resolution issued by the National Council:

> although there are not yet any political conditions for a formal discussion between the authorities of Polish People's Republic and the pro-independence emigration, we should – for the sake of our nation – try to strengthen the relationship between the refugees and those organisations in Poland, whose sovereignty cannot be questioned (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 36).

The resolution also stated that the mission of the government-in-exile would end when Poland would have "an independent Sejm and Senate, and when the free nation would place the power in the hands of an independent Constituent Assembly" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 36). In the end, the National Council claimed that their mission still had not changed despite discussions in Council's meeting about handing over the presidential insignia back to the country with the legitimate power and then dissolving. During these discussions, a decision was made to cease any claims to Eastern Borderlands. The emigration elites, however, upkept their demand for the Red Army units to leave Poland (Turkowski, 1995, pp. 82-84). In his New Year's speech, President Kaczorowski summarised the events of 1989 by claiming that "for the first time in 45 years, we have hope for a better future" (Kaczorowski, 1990c, p. 1). He also pointed out that the government-in-exile was looking at the transformation of the Polish state with "understandable impatience, because we would like the purpose for which we stayed and worked in exile to be achieved as soon as possible" (Kaczorowski, 1990c, p. 1).

Since the beginning of 1990, there was a rapid development in contacts between the refugee communities (with the government-in-exile) and various politicians from Poland. In February, Prime Minister Mazowiecki embarked on an official visit to Great Britain; however, he did not meet with any members of the government-in-exile. Subsequently, Minister Aleksander Hall travelled to Toronto where he met with the presidium of the Coordinating Council of Free World Polonia, Zygmunt Szadkowski, the head of the National Council based in London, and Ryszard Zakrzewski, Minister of Home Affairs in the government-in-exile. After this meeting, the Polish authorities in London assumed that "the process of Poland's liberation from Soviet dominance was in progress" (Szczepanik, 1990, p. 2) and that the question of the country's government legitimacy (as understood by the government-in-exile) could be solved in two different ways. The first one involved the country authorities severing "from the constitutional law created by the communist regime and enforced by the Soviet Union. Then they would show the continuity of the Polish State by coming back to the Polish Constitution from April 1935, hold free and democratic general elections. After that, the Constitution would have to be changed or

a new one should be written" (Szczepanik, 1990, p. 2). The second idea was "to hold a free and democratic parliamentary election, which will also form a constituent assembly, based on a new, democratic electoral law, that is not in any way related to the April Constitution of 1935, and there will be no coming back to it" (Szczepanik, 1990, p. 2). Then a new Constitution would be enacted, and based on it, a presidential election would take place. After the election, the new President would be recognised by the current President-in-exile as his successor. However, regardless of the path chosen by the government in Poland, the authorities in London still reserved their right to a "judgement by the Government and State Council of the Polish Republic, if Poland reclaimed its independence, and if the following conditions for the elections will be fulfilled" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, pp. 35-39).

4. THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND THE END OF THE GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE

The situation in Poland was not developing as expected by the authorities in London. President Jaruzelski's term was shortened by the National Assembly. The first round of the presidential election was scheduled for 25 November and the second round – for 9 December 1990. It meant that the presidential election would be the first general election and not the parliamentary one as the government-in-exile expected.

This forced the authorities in London to rethink their position on the situation in Poland. They needed to issue an opinion on the announcement of the presidential election before the parliamentary one, and on the candidates that would participate in it. In the end, the government-in-exile could not reach an agreement on those issues. President Kaczorowski approved of how the transformation in Poland was proceeding. He said that the nation and the refugees had expected the parliamentary elections to be the first democratic general election, but the situation had developed towards presidential election. He expressed his belief that the parliamentary election would soon follow the presidential one thanks to the will of the nation. That's why he was going to make the decision to return the presidential insignia to Poland. His stance was made public in an announcement of 12 October 1990, in which he claimed to "be ready – after a general presidential election in Poland – to go to Warsaw, if invited by the elected President, and to pass the insignia of the rightful presidential power of the Second Republic" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, pp. 40-41).

