

NORWAY IN THE POLISH PRESS IN GREAT BRITAIN DURING WWII

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ABSTRACT. The Polish press in exile's interest in Norwegian affairs began when Germany attacked Denmark and Norway in April 1940, at which time Polish soldiers were sent to Narvik to participate in the Allies' defence of the country. The battle of Narvik became a symbol of Polish-Norwegian solidarity and reactivated existing Polish traditions of identifying themselves with those fighting "for our freedom and yours". For a long time Norway was associated in Polish minds with the expedition to Narvik. The subject was frequently raised in the émigré Polish press and in separate publications during the course of the War. This interest in Norway was enhanced by a community spirit and a shared political aim: the defeat of Germany and the liberation of the homeland. Therefore Polish journalists recorded all kinds of Norwegian propaganda in Britain, important statements made by the King, Haakon VII, and by the government in exile. Polish commentators also presented Norway as a victim of German aggression. Numerous articles described the conditions of every day life under German occupation; issues related to food shortages, the lack of basic articles as clothes and fuel were all repeatedly exposed. From the end of 1941 this media coverage presented its readers with a picture of a nation that was actively resisting occupation. The difficult question of Vidkun Quisling's collaboration with the Germans was, however, dealt with separately by Polish publicists.

During the inter-war period Polish relations with Scandinavia remained on the periphery of Polish foreign policy interests, and among the three Scandinavian states Poland had the weakest connections with Norway. Therefore it was understandable that stories about Scandinavian countries rarely appeared in the Polish media.¹ During the late 1930s it seemed unlikely that these circumstances would change even if war broke out. The problems of formulating a coherent Polish Scandinavian policy were presented

¹ For an overview of how Norwegian matters were dealt with by the Polish press in the interwar period see P. Jaworski, *Polska niepodległa wobec Skandynawii 1918–1939*, Wrocław 2001.

in the context of the predicted war. On the one hand, prior to the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 various articles were published in the Polish press that argued that Scandinavian neutrality was an illusion, and when the war began these countries would have to join one side or another. It was taken for granted that the only possible choice was a French-British-Polish alliance, because these Scandinavian democracies were deemed unlikely to support totalitarian Germany or Italy. On the other hand many Poles remembered WWI and they sometimes thought that the Northern Europe was a safe zone, which always managed to avoid conflict.

After Poland's defeat in the campaign against Germany and before the Soviet Union's anticipated occupation the Polish government crossed the Romanian frontier on 17 September 1939. Around this time a Polish refugee decided to send his family to Norway. He wrote to the Polish legate in Oslo, Władysław Neuman, and argued that if there were any safe places in Europe, it must be Norway.² Given the circumstances of the time the Polish political elite were forced to establish a new government in exile. These émigrés' political, military and propaganda efforts to regain independence were at first concentrated in France. By the spring of 1940 the conflict had moved to the French-German frontier, but for the first few months of the Pole's exile little could be achieved. During the Phoney War the Allies waited for the enemy's anticipated attack. At much the same time another conflict began between the Soviet Union and Finland, the so-called Winter War, which began in November 1939 and ended in March 1940.

The unexpected German attack on Denmark and Norway in April 1940 encouraged the Polish press in exile to take an interest in Norwegian affairs, not least because for the first time in history Norway became an ally of Poland. The Polish Tatra Highland Rifle Brigade, which had been dispatched to support the Norwegians, was originally destined to fight on the Finnish front. Nevertheless, the arrival of these forces and their involvement in the defence of Narvik became a powerful symbol of Polish-Norwegian cooperation. The Polish commander-in-chief (and the Prime Minister in exile) General Władysław Sikorski appealed to his soldiers on 14 April 1940: "You will fight for Poland against its ancient and implacable enemy. You will also fight for a holy idea, an idea of a people's freedom, as your fathers' proclaimed: for our freedom and yours".³

After the battle at Narvik Allied troops had to evacuate Norway, largely because of defeats on the main front in France. The Polish government, along with the remnants of the Polish army, soon re-located to the relative safety of

² Archiwum Akt Nowych (Warszawa), Poselstwo RP w Oslo, sig. 25, p. 63-65, a letter by Damian Wandycz to Neumans, Bukarest, 1 X 1939: "I must to do something with my family who cannot – for many reasons – stay here. I would like to send them to a safe place. If there are such places in Europe, it must be Scandinavia. Visas to Sweden (obviously to Norway as well) require a residency permit. That is just my question and my great request to you if you could obtain the Norwegian residence permit for my wife, my wife's son and daughter from her first marriage. Certainly some funds will be needed, I will try to collect them".

