

Reports to the Military Office of the President of the Republic in Czechoslovakia on the situation in Poland in 1935

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The article focuses on the military and political reports of the Military Office of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1935. The relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland in the interwar period were not ideal for a number of reasons, yet there were mutual contacts, one of which was the work of the diplomatic corps and military attachés. The view of these reports on developments in Poland was an important source of information for the Czechoslovak President. That is why the reports are quite detailed. The article presents them with a commentary on the events mentioned and with the necessary setting in the contemporary context.

Keywords: *Interwar period; Interwar Czechoslovakia; Interwar Poland; Czechoslovaks; Poles; Czechoslovak army, Polish army; Military Office of the President of the Republic in Czechoslovakia; 1935; Reports to Czechoslovak President about Poland*

The study offers a comprehensive look at the topic of the extant reports of the Military Office of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic for the year 1935, which may serve as a reminder of the most important political and military events in Poland at that time. These are reports of Czechoslovak diplomatic staff and military attachés in Poland about the situation there in the confidential mode. This is also in view of the contemporary context and the growing international tensions, the arms race that was set in motion and the related search for security guarantees among the various European states. The method chosen for this study was the direct use of archival sources and published sources from the Military Historical Archive in Prague. An important aid is the secondary literature from the Czech and Polish perspective and its reflection on the topic.

First quarter 1935

The scenario of the quarterly reports was always the same, with military reports first, followed by an overview of the more important changes in laws and regulations. However, a significant part of the reports to the President of the Republic was always devoted to the internal situation in Poland, then to the foreign situation. All the reports were signed at the end by their author, Colonel of the General Staff Ferdinand Silvester¹, who served as military attaché² in Poland from 1932 to 1937.³ His signature was also added by divisional general Silvestr Bláha⁴ (from 1929) in his capacity as head of the Military Office of the President of the Republic, who went through the reports and often produced only a summary of the most important information and opinions from the military attaché addressed directly to the President of the country. Turning to the actual content of the reports, on 10 April 1935 the Military Attaché of the Czechoslovak Republic in Warsaw reported in the military section that the spirit of the Polish Army was somewhat diminished in comparison with recent periods, referring to the fact that the non-aggression pact signed in 1934 with Germany⁵ had not brought lasting guarantees and that there was a sobering and often disillusionment and disorientation. In relation to Czechoslovakia, the military attaché states his view that the campaign against Czechoslovakia by the ruling political forces has so far been essentially a failure, and that the elemental resentment against everything Czech has not been present. The report also concludes, based on an overheard view from several Polish officers, that the cause of the Polish-Czechoslovak misunderstanding was primarily the then Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš. The old pains of Poland were to be forgotten in moments of enthusiasm, and the author of the report mentions, among other things,

¹ In some publications he is also listed as Ferdinand Sylvester, but his signature on documents for the Military Office of the President of the Republic is in the form Silvester. In the form Sylvester used for example see Zudová-Lešková, Z. (2011). *Zapomenutá elita: českoslovenští vojenští diplomaté v letech 1938–1945*. Praha: Mladá fronta, p. 38.

² In the evaluation of his qualification certificate for 1935, Ferdinand Silvester was rated as an intelligent officer, whose great general education and sociable nature were applied with very good success at his post in Warsaw. In addition to his mother tongue, his language skills are rated as excellent in German and French, good in Romanian and Polish, and partial in Russian and English. Military Historical Archive Prague (hereinafter known as MHA), fund Qualification papers of military persons, qualification (personal) file of Ferdinand Silvester.

³ Kołakowski, P. (2012). *Przywileje i uprawnienia obcych attaché wojskowych w Polsce. Instrukcja z 1934 roku*. In: *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne im. gen. broni Kazimierza Sosnkowskiego Wojskowe Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej w Warszawie, issue 13 (64)/3 (241), p. 106.

⁴ MHA, fund Qualification papers of military persons, qualification (personal) file of Silvestr Bláha.