Kaczorowski justified his actions by referring to a declaration made by President Władysław Raczkiewicz in his proclamation of 29 June 1945. In his inaugural address, Raczkiewicz declared his intention to relinquish power to a successor chosen by the people in free and unrestricted elections, as soon as those could be held. This commitment was subsequently reaffirmed by each of his successors. As one of them, Kaczorowski felt bound by this pledge (Kaczorowski, 1990b).

A part of the National Council in London was against President Kaczorowski's decision. They were led by Lidia Ciołkoszowa and Walery Choroszewski, and they claimed that a democratic, general parliamentary election should take place before the passing of the insignia. For this reason, on 20 October 1990, the National Council passed a declaration stating that the upcoming presidential election would give "the nation a chance to show the free will of the people," but the presidential insignia and power can only be passed after "unfettered parliament election" that should take place as soon as possible. The declaration ended with a statement that their work "will only end after legal authorities are appointed in presidential and parliamentary elections" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 43). The government-in-exile agreed only on not supporting any of the candidates in the first round of the presidential election.

Discussions between representatives from Poland and the authorities in London were developing, and the main point of the talks was the issue of transferring the presidential insignia back to Poland. When the presidential campaign drew closer, visits from the candidates' committees were quite frequent (*Kalendarium Londyńsko-Warszawskie*, 1995). One of the most important discussions were held in Rome by the end of October 1990 between selected members of the government-in-exile and authorities from Poland. Another significant event took place on 5 November when the Speaker of the Polish Senate Professor Andrzej Stelmachowski and the Polish Ambassador in Great Britain Tadeusz de Virion had an official meeting with President Kaczorowski. Stelmachowski also met with the Prime Minister of the government-in-exile Szczepanik, members of his cabinet, and representatives of the National Council. In the talks between both centres of authority, from May until November 1990, the politicians from the government-in-exile emphasised that in their opinion, "government legality was strongly connected to the April Constitution, thanks to which the idea of Polish independence was kept alive" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 42). Consequently, during the talks with the representatives of presidential candidates, they insisted that the presidential vow include the phrase "to the Lord God Almighty," as it was stated in article 19 of the April Constitution, which would symbolically

make it legally binding again. This request was accepted by most of the candidates, because they wanted "to preserve the legal continuity of the Second Republic" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, p. 43).

After the first round of the presidential election, the "Polish London" resolved to officially support Lech Wałęsa. On 10 December 1990, the leaders of the government-in-exile confirmed that the election was "general and independent" (Turkowski, 1995, p. 94). The second round was won by Wałęsa. After the official results were announced, the next stage of talks about passing the presidential insignia began. The discussions mostly focused on what the ceremony would look like.

On 16 December 1990, an official delegation from the London-based government-in-exile arrived in Warsaw at the invitation of Speaker Stelmachowski. The delegation comprised Szadkowski, General Jerzy Morawicz, Zakrzewski, and Jerzy Zaleski. They met with Jacek Merkel and other representatives of President-elect Wałęsa to discuss the ceremonial transfer of presidential insignia (Zakrzewski, 1995, p. 63).

A crucial issue during these discussions was to determine a legally sound formula for ceasing the activities of the government-in-exile. A direct transfer of legal authority from London could potentially challenge the legitimacy of the Polish authorities and the presidential election won by Wałęsa. Another point of contention was the host of the ceremonial transfer. The London authorities proposed a joint hosting arrangement with both Presidents at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Ultimately, an agreement was reached and resulted in designating Senate Speaker Stelmachowski as the host. The ceremony was scheduled to coincide with Wałęsa's presidential inauguration on 22 December 1990 (*Sprawozdanie Komisji Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej*, 1990).

At the same time in London, the emigration elite was preparing for the cessation of the activities of the authorities in exile. Kaczorowski published a decree of the President of Poland of 20 December 1990, which stated that the operation of the Polish government-in-exile had ended, and that it was dissolved. According to the decree, the new President in Poland was elected by the independent nation. When Wałęsa would therefore be sworn in as the President, the mission of the President-in-exile would come to an end. By the power of this decree, the government-in-exile was dissolved, and the Liquidation Committee came to power. The Committee's responsibility was to terminate the activities of any government-in-exile institutions (Kaczorowski, 1990a).