³ *Rzeczpospolita Polska czasu wojny. Rozkazy Naczelnego Wodza do żołnierzy 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1997, p. 59.

the United Kingdom. During the first half of July, 1940 numerous Polish newspapers and magazines began to appear, starting with the official newspaper of the Polish government in exile 'Dziennik Polski', an illustrated literary-military journal 'Polska Walcząca' and the literary 'Wiadomości Polskie'. The military press in Scotland published the popular 'Dziennik Żołnierza' (which in 1944 was amalgamated with 'Dziennik Polski') and a specialist theoretical quarterly entitled 'Bellona'. In absence of genuine political pluralism in exile, the periodicals produced by the various political parties played an important role. The most significant were: the fortnightly 'Robotnik Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii' published by the Polish Socialist Party, the fortnightly 'Myśl Polska' and 'Biuletyn Klubu Narodowego' connected with the right-wing National Party, a weekly 'Jutro Polski' an organ of the folk movement, a liberal monthly 'Nowa Polska', and a fortnightly 'Listy z Londynu' the magazine of the pre-war governmental circles.⁴

For some time most Polish articles about Norway were primarily associated with the expedition to Narvik, the battle fought there had already led to a variety of published memoirs, articles and literary works. In the summer 1940 a journalist, Karol Zbyszewski, described the activity of Polish soldiers in Norway in 'Dziennik Polski', he later published a booklet in London entitled 'The Battle of Narvik' and illustrated by a painter, Józef Natanson:⁵ "Most Polish highlanders knew far more about their rifles than about the geography of the region" – stated Zbyszewski – "Where exactly Norway was and what it really was nobody knew for the most part (...) Therefore the highlanders were amazed by the huge rock formations, deep fiords, little cottages above the precipices, snow everywhere in spite of the fact it was May...".⁶ The most surprising thing for the Poles was that, "There was a complete prohibition on alcohol in Norway; except for cow's milk there was nothing more to drink". Zbyszewski also gave the reader an intriguing portrait of how the Poles were viewed by the locals:

Norwegians wondered too when they saw our Poles; they wondered in the same way as the people in Gniezno in September [1939] would have been surprised to see Lapps fighting to support them. [...] Having seen us loaded down by fur-coats, thick gloves, mufflers, high felt boots, ear-protectors, skis – all our polar equipment, the Norwegians were convulsed with laughter. In spite of the snows in mountains and night ground frosts they were in loose attire and in their opinion it was summer time and they regarded the weather as being very warm.⁷

Another Narvik story was a controversial report by Ksawery Pruszyński entitled "Droga wiodła przez Narvik", published in London in 1941. Actual participants in the battle were replaced by fictitious heroes and fictionalised dia-

⁴ See: S. Lewandowska, *Prasa polskiej emigracji wojennej 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1993, s. 49-78.

⁵ K. Zbyszewski, J. Natanson, *Bitwa o Narvik*, Londyn 1940; K. Zbyszewski, *Podhalanie w Norwegii*, "Dziennik Polski", 12 VII 1940, nr 1. This book was later reviewed in the press: *Książka dwu żołnierzy*, "Polska Walcząca", 1941 nr 3.

⁶ K. Zbyszewski, *Podhalanie w Norwegii*, "Dziennik Polski", 12 VII 1940, nr 1.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

logues presented the writer's critical opinions on the policy of Poland before the War. He attacked the previous regime and criticized the situation in the Polish army, especially the deep divisions between the officer Corps, the other ranks, and civilian refugees and emigrants.⁸

A series of articles about the campaign in Norway was written by the Polish commander-in-chief in Narvik General Szyszko-Bohusz, who highlighted the hard climatic conditions experienced by the Polish troops, especially the "never-ending day" which "killed people by keeping them awake all the time", and that helped German aircraft to "fly and bomb at will". The General characterized the Norwegians in a level-headed way and without sentiment: "The civilian population" – Bohusz-Szyszko stated – "were good-tempered, taciturn and very rich, in the most part they did not want any war and were afraid of air bombardment. Therefore, they welcomed foreign troops into their villages and towns without any special enthusiasm, however, especially we, Poles, were in favour with them". Breaking the stereotype that pre-dominated in the Polish press of all Norwegians being reliable allies, the General added that "a relatively large number of Norwegian citizens were friendly towards the Germans and this made us vigilant and careful all the time".⁹

The subject of Polish participation in the battle of Narvik was repeatedly raised in the press or in separate publications throughout the war.¹⁰ Some

⁸ A small part of the book was published in the press: K. Pruszyński, *Pogrzeb w Narviku*, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1941, nr 16, p. 3. The book caused lots of discuss and polemics: S. Mackiewicz, *Droga wiodła przez Narvik*, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1941, nr 25, p. 1; Z. Bohusz-Szyszko, *O książce "Droga wiodła przez Narvik"*, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1941, nr 32, p. 2.

⁹ Z. Bohusz-Szyszko, *Z dziejów i walk Brygady Podhalańskiej*, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 29 I 1941, nr 180. Parts of the series written by the leader of the Polish troops in Narvik was published in the following: 30 I (nr 181), 31 I (nr 182) and 5 II (nr 186). A slightly different Norwegian attitude towards these Polish soldiers was presented by another author of the report from Narvik: Cz. Jeśmian, *Norweskie tyły*, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1940, nr 21, p. 3: "There were not many examples of aversion, and even then it appeared that the reasons were either over attitudes towards communism or troubles with understanding the language".