⁵ For more see Friedl, J., Jurek, T., Řezník, M., Wihoda, M. (2017), *Dějiny Polska*. Praha: Lidové noviny, pp. 459–460.

the 8 to 10 million illiterates, the lack of roads, the Ukrainian question⁶, Lithuania-Vilnius, the impoverishment of the Polish countryside, the armaments of Russia⁷, and others. A really interesting remark by the military attaché is the sentence that even the current Polish regime, for all its admiration for a really strong, armed Germany, is afraid of it.⁸

On internal Polish politics, the report looked at the government's efforts to push for the approval of a new constitution. Only the deputies of the ruling bloc were then to vote for the constitution; the representatives of the Ukrainians and Jews abstained. The Germans were not supposed to attend the vote at all. Thus, only the combined Polish opposition was to vote against the constitution. In the opinion of the attaché, the new constitution was accepted indifferently by the general public, despite the fact that the ruling bloc and its press described the new constitution as a landmark in the history of Poland. In another passage of the report, it is stated that there is much to suggest that the transition from the existing masked dictatorship in Poland to an overt dictatorship and that the new regime⁹ will have much in common with Hitler's regime in Germany. The report also contains further assessments of the Polish political scene which, in the opinion of the report's author, are dominated mainly by two clearly discernible tendencies in the ruling bloc. The first is the influence of the so-called left, which is demanding radical land reform without compensation and a managed economy on the Soviet model. The second tendency is that of the conservative circles, which demand the rehabilitation of the landlords, a return to economic liberalism, tax cuts and an abandonment of economic experimentation. Tensions were further heightened by the proximity of the elections. The government's main concern, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, was to reduce the effects of the Great Depression, which in the Polish case hit farmers particularly hard. The government also focused on tackling unemployment through increased investment.¹⁰

With regard to Poland's foreign policy in the first quarter of 1935, it is noted that the main focus of Polish policy was on the so-called Eastern Pact.¹¹ The

⁶ Which, among other things, was of courses also discussed by Polish military intelligence Danielewicz, K. (2011). *Lwowska Ekspozytura wywiadu: działalność Ekspozytury nr 5 SG we Lwowie w latach 1921–1939*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, pp. 148–171.

⁷ In reports to the Military Office of the President of the Republic, Russia regularly appears instead of the Soviet Union; this is probably an established stereotype in the sense of Polish fears of Russian imperialism, which was only confirmed by later events and Soviet policy.

⁸ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 1st Quarter 1935.

⁹ Characteristics of the Polish regime at the time Topolski, J. (2015). *Historia Polski*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, pp. 275–280.

¹⁰ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland - 1st Quarter 1935.

¹¹ About the topic Jurkiewicz, J. (1963), *Pakt Wschodni: Z historii stosunków międzynarodowych w latach 1934–1935*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej; in the newer concept further Krasuski, J. (2000). *Tragiczna Niepodległość: Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 1919–1945*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie; likewise Wieczorkiewicz, P.

Polish government, in unison with Berlin, rejects multilateral treaties, does not want to assume guarantees for the inviolability of the Lithuanian and Czechoslovak borders, and above all opposes the multilateral Eastern Pact on mutual assistance. In its manoeuvring against it, it relies primarily on the intransigence of the Western powers, and especially on England's dislike of the Franco-Soviet treaty. The author of the report states very critically that: "It is clear that the Polish objections are mere diatribes and that behind them lies a firm intention to thwart the consolidation of Eastern Europe at all costs."¹² It goes on to say that the assumptions on which Polish foreign policy was based have failed. The results of British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's¹³ trip to Moscow were to show this. Therefore, the Polish government had no choice but to change tactics. Suddenly it began to stress the importance and binding nature of the Franco-Polish Treaty, to exaggerate the importance of the security system constituted by the treaties and non-aggression agreements with Russia and Germany, and to point to its difficult situation as a large buffer state.¹⁴