President Kaczorowski arrived in Warsaw on 22 December 1990, welcomed at the airport with all the honours due to being the head of state. After Wałęsa

was sworn in as President by the National Assembly, at 4 o'clock p.m. the planned ceremony started in the Royal Castle. The passed insignia consisted of the flag of the Second Republic, the manuscript of the April Constitution of 1935, the Chancellery of the Polish President seal, and the Order of the White Eagle insignia (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, pp. 48-49). During the ceremony, President Kaczorowski announced: "my presidential mission was fulfilled and has come to an end" (*Nota Redakcyjna*, 1995, pp. 48-49). Wałęsa's predecessor, President Jaruzelski, did not participate in the ceremony. For everyone, this fact held significant symbolic value, indicating a break from the state power legitimacy derived from the communist regime in Poland. The insignia of presidential power were transferred to the newly elected President Wałęsa not by Jaruzelski, the outgoing president, but by President-in-exile Kaczorowski, who arrived from London. This symbolic act served to demonstrate the continuity of an independent Poland (Roszkowski, 2003, p. 140).

Members of the National Council in London remained distrustful of the ongoing political transformation in Poland. They were particularly sceptical of the members of the Sejm. While the Council members acknowledged the need for a new Constitution, they denied the Sejm the authority to draft it, arguing that the Sejm had been elected under the terms of the Round Table Agreements. In their view, the presidential election held little significance for "Polish London," and they advocated for awaiting the parliamentary elections (Turkowski, 1995, pp. 87-90). For the Council members, it was difficult to come to terms with a "reverse situation" that occurred in Poland.

During the National Council's meeting on 20 October 1990, they called for the organisation of free and general parliamentary elections. They emphasised that only then would the necessary conditions be met to transfer the presidential power to the President elected within the country (Turkowski, 1995, p. 91). In their opinion, Wałęsa lacked many political skills, thus they cited his various unusual statements and his meetings with the self-proclaimed president Juliusz Nowina-Sokolnicki as evidence. They also criticised Wałęsa for being one of the individuals responsible for the upheaval in Poland. Ciołkoszowa reiterated her stance during this council meeting, emphasising that free parliamentary elections should precede presidential ones. Furthermore, the National Council believed that the process of transferring power back to the country was proceeding too rapidly (Turkowski, 1995, pp. 95-98).

Differences in perspective regarding the unfolding events within the country led to a conflict between the National Council and the Liquidation Committee. During a council meeting on 8 March 1991, Minister of the Committee Zakrzewski

was asked to present a report on their stay in Warsaw in December 1990. He stated in his report that the government-in-exile's mission had been fulfilled, as it had endured until a President-elect was chosen by the nation and had remained faithful to the principles and resolutions it had adopted (*Sprawozdanie Komisji Prezydenta*, 1990, p. 10). In response to his claims, a council member from the Polish People's Party read a party's letter addressed to the National Council. This document accused the Committee of wrongful and politically harmful actions by excluding representatives of the Polish People's Party and other political groups from the delegation that participated in the ceremony transferring presidential power. The letter contended that these actions should have been criticised by the Presidium of the National Council (*List Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego*, 1991). Later discussions during the meeting saw President Kaczorowski and the Committee accused of acting prematurely. Some argued that Poland was not yet an independent country, because truly free and democratic parliamentary elections still had not been held. For this reason, "the Council has to wait for them to take place" (*Posiedzenie Rady RP*, 1991).

This hard stance on the topic meant that the National Council did not cease its activity and waited for a free general parliamentary election. However, at the same time, all institutions led by President Kaczorowski acknowledged Wałęsa's power. The government-in-exile in London was replaced by the previously mentioned Liquidation Committee.

Growing problems and escalating political issues contributed to the calling of the 1991 parliamentary election in Poland. It was held according to the new democratic electoral legislation. This parliamentary election fulfilled the conditions set by the National Council in London. In Romuald Turkowski's opinion, the fact that members of the Council participated in the first assembly of the new Sejm meant that they accepted the results of the 1991 election (Turkowski, 1995, p. 114). As a result, the National Council in London ceased its activity. On 8 December 1991, there was the last Council meeting with the former President Kaczorowski, the former Speaker of the Senate Stelmachowski, and representatives of the new Parliament and the government were invited to it. This meeting ended with the Council approving a declaration that stated they would provide assistance "in the hard process of rebuilding Poland into a parliamentary democracy" (Turkowski, 1995, pp. 114-115). It was a historic moment because it meant that the "Polish London" accepted changes that took place in Poland. It also signified the end of Poland's government duality, each based on different rights to hold legitimate power.