¹⁰ Books: A. Jaskowski, *Kampania norweska*, 1944; rev. C. Szaszkievicz, *Kampania norweska*, "Polska Walcząca", 1944, nr 34; Z. Lityński, *I was one of them*, London 1941, rev. K. Nienaski (W. A. Zbyszewski), *O Narviku i coś więcej*, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1941, nr 38, p. 4; *Polish Troops in Norway*, London 1943.

Articles: E. Hinterhoff, *Inwazja Norwegii. Refleksje po trzech latach*, "Dziennik Polski", 13 IV 1943, nr 847; J. Tumaniszwili, *Z kampanii norweskiej. Urywki pamiętnika*, "Polska Walcząca", 1941, nr 21 and nr 22-23; J. Meysztowicz, *W pierwszą rocznicę bitwy o Narvik*, "Polska Walcząca", 1941, nr 24; A. Jaskowski, *Wspomnienia z kampanii norweskiej*, "Polska Walcząca", 1942, nr: 14-15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; *Brygada Podhalańska w Norwegii*, "Bellona", 1945, nr 6, pp. 28-46; *Bitwa o północną Norwegię*, "Bellona", 1945, nr 6, pp. 70-76; *Kampania norweska w oczach niemieckich*, "Bellona", 1945, nr 6, pp. 76-80; T. Strzetelski, *Było to pod Ankenes*, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1942, nr 47.

Some publications were connected with, apparent as appeared finally, plans of Allies to open the second front in Norway. The discussion about the chances of such an action was based on the experiences of the year 1940: A. K., *Czy front w Norwegii?*, "Bellona", 1942, nr 7, pp. 71-72; *Przez Norwegię i Szwecję – do Polski?*, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 1 II 1943, nr 25; *Niemcy fortyfikują Norwegię*, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 10 II 1943, nr 33; *Grecja, Norwegia czy Hiszpania? Widmo inwazji Europy*, "Dziennik Polski", 24 II 1943, nr 806.

commentators were surprised by the continued popularity of the battle of Narvik, because although “the expedition was another great act undertaken by the Polish army”, yet at the same time it was, “only a little episode” in the Second World War and “this victory had no practical meaning”. On the third anniversary of the defence of Norway one of the publicists at ‘*Dziennik Żołnierza*’ explained the phenomenon of the popularity of that matter:

The reason why a great amount of the literature of that kind has been written, and certainly will be written in the future, is because the Norwegian expedition was attractive and romantic. Improvised preparations, a ten day long cruise in an unknown direction and roaming across the North Sea finally arriving in Norway, a wonderful country with the beauty of the Northern landscape, snow covered peaks and fiords winding among the mountains – the whole expedition was filled with romanticism and adventure.¹¹

The participation of the Polish army in the Norwegian campaign was instrumental in strengthening relations between the Polish and Norwegian governments in exile. In 1940, the Norwegian minister for foreign affairs, Halvdan Koht, expressed his “whole-hearted thanks” to Poland for sending troops to Narvik and added courteously, that “everyone knows that without a free Poland there will be no free Europe”.¹² On 27 July 1942, at the Norwegian legation in London the King of Norway, Haakon VII, personally decorated five Polish soldiers and gave a seven further orders to absent veterans, who were serving outside Britain at the time.¹³ King Haakon had already conferred a special decoration on the Poles, the so-called ‘string of a quartermaster’, in the Norwegian national colours. During the celebrations the Norwegian commander-in-chief, General Carl Gustav Fleischer, announced that it was “a great honour for us, because I know that the colours of my country were never before worn by such braver soldiers”.¹⁴ After General Sikorski died in an aircraft crash in Gibraltar, he was posthumously decorated with the highest Norwegian order. General Hamsteen mentioned two merits of Sikorski: “that he, as the leader of Polish Army, decided to send Polish troops to Norway where their valour made them famous and that he allowed Norwegian soldiers in Britain to train with Polish units”.¹⁵ The joint training mentioned above was arranged in 1942, when Polish parachutists taught their Norwegian colleagues commando skills.¹⁶ Another purely social form of mutual contacts were regular football matches between the two armies.¹⁷

¹¹ W rocznicę zwycięskiej bitwy, “*Dziennik Żołnierza*”, 28 V 1943, nr 124.

¹² Dziękuję Wam, Polacy!, “*Robotnik Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii*”, 1940, nr 5-7, p. 5.

¹³ Król Norwegii dekoruje bohaterów z Narwiku, “*Dziennik Żołnierza*”, 28 VII 1942, nr 71; Norweski Krzyż Wojenny na piersiach 12 żołnierzy polskich, “*Dziennik Polski*”, 28 VII 1942, nr 629; L. Tyśmienicki, Król Haakon dekoruje żołnierzy Brygady Podhalańskiej, “*Polska Walcząca*”, 1942, nr 32.