The report concludes with a very harsh assessment of the Polish army at the time: "It is already confidentially admitted that the Polish army is not up to date"¹⁵, that its armament is inadequate and that it suffers from a perceptible lack of the skilled forces which the present war technology requires. It is also confidently feared that, owing to insufficient funds, Poland will not be able to keep pace with Germany and Russia, that she will lag behind them and that her military importance will consequently decline. It can already be said that Poland's policy towards Germany is primarily inspired by fear of Germany, and it can therefore be expected that these motives will increasingly influence Polish policy."¹⁶

Second quarter 1935

The report of the military attaché in Poland to the President of Czechoslovakia for the second quarter of 1935 also contains many interesting observations.

(2006). *Historia polityczna Polski 1935–1945*. Warszawa: Książka i wiedza.; Batowski, H. (2008). *Między dwiema wojnami 1919–1939: zarys historii dyplomatycznej*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, pp. 218–228.

¹² MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 1st Quarter 1935.

¹³ On the person and career of Anthony Eden, see Brož, I. (2004). *Diplomaté*. Praha: Epocha, pp. 423–444.

¹⁴ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 1st Quarter 1935.

¹⁵ On the shortcomings of the contemporary Polish army as seen by a Polish military historian further in Miśkiewicz, B. (2006). *Wojsko Polskie w XX wieku*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Kurpisz, pp. 41–54. (chapter Osiągnięcia i niedostatki Wojska Polskiego w latach 1921–1939).

¹⁶ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 1st Quarter 1935.

Although even here it is clear that this is only the subjective view of an individual who is trying to report on anything that might have any significant value in the future. Today we know the further course of events, so it is clear that he was not wrong in many of his observations. Of particular interest are the references to longer-term trends in the development of Polish politics and the level of the military. A crucial event of the second quarter of 1935, with significant consequences, was above all the death¹⁷ of Marshal Józef Piłsudski¹⁸ – one of the most important figures in Poland's modern history.¹⁹ Thus, the report states at the outset that: “The death of Marshal Piłsudski had a rather unfavourable effect on the spirit of the army, which still clearly feels that the loss of its commander-in-chief is irreplaceable.”²⁰

The report goes on to assess the further development²¹ of the Polish army with a new commander in the post of Inspector General of the Polish Armed Forces, Edward Śmigły-Rydz²², and states that Rydz wants²³ to have an army that is well trained, well equipped and well commanded.²⁴ This was to go against the exorbitant demands of various militant formations, which over time had too many claims on their position, weakening the army's position. Another appeal in the development of the army was to be made in the field of morale. Soldiers were to consider their families as much as possible, mistresses and dubious companions were to have unpleasant consequences for the officer. Another aim was to bring the army into closer touch with the other branches of the nation. The first step in this direction was to be the gradual introduction of conscription education into compulsory education. The military administration in Poland, in the opinion of the military attaché, was to proceed with a healthy sense of the country's internal needs, albeit with a loss of external effect. This was to occur even before the death of Józef Piłsudski. As regards the relationship with Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak army, it is stated that it remained largely unchanged. With regard to personnel changes in the Polish Armed Forces, it is stated that honest military personnel were being recruited

¹⁷ Řezník, M. (2010). *Dějiny Polska v datech*. Praha: Libri, p. 397.

¹⁸ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 2nd Quarter 1935.

¹⁹ Brief summary of Marshal's life available Gałęzowski, M. (2013). *Marszałek Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935)*. Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu.

²⁰ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 2nd Quarter 1935.

²¹ Further on topic see Pawłowski, T. (2009). *Armia marszałka Śmigłego: idea rozbudowy Wojska Polskiego 1935–1939*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM.

²² MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 2nd Quarter 1935.

²³ In detail about the vision Śmigły-Rydz Pawłowski, T. (2009). *Armia marszałka Śmigłego...*, pp. 23–52.