CONCLUSIONS

Polish history is filled with difficult and dramatic events, and the outcome of World War II and the subsequent agreements reached by the Big Three undoubtedly rank among them. Poland, having been conquered and stripped of its independence at the war's beginning, saw its government flee the country and establish itself in exile.

Following the war, the exiled government aimed to return to Poland and resume its rule based on the legitimacy derived from the April Constitution of 1935. The internment of the government in Romania, however, compelled Polish politicians to seek a compromise, culminating in the so-called Paris Agreement and the establishment of a new government-in-exile whose legitimacy stemmed from the laws of the Second Republic.

The post-war geopolitical landscape did not unfold as the Polish authorities had hoped. Poland remained under Soviet Union's dominance. Based on the agreements reached by the Big Three, a new Polish communist government was established in Moscow under Stalin's patronage. The Polish government-in-exile was excluded from this new political order. The establishment of the Provisional Government of National Unity resulted in the withdrawal of international support for the London-based government. The new communist government derived its legitimacy from the agreements of the Big Three and, ostensibly, from the will of the people, expressed through the rigged People's Referendum of 1946 and the 1947 general election. Consequently, many Poles believed that Poland had not truly regained its independence. The government-in-exile chose not to return to the country, maintaining that its mission remained unfulfilled. It asserted the continued existence of Polish state institutions in exile and vowed to continue their activities until Poland regained its full independence. This marked the beginning of a period of two Polish governments, each side refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the other.

Despite this, "Polish London" remained actively engaged in monitoring internal and international developments. They consistently analysed global and domestic events through the lens of their ultimate goal: Poland's restoration to full independence. For nearly four decades, they claimed that Poland remained a non-sovereign entity, necessitating the continuation of their mission.

This situation began to shift along with the events of the late 1980s, particularly in 1989. The ongoing political transformation within Poland facilitated the dialogue between the government-in-exile and the authorities within the country from 1989 to 1991. The subsequent democratic presidential and parliamentary

elections led the government-in-exile to conclude that its mission had been accomplished and that it could now cease its activities.

However, significant discrepancies emerged between President Kaczorowski and the National Council regarding the pace and nature of the political changes unfolding within Poland. These disparities stemmed largely from the fact that the actual course of events did not entirely align with the scenarios envisioned by the exiled authorities. President Kaczorowski and the government-in-exile were more readily inclined to accept the presidential election as a substantial step forward. In contrast, members of the National Council maintained a more cautious stance. They argued that Poland would only achieve true freedom and independence after the successful completion of both democratic parliamentary and presidential elections.

Ultimately, all members of "Polish London" concurred that the process of state transformation initiated in 1989 had culminated in Poland regaining its independence.

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WŁADZE POLSKIE NA UCHODŹSTWIE WOBEC TRANSFORMACJI USTROJOWEJ W KRAJU W LATACH 1989-1991

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Celem artykułu jest analiza wpływu transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce na postawy, decyzje i działalność środowisk polskich uchodźców, w szczególności tych związanych z instytucjami politycznymi polskich władz na uchodźstwie. Pokazuje również, jak proces transformacji wpływał na stosunek liderów politycznych na uchodźstwie do elit w kraju i doprowadził do zakończenia powojennej polskiej dwuwładzy. Podstawowe pytania badawcze brzmią: Jak władze polskie na uchodźstwie oceniały wydarzenia z 1989 r. w kontekście własnego celu nadrzędnego? Jakie były kryteria oceny transformacji w Polsce w kontekście zakończenia własnej misji politycznej? Z czego wynikała różnica w działaniach Prezydenta i jego rządu oraz Rady Narodowej RP? W artykule zastosowano przede wszystkim elementy metody opisowej i analizy źródeł.

Słowa kluczowe: transformacja ustrojowa; władze polskie na uchodźstwie; wybory parlamentarne; wybory prezydenckie