¹⁴ Wyprowadzenie Podhalańców do Norwegii. Rocznicę bohaterskich walk pod Narwikiem, “*Dziennik Polski*”, 27 V 1941, nr 269.

¹⁵ Hołd armii sprzymierzonych. Najwyższe odznaczenie norweskie dla śp. gen. Sikorskiego, “*Dziennik Żołnierza*”, 13 VII 1943, nr 160.

¹⁶ Z. Zawada, Spadochroniarze norwescy u polskich kolegów, “*Polska Walcząca*”, 1942, nr 40, p. 3.

¹⁷ Armia polska – armia norweska, “*Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*”, 15 II 1944, nr 38.

The campaign in Norway was also marked by severe losses suffered by the Polish Navy: the destroyer 'Grom', the submarine 'Orzeł' and the troopship 'Chrobry' were all sunk, and these actions laid the foundations for a deep affinitive between those Poles and Norwegians who had fought together within the anti-German alliance. It should be also noted that the raids undertaken by Polish warships off the Norwegian coast were part of a diversion of the allied forces, an action that was described in press.¹⁸ These were, however, the first and last joint actions undertaken by the two nation's armies. Many official speeches by the representatives of both sides repeatedly returned to the events of 1940. On the first anniversary of the German attack on Poland, King Haakon, after having sent a courteous cable to the Polish president, Władysław Raczkiewicz, received a reply which underlined this point, "Polish soldiers are proud that they could fight in Norway in brotherhood in arms with the Norwegians for a common idea, which strengthened the friendship that unites our nations".¹⁹ On 16 April 1941, the first anniversary of the battle of Narvik the Tatra Highlanders battalion prepared an exhibition at the Art Gallery in Dundee (Scotland) to commemorate the campaigns in Poland and Norway: pictures, captured weapon, equipment, letters and newspapers detailed the events that occurred in 1939 and 1940.²⁰

Gradually, as the allies got to know each other better they used numerous other opportunities to exchange messages and good wishes. One pretext was the national feast day of Norway – held every year on 17 May – when all the important newspapers remembered "an allied nation" to which "we direct our thoughts and our whole-hearted good wishes for the help that the Polish soldier offered during the days of aggression by the common enemy".²¹ On these occasions the published articles were full of pathos. For instance, a former lecturer in the Polish language at the university of Oslo, Olav Ritter, appealed to the very well known Polish slogan, 'for our and your freedom': "In these days of trial and war, which Poles and Norwegians for the first time in history experience together – there is no better words of praise than these that we served under the same slogan with the same courage and the same sacrifice as the Polish nation".²² Another opportunity to recall these joint actions in Norway was the birthday of King Haakon VII.²³

¹⁸ Polskie okręty u brzegów Norwegii, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 3 I 1942, nr 461. Udany wypad komandosów na wybrzeże Norwegii, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 27 I 1943, nr 21; Atak na wyspę w zatoce Narwik, "Dziennik Polski", 6 III 1941, nr 201; Wypad na wyspy norweskie, "Dziennik Polski", 30 XII 1941, nr 453; Przy brzegach Norwegii doszło do walk morskich, "Dziennik Polski", 7 X 1943, nr 996.

¹⁹ Braterstwo broni Polski, Holandii i Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 6 IX 1940, nr 49.

²⁰ Wystawa pamiątek z Polski i Norwegii, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 22 IV 1941, nr 248.

²¹ Święto Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 16 V 1942, nr 568.

²² O. Rytter, Polska i Norwegia, "Polska Walcząca", 1942, nr 21.

²³ Jel., Haakon VII. W 70-tą rocznicę urodzin króla Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 4 VIII 1942, nr 643; Urodziny króla Haakona VII świętem narodowym Norwegii, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 3 VIII 1943, nr 178; Alt for Norge, "Dziennik polski", 5 VIII 1942, nr 635.

The Polish émigrés' interest in Norway was heightened by the community spirit of the Allies and the shared struggle to achieve the same political aim: to defeat Germany and to liberate the homeland. From April 1940 on, Norway and Poland were united by a common experience of occupation, and by the fact that their respective governments in exile continued the fight for independence from the territory of Great Britain. One Polish sailor expressed this viewpoint in a piece for 'Dziennik Żołnierza', feelings voiced by many of his colleagues:

Listening to an old Norwegian fisherman – today wearing the uniform of a naval officer – I slowly began to understand that there is something more that we share, much more than I could ever have expected. It is true that we came from two different and distant countries. We have different languages. We even wear different uniforms. But it is not important. We have the same thoughts, wishes, and hopes. We share the same consciousness of the orphan's fate of living in exile. The same work with the same aim that the first stage is to recover everything that we lost and then a long and hard reconstruction.²⁴