²⁴ On the development of the concept of the Polish army and military art throughout the interwar period Feret, S. (1972). *Polska Sztuka Wojenna 1918–1939*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, Biblioteka Wiedzy Wojskowej.

to important posts. In a summary of the more important changes in laws and regulations, it is stated that the general registration of officers is being tightened and the regulations on travel abroad are being tightened. Conversely, some short-term tours to neighbouring states are facilitated. Also, a ban was issued on the military registration of officers' private cars of a brand other than Polski Fiat, a measure to encourage domestic production. It was also rather interesting to note that all Polish non-military aviation was heading towards nationalisation.²⁵

The two main events in the domestic political statute are the final vote on the new Polish constitution and, again, the death of Józef Piłsudski.²⁶ As regards the constitution, the author of the report states that it concentrated in the hands of the president so much almost unlimited power that it could not be compared with the power of any ruler in Europe at that time. The executive power and, in the main, the legislative power passed from the Diet to the President. He thus bears an immense responsibility, according to the wording of the constitution, "before God and history". All the protests, amendments, corrections of the opposition parties were doomed to failure in advance and the majority voted their original version of the constitution. Despite the greatest haste and "obedience" of the parliament and senate, the government did not pass the new electoral regulations during Marshal Piłsudski's lifetime. It was not voted in the government's draft version until the second half of June and early July 1935. This was also after stormy protests by the opposition parties. The author of the report also notes that the latest signs of anti-Jewish manifestations in various communities with a Jewish majority are telling. However, these were not organised by any particular political party, but were spontaneous expressions by the people. The military attaché added that he had learned from an insider source that many ministers themselves looked upon the new constitution, the new elections and the new legislature as a risky experiment, unsuitable in the difficult times of the time. The report concludes: "The most important conclusion we can draw from the course of events in Poland so far since the death of Marshal Piłsudski is that nothing has changed in the policy, both domestic and foreign, which he inspired. For a long time, it must be reckoned that this policy will not change. The opposition camp is still too weak to exert any influence on events other than criticism. They have neither the leaders nor the money to organize any action. The present holders of power, all of whom consider themselves to be the continuators of the Marshal's policy, are united, in spite of all personal differences, in the basic desire to hold on to power by mutual aid and mutual compromise for as long as possible."²⁷

²⁵ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 2nd Quarter 1935.

²⁶ For a summary of the effects of Marshal Piłsudski's death on the Polish army, see Collective of authors. (2019). *Wrzesień 1939: Wojsko Polskie 1935–1939*. Warszawa: ZP Grupa, p. 8.

²⁷ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 2nd Quarter 1935.

Regarding foreign policy, it is briefly stated that the principle is present in adhering to the concept of seeking good neighbourly relations with both Germany and Russia.²⁸ And this while fully upholding the alliance with France. The Military Attaché, however, added to this his observation that all recent Polish-German attitudes and co-operation have been directly demanded and enforced by Germany. The present Government continues to insist on a cautious Polish-German relationship and only within certain limits. In the Polish nation, among the broader classes, the Polish-German friendship is unpopular. Nothing has changed in the attitude towards France. The Polish-Soviet relationship remains unchanged, distrustfully hostile. The attitude of Poland towards Czechoslovakia on the part of Foreign Minister Józef Beck has changed nothing. At the same time, the government press brings out many articles for public opinion in which the Těšín question²⁹ is presented as of increasing and exaggerated importance. The military attaché commented on this situation very frankly in the following words: „Under the present Polish regime, any Polish-Czechoslovak honeymoon would be a national mistake! It would be a very calculated gesture of the present government group, which is counting on subordination to the great power of Poland!“³⁰