It was predicted that after the War Poland and Norway would continue to share the same political aims, primarily an eagerness to secure the freedom of the Baltic Sea: "Securing by our common efforts real freedom on the Baltic will be in both Poland's and Norway's best interests. The confirmation of the position of Poland on the Baltic Sea and our participation in the system of its defence must be regarded by Norway as the way to increase its chances for securing freedom too".²⁵ In the opinion of one Polish publicist some psychological circumstances and results of the decision made by both governments to fight against the enemy until victory, and to consider that "the freedom of individuals and the nation is not an abstract idea, but a goal worth the highest sacrifice" had an essential meaning in strengthening bilateral relations. The commentator was convinced that "such an identity of the inner imperatives brings [our governments] closer and joins [them] together".²⁶

The Polish émigrés kept a close eye on the policy of the Norwegian government in exile. Polish journalists recorded various kinds of Norwegian propaganda in Britain, important statements made by the King and by other politicians,²⁷ especially when these were of direct relevance to Polish affairs or were addressed to the Poles themselves. For example, a speech by minister Koht given in November 1940, in which he paid homage to the Poles for their general contribution to the war effort.²⁸ On another occasion, the visit of General Fleischer to a group of Polish soldiers was courteously described in an illustrated report.²⁹ Fleischer was given the order of 'Virtuti Militari' by General Sikorski, witnessed by Polish veterans from Narvik. When the first issue of the 'Norsk Tidend' maga-

²⁴ E. Sopoćko, Na starym norweskim trawlerze, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 30 VIII 1943, nr 201

²⁵ Norwegia i Polska, "Dziennik Polski", 10 III 1942, nr 818.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Król Haakon walczy dalej, "Dziennik Polski", 28 IX 1940, nr 68.

²⁸ Norwegia dziękuje Polsce, "Dziennik Polski", 18 XI 1940, nr 111.

²⁹ Wódz Naczelny wojsk norweskich gen. Fleischer odwiedza oddziały wojska polskiego. "Dziennik Polski", 14 XII 1940, nr 134.

zine appeared in London at the end of August 1940, the editors of 'Dziennik Polski' announced its arrival in a friendly manner: "We cannot read Norwegian, but we understand that you can find in the first issue speeches by King Haakon, prime minister Nygaardsvold, minister Koht and the English minister Cross".³⁰

In December 1940, the journal reprinted a speech by the new Norwegian minister of foreign affairs, Trygve Lie, who linked the future of Norway with Great Britain and all other victims of German aggression.³¹ It seemed that Polish hopes were raised by Lie's references to the plans for an Atlantic confederation – "We must all be united" – but these were not fulfilled. Polish political circles hoped that a certain community of experiences would tie geographically distant countries to each other after the war had ended: "The brotherhood in arms" – Eryk Sopoćko wrote with conviction – "that exists today among us, is and will be the foundation on which on the ruins – the result of actions by the same German hand – will open a new chapter in the chronicle of history with words: Common understanding, respect and cooperation!" Another commentator hopefully predicted that within the post-war order "we [Poles and Norwegians] will be (...) close neighbours".³² However, in November 1941 Trygve Lie retreated from the idea of an Atlantic confederation and began to support the vaguer concept of "close cooperation between all countries" after the War. This passive attitude towards post-war planning meant in practice that Norway was unlikely to cooperate too closely with Poland at a later date.³³

It is very difficult to find any evidence of spectacular and collaborative political actions undertaken by the Poles and Norwegians, but several joint cultural projects that took place in Sweden are worth mentioning. One example was a Polish-Norwegian artistic exhibition by refugees arranged in Stockholm in November 1942.³⁴ Organised by an art theory professor, Waclaw Reybekiel, 16 Poles and 18 Norwegians, presented 169 works: paintings, sculptures, dolls, a model of guitar made of matches, a model of the church in Mariefred and a model of the destroyed submarine 'Orzeł'. In December 1944, Poles and Norwegians, together with Danes and Czechs, participated in a literary evening arranged in Stockholm by Swedes and dedicated to all the countries under German occupation.³⁵

³⁰ Pismo norweskie w Londynie, "Dziennik Polski", 3 IX 1940, nr 46.

³¹ Przyszłość Norwegii w wiecznym sojuszu z Wielką Brytanią i sprzymierzeńcami, "Dziennik Polski", 17 XII 1940, nr 136.

³² J. Boryna, Wysoko powiewa flaga Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 18 V 1942, nr 569.

³³ More see *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, t. V (1939–1945), pod red. W. Michowicza, Warszawa 1999, s. 186–188. About the policy of the Norwegian government see also A. Witt, Wybrane aspekty współpracy emigracyjnego rządu norweskiego z Wielką Brytanią w latach 1940–1943, [w:] *Norwegia w I połowie XX wieku*, red. E. Denkwicz-Szczepaniak, Toruń 2004, pp. 45–83.

³⁴ Malarze polscy w Szwecji, "Wiadomości Polskie", 1943, nr 9. More information was published in Hungary by "Wieści Polskie", 16 XII 1942, nr 150: J. Raykowski, Polsko-norweska wystawa prac uchodźców w Sztokholmie.

³⁵ Wieczór literacki w Sztokholmie, "Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza", 13 XII 1944, nr 295.

In the wider political context it became gradually more apparent that the future geopolitical challenges Poland and Norway faced were entirely different. In the middle of 1943 the Polish press reported the announcement of Norwegian war aims. As a matter of fact, these aims encapsulated Norway's guiding principles for the post-war period: the end of neutrality and the cessation of connections with the Nordic bloc. Cooperation with Sweden and Denmark was taken into consideration, but a common policy with Finland was excluded, because this country was still at war with the Soviet Union.³⁶ From the Polish perspective this policy meant that there would be little opportunity for future Norwegian support in any dispute with the Soviet Union. This was a crucial point as Moscow wanted to legalize its annexation of Polish territory, and to subordinate the whole of Poland under its control. At the beginning of 1943, Rowmund Piłsudski published a booklet 'The Baltic, Britain and Peace' in which he formulated an opinion that the Soviet Union would try to take possession of Northern Scandinavia and that Stalin was far more interested in the Northern Sea routes, than in the Baltic Sea. When they saw these comments the Norwegians intervened diplomatically. During a confidential conversation with the Polish legate to the Norwegian government, Władysław Günther-Schwarzburg, Trygve Lie stressed the unsuitableness of such opinions. He stated that this was "an opinion and action that was incompatible with the spirit which should prevail among the allied countries".³⁷

In 1944 Polish publicists repeated their opinion that the mounting Soviet threat, carried westward by the Red Army, was one that also endangered Norway. The British press had recently carried stories suggesting that the Soviet government had demanded to be allowed to participate in the administration of Norway after its liberation. In January 1942, after General Sikorski had visited Moscow, Norwegian diplomats asked the Poles about the possibility of Polish troops being sent to Norway along with the Red Army.³⁸ There were also reports that the British might mount amphibious landings in Scandinavia. Eventually the Norwegian government signed a civil affairs agreement with the Western allies to regularise the post-liberation administration of its territory. As a result, Norway avoided being included in the Soviet zone of influence, unlike Poland.³⁹

Apart from the relations with the Norwegian government in exile, the Polish press printed regular stories about the conditions in occupied Norway.⁴⁰ Po-

³⁶ Norwegia i blok nordycki, "Myśl Polska", 1 VIII 1942, nr 29, p. 469.

³⁷ Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (London), Prezydium Rady Ministrów, sig. 110, pp. 73-76, Minute by Polish legate at the government of Norway W. Gunther-Schwarzburg, a conversation with Norwegian minister of foreign affairs Trygve Lie, 19 II 1943.

³⁸ Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (London), Prezydium Rady Ministrów, sig. 81/4, pp. 1-2, Minute by general secretary of the Ministry of foreign Affairs K. Dzierżykrąj-Morawski, a conversation with chargé d'affaires Hans Berg, 22 I 1942.

³⁹ Kto będzie okupował Norwegię? Układ w sprawie administracji cywilnej, "Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza", 11 V 1944, nr 110.

⁴⁰ Among works in Polish see Cz. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm i okupacje 1938-1945. Wykonywanie okupacji przez państwa Osi w Europie*, t. I: Ukształtowanie się rządów okupacyjnych, Poznań 1983, pp. 271-287; in a very brief way: A. Bereza-Jarociński, *Zarys dziejów Norwegii*. Warszawa 1991, pp. 267-276.

lish commentators presented Norway as a fellow victim of Germans aggression. In July 1940, 'Dziennik Polski' informed its readers that "Norway, which before the War exported the greatest amount of aluminium in the world, has since stopped all exports". German occupation led to an economic depression: "In these circumstances" – a correspondent of 'Dziennik Polski' reported – "there have been lean years for all Nordic countries".⁴¹ In the articles describing the conditions of every day life under the Germans food supply troubles, the lack of basic articles as clothes and fuel were regularly exposed.⁴² A journalist for the "Robotnik Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii" noted in 1942: "The food supply is getting worse and worse. The symptoms of malnutrition are now observed (...) Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever and Measles are rife among the children. Tuberculosis has intensified and the number of stomach illnesses has increased".⁴³

The issue of conditions in occupied Norway received further scrutiny from Polish periodicals when it emerged that Polish prisoners-of-war were being held in the country. In 1944, reports started to appear about the number of Polish POWS held in camps (some 1700 people) and the rudimentary living conditions (bad food, primitive barracks) they experienced, these stories reached press thanks to refugees who had escaped to Sweden. Polish newspapers informed their readers that they could assist these men by sending parcels, although these requests did not give the impression that conditions in the camps were too severe. Readers were asked to send "games, playing cards, balls", which would seem to indicate that the greatest hardship these prisoners faced was boredom and a lack of entertainment.⁴⁴ In the spring 1944 a short note was published that revealed there were also Polish forced labourers in Norway, a proportion of whom escaped to Sweden.⁴⁵