Third Quarter 1935

The Czechoslovak Military Attaché began his third quarter report with the information that the military exercises had demonstrated good spirit and discipline in the Polish Army. Specifically, it is stated that there has been progress in the combat behavior of officers - better use of terrain, increased concern for concealment, calculation of time to engage artillery, control of combat capability with reduced exaggeration of marching requirements. Particular emphasis is placed on the traditional mounted action for the Poles, where there was to be a moderation of views on surprise mounted action. The latest German insights were to play a part in the change of view of Polish officers, which excluded mounted combat and regarded the cavalry horse as a means of transporting fire resources. Suitable opportunities for the deployment of Polish cavalry should thus be found especially where the enemy does not have enough automatic weapons. It is generally mentioned that the “military legacy of the late Marshal Piłsudski” already rests firmly

²⁸ But this also meant monitoring these states as potential aggressors by Polish secret services. For Germany and the Soviet Union, there was also recognition of their mutual military cooperation. Further details on the topic Peplowski, A. (2011). *Wojna o tajemnice: w tajnej służbie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1944*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, pp. 131–230.

²⁹ On the origins and genesis of the Těšín dispute Jelínek, P. (2009). *Zahraničně-politické vztahy Československa a Polska 1918–1924*. Opava: Matice slezská, pp. 10–105.

³⁰ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 2nd Quarter 1935.

in the hands of Inspector General Edward Śmigły-Rydz, and the impression of the solidity of the proper further development of the Polish Army prevails.³¹ However, this is not the case as far as the highest military and state authorities are concerned. According to a very confidential private source, a battle is actually being fought at the highest levels over the army, which can be described as a struggle between a group of generals and a group of colonels. This is beginning to emerge as the most serious shortcoming of Marshal Piłsudski's exceptional position, which combined both leadership and promotion of the army and politics. The military attaché also stated after this passage in the report that this internal split in the country could become a weakness in the very foundations of the existing state establishment. It is also mentioned afterwards that Śmigły-Rydz and Józef Beck are not exactly on friendly terms, and specific personnel changes in the positions of the head of the 2nd Department of the General Staff and the First Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Military Affairs are commented on.³²

In the summary of changes to laws and regulations, it is noted that the implementing regulation to the law on the supervision of horse breeding, the regulation on the women's state police, have been published, raising its authority. Also important was the implementing decree for the Pension Act, which introduced appropriate age limits at which officers could be retired. For a major, 46 years; a colonel, 50 years; a divisional general, 54 years. There was also a regulation on film censorship and a regulation by the Ministry of Justice in agreement with the Ministry of the Interior on the compulsory sale of real estate in the borderlands. Also published was a decree on benefits in performing active military service for members of the pre-military training organization. In another part of the military attaché's report, alarming information is mentioned that illiteracy is on the rise, which is a threat to military circles as well. Allegedly, nearly one million Polish children in 1935 had no place in schools, with as many as 113 children for every teacher. A "For official use only" clause was also introduced for service regulations and military publications with partly confidential but less important content. The report describes in detail the reorganisation of the assault vehicles, the increase in the number of tank battalions, and notes the absence of anti-tank rifles in the units. The number of tanks in Poland is estimated by the author of the report at around 700 of various types, including a number of obsolete French Renaults.³³ The military attaché here literally states: „I am trying to verify all these reports. Despite all the difficulties. Notwithstanding our

³¹ For a very detailed analysis see Kozłowski, E. (1964). *Wojsko Polskie 1936–1939: Próby modernizacji i rozbudowy*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, pp. 13–42.

³² MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 3rd Quarter 1935.

³³ On the situation with tank units Kozłowski, E. (1964). *Wojsko Polskie 1936–1939...*, pp. 151–187.

present strained relations, Poland is now one of the most secretive countries ever.³⁴

The next part, which is directly related to the relationship between Poland and Czechoslovakia³⁵, is serious. It is stated here that the local press has broken the principle of not writing tendentiously and distortedly about the armies of the other state. It is explicitly mentioned that never has the return of Těšín and the repair of the border with Czechoslovakia been so publicly proclaimed in the press and at rallies as in the past quarter. This is connected with the next paragraph, where it is mentioned that on the sidelines of the Legionary Congress in Krakow, General Śmigły-Rydz was reportedly given to speak out very strongly against the “insidious seizure of the ancient Polish Piast land of Těšín” by Czechoslovakia.³⁶

The figure comparing the number of cars in 1935 to the population is interesting. Here we are told that there were 1,275 inhabitants per car in Poland, 134 in Czechoslovakia and 22 in France. The attaché commented on the internal political situation by reflecting that the elections had shown that the current Polish regime relied on a very small part of the nation, but that the regime had at its disposal the army, the police and the state administration. Moreover, the Polish people are largely apathetic towards politics, not least because of the major economic crisis. In the assessment of foreign policy, it is stated that the main feature of the past period has been the difficulties³⁷ in German-Polish relations.³⁸ It is also noted in the context of foreign policy that the Polish-Czechoslovak relationship has recently become extremely acute and that, for example, the Polish-Soviet relationship remains coldly correct.³⁹

Fourth Quarter 1935

In his report, the Military Attaché characterizes the final quarter of 1935 in Poland in the following words: “The military legacy of the late Marshal Piłsudski has been taken over and definitely consolidated by the Inspector General of the Polish Armed Forces, Edward Śmigły-Rydz. The political legacy - after a crisis and some behind-the-scenes fighting - is firmly held by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Józef Beck.” He went on to say that the split, previously non-existent in the days of Marshal Piłsudski, is now a *fait accompli*.

³⁴ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 3rd Quarter 1935.

³⁵ Batowski, H. (2008). *Między dwiema wojnami 1919–1939...*, p. 227.

³⁶ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 3rd Quarter 1935.

³⁷ Additionally to the topic Friedl, J., Jurek, T., Řezník, M., Wihoda, M. (2017), *Dějiny Polska*, pp. 459–460.

³⁸ Batowski, H. (2008). *Między dwiema wojnami 1919–1939...*, pp. 230–234.

³⁹ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 3rd Quarter 1935.

Also crucial is the information that Śmigły-Rydz has maintained the army's primacy in the state⁴⁰, "cleanses" the army of all "politicians" and is an unlimited master in his domain, responsible in fact only to the President of the Republic. For Czechoslovakia, in the opinion of the military attaché, this resulted in a positive situation - Śmigły-Rydz did not fall under the control of the most hostile to Czechoslovakia, ruthlessly autocratic group of "strong arm" colonels. The principles of Śmigły-Rydz, mentioned in a report to the Military Office of the President of the Republic delivered on 15 February 1936, relatively soon after the abdication of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (14 December 1935), were supposedly as follows: "To the hard hands of the soldiers the whole of Poland owes its independence alone. The fate of nations is decided by wars. Bad and good times alternated in Poland according to the army it had. All the conveniences of culture, civilization, humanity is nothing to a state unless a strong army, imbued with love of country, ready to sacrifice, stands at its borders. The duties of a soldier are the most difficult, for they threaten death. Every grave of a fallen soldier represents a great common national value of spirit, and therefore it is necessary from the youngest years to cultivate in the youth the spirit of wealth."⁴¹

The Military Attaché commented on these principles in the sense that the present mentality here no longer admits any debate that Poland would not have risen by her own power alone. This spirit had also taken hold of the public and the military attaché saw it as a positive element in the development of the Polish army. He also commented on the personnel changes, among others, in the positions of the Vice-Minister of Education and the First Vice-Minister of Military Affairs.⁴² The author of the report also mentioned and commended, on his own initiative, the action taken by the Chief of the Polish General Staff and the crackdown on particularly inflammatory anti-Czechoslovak writing in some military magazines. Concerning the material condition of the army, he said that great deficiencies persisted, in particular the lack of heavy artillery, the lack of bomber aviation and the lack of anti-aircraft artillery. On the other hand, special interest was exercised in increasing the provision of radiotelegraph equipment, the production of indigenous aircraft, light tanks and, to some extent, medium tanks. There was also an increased interest in the results of the work of experienced specialists in various fields under the motto: "to have something more than others".⁴³

⁴⁰ On the subject of the political activity of the Polish army in detail Stawecki, P. (1969). *Następcy Komendanta: Wojsko a polityka wewnętrzna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1935–1939*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, pp. 21–25.