Gradually, the brutal nature of the occupational regime in Norway encouraged the growth of a Norwegian resistance movement directed against the Germans. In early 1941, 'Dziennik Żołnierza' reported that "passive resistance has increased and this movement has united all social classes and various professions". Some examples of resistance against the German authorities were given and these included activities by judges, municipal workers, policemen, university professors.⁴⁶ By the end of 1941 the Polish émigré press

⁴¹ Ruina Skandynawii, "Dziennik Polski", 29 VII 1940, nr 15.

⁴² Warunki życia w Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 6 III 1942, nr 509; zob. też: Norwegia. Położenie gospodarcze, "Ekonomista Polski", 1943, nr 7, p. 127; Norwegia. Sytuacja gospodarcza, "Ekonomista Polski", 1943, nr 13, pp. 141-143.

⁴³ M. Karniol, Norwegia walczy z najeźdźcą, "Robotnik Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii", 1942, nr 6, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Z. Leszczyc, Jeńcy polscy w Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza", 24 II 1944, nr 46.

⁴⁵ Jeszcze jeden Polak uciekł z Norwegii do Szwecji, "Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza", 30 III 1944, nr 76.

⁴⁶ Bierny opór w Norwegii i Francji, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 3 I 1941, nr 158; Sytuacja w Norwegii, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 13 IX 1941, nr 370; Milczące manifestacje w Norwegii, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 10 IV 1943, nr 84.

painted a picture of the development of an active resistance in Norway. According to one Polish commentator a tough occupation policy and increasing reprisals had caused "The most pacifistic nation in Europe, the Norwegians, to absolutely resist the Germans, to learn guerrilla warfare and to learn to hate". The result was that "Norway was ripe for an anti-German revolution".⁴⁷ A similar tone prevailed in other articles that exposed German reprisals.⁴⁸ It was argued that all these activities demonstrated that the average Norwegian "is against" and "subconsciously defends against a new form of government, against Hitlerism, against militarism".⁴⁹ In the spring of 1942 a Polish publicist recorded another stage of the evolution of the Norwegian society: "The German occupation cemented the whole Norwegian society in hating the enemy and in fostering solidarity. Illegal trade developed, but the prices did not increase what would be regarded as not patriotic and worth of condemning".⁵⁰ The readers of 'Dziennik Polski' were informed "the resistance of the whole nation, resistance of such a solidarity and pride that it has long since eclipsed the personage of Quisling". The proof was "the increasingly frequent sound of volleys from the firing squads".⁵¹ A correspondent from Stockholm cited the words of the leader of a socialist students' society in Norway who confirmed that in addition to a growing level of Norwegian resistance and increasing ferocity of the German terror and stated: "We are becoming more and more like Poland".⁵²

In 1943, a commentator for "Dziennik Żołnierza" announced that "the persecuted people of Norway are waiting longingly for the great moment of the liberation being ready for a heroic effort on the day the Allied forces land".⁵³ Attempts by Norwegian ships to escape from the port of Gothenburg were reported with satisfaction.⁵⁴ Polish journals published information about Norway's armed resistance against the Germans and the activities of traitors.⁵⁵ These reports about widespread Norwegian resistance fitted unconformably with the prevailing opinions of Polish diplomacy. In the autumn 1942, a Polish legate to the Norwegian government, Władysław Neuman, wrote to the general secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Edward Raczyński, and stated that "with the exception of a group of Quisling supporters which amounts to about 3 percent, the whole nation resists the Germans and supports the Allies".⁵⁶ The National Church, teachers in schools of every kind and trade

⁴⁷ Lt., *Zacznie się od Norwegii?*, "Dziennik Polski", 31 XII 1941, nr 453.

⁴⁸ 11 wyroków śmierci w Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 31 XII 1941, nr 454; Quisling regentem Norwegii?, "Dziennik Polski", 2 II 1942, nr 481.

⁴⁹ Nie ma Hitler pociechy z Norwegów, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 11 VI 1941, nr 290.

⁵⁰ Warunki życia w Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 6 III 1942, nr 509.

⁵¹ J. Boryna, Wysoko powiewa flaga Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 18 V 1942, nr 569.

⁵² M. K., Norwegia walcząca, "Robotnik Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii", 1942, nr 7, p. 3.

⁵³ H. T., Skandynawia po czterech latach wojny, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 15 IX 1943, nr 215

⁵⁴ Ucieczka statków norweskich ze Szwecji, "Dziennik Żołnierza", 4 IV 1942, nr 539.

⁵⁵ Atak na quislingowców, "Dziennik Polski", 13 X 1941, nr 387.