⁴¹ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

⁴² For an overview of staff changes, see Kozłowski, E. (1964). *Wojsko Polskie 1936–1939...*, pp. 47–69.

⁴³ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

An overview of changes to laws and regulations is provided by the newly established Inter-Ministerial Commission on the Motorization of the Country.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the possible introduction of restrictions on exports to Germany as a result of frozen Polish claims on German industrial production in exchange for Polish foodstuffs. There were also some uniform changes, the introduction of a uniform cap and a uniform colour of shoes. The attaché appreciated the new loose-fitting single-breasted coats, which in his opinion look good.⁴⁵

In a passage reporting on various other matters, it is mentioned, on the basis of a confidential source, that: “Even in the event of an unexpected sudden improvement in general Polish-Czechoslovak⁴⁶ conditions, the headquarters here is said to be determined to maintain, at least at first, a calm and discreet line. However, they certainly do not wish to bind themselves in any closer military relations.”⁴⁷ Important changes in the air force⁴⁸ were also cited from a private source, as no relevant information was given by the Polish side along official lines. The news concerned both personnel changes in the management of individual air units and the introduction of new equipment and techniques – the storage of 150 aircraft engines in Lvov. From the same source came a report on the rebuilding of the Lviv radio station and the development of a new reconnaissance and possibly bomber aircraft with a maximum range of 360 km/h, a radius of over 600 km, i.e., with the possibility of doubling the flight length to 1200 km. At the same time the local factories were to be increased to 25 aircraft engines per month. Troop interventions were also to take place in the composition of machine-gun companies and “battalions of gunners”.⁴⁹

In the section of the report on the internal political situation, mention is made in particular of the poor financial situation and the introduction of a new pension tax, which was felt especially by civil servants. Despite the provision of new revenue in the state budget, a larger appropriation for anti-aircraft artillery of larger calibre was to be cut. A major concern of the government was to enforce a reduction in the prices of basic necessities for the general public – coal, sugar, bread, petroleum products and salt. There were to be demonstrations in rural areas because of long-standing discontent. Crime of all kinds also increased in the country during this period, according to reports from

⁴⁴ Some other changes and the establishment of new military institutions Böhm, T. (1994). *Z dziejów naczelných władz wojskowych II Rzeczypospolitej: organizacja i kompetencje Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych w latach 1918–1939*. Warszawa: Bellona, pp. 208–210.

⁴⁵ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

⁴⁶ Further on the topic of Czechoslovak-Polish relations in the 1930s Zbořil, F. (2010). *Československá a česká zahraniční politika: minulost a současnost*. Praha: Leges, pp. 86–89.

⁴⁷ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

⁴⁸ On the situation in the Polish air force Kozłowski, E. (1964). *Wojsko Polskie 1936–1939...*, pp. 220–270.

⁴⁹ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

the military attaché. According to official statistics, over 95,000 police raids were carried out in the first nine months of 1935, compared with 28,000 in 1925. Public education continued to be in a poor state.⁵⁰ The Military Attaché concludes his report with his estimate that a development has begun which will eventually bring an end to the present Polish political regime, while he also discusses in detail the internal division of the political scene⁵¹ already mentioned in the previous sections of this study.