⁵⁶ Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (London), Prezydium Rady Ministrów, sig. 81/4, pp. 7-8, Minute by Polish legate at the government of Norway W. Neuman, 11 XI 1942.

unions resisted the Germans. "One day, after the War was won" – a Polish commentator wrote – "a balance-sheet of the war efforts will be produced, on such a list Norway – we believe – will take the place of honour".⁵⁷

These military and economic efforts undertaken by Norway in the fight against the Germans helped to prevent the Norwegians from being too closely associated with treason and cooperation with the enemy. The ticklish question of collaboration was a separate subject for Polish publicists. Central to this issue was the origins of Vidkun Quisling's movement:

Today Norway is excellent proof of the results of German domination, even in a country where the attitude towards the Germans before the invasion was not especially unfriendly. It is true that before the War relations between the Norwegians and the Germans were very good and they could not even say that about the wider common Nordic community. This is the reason why the Quisling movement developed and attracted some groups of society that the Germans could use for their purposes.⁵⁸

Quisling himself was referred to as "an agent of Germany",⁵⁹ a "Judas of modern times",⁶⁰ and became a symbol of national treason.⁶¹ As early as 1940 all politicians, who collaborated with the Germans were called "Quislings" by the Polish press.⁶² At the same time the name of Quisling became a symbol of the total lack Polish collaboration with the Germans. The slogan "Poland – the only country without Quisling" was designed to be used as a good argument for gaining international acceptance for the Polish government in exile at the anticipated post-war conference. Both in diplomatic documents and in press articles, where the problem of cooperation with the occupation authorities in Norway were often referred to, it was always underlined that only a small group of Norwegians supported Quisling and the Germans.

The Norwegians were also portrayed in another light, thanks to the work of the great writer Knut Hamsun; his pro-Nazism met with a great response in the Polish press. The main Polish newspaper 'Dziennik Polski' published an open letter by Ella Ankar, who attacked Hamsun and his attitude of adaptation and collaboration referring to the example of Poland:⁶³ "The martyrdom of Poland has always met a great response in our hearts" – Ankar stated attacking

⁵⁷ J. Boryna, Wysoko powiewa flaga Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 18 V 1942, nr 569.

⁵⁸ Lt., Zacznie się od Norwegii?, "Dziennik Polski", 1941, 31 XII nr 453.

⁵⁹ „Premier” Quisling grozi Szwecji, "Dziennik Polski", 3 II 1942, nr 482.

⁶⁰ J. Boryna, Wysoko powiewa flaga Norwegii, "Dziennik Polski", 18 V 1942, nr 569.

⁶¹ Among few Polish publications see e.g. E. Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Norwegia w I połowie XX wieku*, red. E. Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, Toruń 2004, p. 43.

⁶² Ponieważ nie znaleźli Quislinga, "Dziennik Polski", 24 VIII 1940, nr 38; W Szwecji o Polsce. Nie ma Quislingów wśród Polaków, "Dziennik Polski", 26 XI 1940, nr 118; Delegacja Quislingów w Polsce, "Dziennik Polski", 16 XII 1940, nr 135; Nowy „Quisling węgierski", "Dziennik Polski", 17 XII 1940, nr 136; H. Heinsdorf, Quislingi dziennikarstwa, "Dziennik Polski", 7 VI 1941, nr 278; M. Prozor, Konferencja Quislingów, "Polska Walcząca", 1941, nr 24.

⁶³ Głos wolnej Norwegii. Ella Ankar do Knuta Hamsuna, "Dziennik Polski", 10 V 1941, nr 255.

Hamsun – “Where were you when German tanks invaded Polish plains, when they were over Warsaw and their defenceless women and children were bombed, in spite of the nonaggression pact?” She paid special attention to the effect of German propaganda in 1940, which had presented a film in Oslo about the war in Poland: “The German attack on Norway began with a presentation at the German legation on 6 April 1940 of a film about the destruction of Warsaw”. For Ankar it obviously was the instrument for intimidating the Norwegians. She stated emphatically: “It was the first act of German terror”. She considered the alliance with Great Britain as the only possible policy for Norway. Any connections with Germany were for her absurd: “As long” – she argued – “as Germany treats other nations in the barbarous fashion we can see in Poland, the idea of any connections with them fills me with disgust and anxiety”.

In conclusion, it must be underlined that Norway was never the most important subject for those Polish publicists based in Great Britain during the War. Although, relations with various minor allies, including Norway, were never regarded as a trivial issue, relations with the superpowers always took precedence. After all, they were the ones who would decide Poland’s future. This does not change the fact that Norway became a source of much symbolic significance, which was quite wide understood, and gave rise to associations which began to live independently from the limited context of Polish-Norwegian relations. The battle of Narvik contributed to the reactivation of the Polish tradition of fighting “for our freedom and yours”. Quisling became an universal symbol of betraying one’s homeland and of collaboration with the enemy. These two symbols – one positive and one negative – survived the end of the war.