Foreign policy is introduced in the report for the fourth quarter of 1935 by the observation that the gap in opinion on foreign policy has narrowed somewhat. Poland was to seek full independence from anyone and a strengthening of her great power position. Polish-German relations are assessed as improved in this period. Immediately afterwards, however, an important piece of information is given from a very confidential source – the head of the operations section of the main staff - that they had no contacts with the Germans, that they did not trust them. He even speaks prophetically that the Germans will never give up the Baltic Sea corridor. From his point of view, Polish foreign policy is forced to balance between the Germans and the Soviets.⁵² In the text, the author of the report again draws attention to the exacerbated mood in the Těšín region, where the Polish public is informed by the propaganda press that injustice is being done to the local Poles. The specialist military press, even after an appeal from the military attaché, has not yet taken part in this harassment. On the part of the Czechoslovak representative, the report suggests a counter-campaign along unofficial lines outside official venues, where, on the contrary, the historical claims of Czechoslovakia would be emphasised. This, it is said, might reassure some Polish sections of the population.⁵³

In the miscellaneous general information section, it is stated that if the claim that the local trial of the murderers of the Polish Interior Minister Bronisław Pieracki⁵⁴ from the ranks of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists⁵⁵ could only have been conducted at all on the basis of documents received from Czechoslovakia proves true, it is counterproductive from the Czechoslovak

⁵⁰ Further on the situation in Polish education in 1930s from the point of view of Polish historians Brzoza, C., Sowa, A. L. (2006). *Historia Polski: 1918–1945*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, pp. 372–391.

⁵¹ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

⁵² Kosman, M. (2021). *Dějiny Polska*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova and Karolinum, pp. 295–296.

⁵³ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

⁵⁴ Details of the assassination of minister Pieracki Gawryszczak, M. (2014). *Bronisław Wilhelm Pieracki (1895–1934). Biografia polityczna*. Łódź: Księży Młyn, pp. 67–69.

⁵⁵ For more on the struggle of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the terrorist acts associated with it in the 1930s, see Řepa, T. (2019). *Banderovci. Politické souvislosti, následky zneužití tématu komunistickou propagandou, návaznost na hybridní konflikt v současnosti*. Praha: Academia, pp. 54–56.

point of view. It is directly expressed: “We did not gain with the Poles, we lost with the Ukrainians”. It is further stated in the text, on the basis of a confidential civilian source, that Śmigły-Rydz is said to be even directly forced to intervene in foreign policy. As the last piece of information of the whole report, it is mentioned that the tone of the government press is somewhat softened towards Czechoslovakia, on the contrary, it is sharpened against Lithuania⁵⁶, which the attaché sees as a usual phenomenon to divert attention.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The year 1935 appeared in the reports to the Military Office of the President of the Republic by the Czechoslovak military attaché in Poland as very rich in important events. These were far-reaching social changes, the reverberations of the economic crisis, rising international tensions, the unfolding of an arms race and the introduction of new measures. The fate of Poland and Czechoslovakia was similar in that, due to their disadvantageous geographical position, they were states surrounded on several sides by countries with hostile intentions. Foreign policy also corresponded to this. Even relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia were far from ideal, which was reflected in a number of areas and mutual mistrust. Poland's domestic politics were greatly affected by the departure of the charismatic politician and soldier Józef Piłsudski in May 1935. In December 1935, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk again abdicated as president of Czechoslovakia for health reasons. The great figures of the struggle for the creation of an independent Poland and Czechoslovakia left the scene at a similar time, when Europe was once again beginning to be gripped by the fear of another major conflict based on the revisionist aspirations of the countries defeated in the First World War. To understand the times, the reactions of politicians, the military administration and society as a whole, the reports of the Czechoslovak military attaché in Poland for a year are a valuable and somewhat forgotten source. In many ways, we can learn from them today, when Europe is once again experiencing a serious and far-reaching conflict.

⁵⁶ More on Polish-Lithuanian relations in the interwar period and the situation in the Baltic countries in general Galbreath, D., Ainius L., Lamoreaux, J. (2008). *Continuity and Change in the Baltic Sea Region. Comparing Foreign Policy*. New York: Rodopi, 185 pp.

⁵⁷ MHA, fund Military Office of the President of the Republic, carton 153. Summary Report on Poland – 4th Quarter 1935.

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