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## **Historical Policy during the 6<sup>th</sup> Term of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland (2007-2011)**

After 2005, the term „historical politics” assumed special significance in the Polish public discourse. However, this term denoting a policy shaping historical consciousness is not a new term. Eugeniusz Ponczek rightly points out that already in *„distant epochs of human history, governance was based on political initiatives, during which knowledge of the past was recalled and applied to the implementation of both sublime and particular political ends”*<sup>1</sup>. Observation of the Polish scene in recent years leaves us with an impression that the ideas associated with the formation of historical policies have been dominated by sharp political disputes, and the historical policy itself has assumed a function of excluding opponents, pointing at who is a patriot, or building a vision of history tailored to contemporary needs and divisions<sup>2</sup>.

*„History can be written in any scale. One may create a description of the history of the universe on a single page, but one may also write a biography of a dragonfly in 40 bulky volumes”*<sup>3</sup> – it is these words that Norman Davies uses as an opening line of one of his most important books *Europe*, which bears an intriguing subtitle: *Historian’s discourse with history*. The author rightly points out that the multitude of disciplines and the related increase of scientific publications instigates a number of serious tensions and disputes about the interpretation of historical facts<sup>4</sup>. These disputes often assume the form of conflict, confusion, controversy and political clashes. Initiatives in the name of narrow political interests may lead to the distortion of historical facts. Emotional approach to

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<sup>1</sup> E. Ponczek, *Polityka historyczna – od refleksji politycznej do racji stanu (ogląd z perspektywy polskiej)*, „Atheneum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne”, no. 28/2011, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> P. Machcewicz, *Spory o historię 2000-2011*, Kraków 2012.

<sup>3</sup> N. Davies, *Europa. Rozprawa historyka z historią*, Kraków 2010, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

the past or lack of due diligence in the consideration of the time gone expose the opponents to the danger of serious interpretative errors.

Political debates cultivated by politicians of different provenance, which constitute part of a wider public discourse, do not seem to take notice of the old Latin maxim *discernere vera ac falsa*, denoting the act of distinguishing the truth from falsehood<sup>5</sup>. It is however difficult not to agree with the opinion of Marcel Kosman, stating that „*manipulation of history for the purpose of propaganda is as old as the world*”<sup>6</sup>. These activities are intended to develop particular views on the past and as such, they sometimes disseminate sustainable social attitudes through the imposition of a particular interpretation of historical events onto citizens. In this context, I would like to draw attention to the historical policy of the 6th term of the Sejm<sup>7</sup>. Because of the increasing wealth of empirical material and in the face of publishing limitations, I will examine the resolutions passed by the Sejm between 2007 and 2011 in relation to commemoration of both particular historical events, as well as of those which commemorated the victims of war or national heroes, the political reconstruction of disputes and debates about the past, which surfaced in the wake of draft resolutions raised by various political factions. These disputes met with great interest on the part of journalists and political commentators, and in numerous cases resulted in national debates. Such was the case of the draft resolution on celebrating the 20th anniversary of the first non-communist government of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, or the draft resolution commemorating the Soviet aggression on Poland on 17 September 1939.

In the past two decades, Polish Sejm has passed more than 220 anniversary resolutions. As noted by Marek Henzler in the magazine *Polityka*, the members of parliament have been actively involved in historical politics since the early 1990s, and anniversary resolutions have been accompanied by „battles worthy

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<sup>5</sup> For more see: M. Kosman, *Discernere vera ac falsa. Z badań nad manipulowaniem wiedzą o przeszłości*, Poznań 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> The scope of the research is rooted in the author's interests and in the research conducted in the framework of a research project of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education on *Great anniversaries in public discourse and social memory*, by the research team of the Department of Political Culture of the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań between 2009 and 2011.

of valiant ancestors”<sup>8</sup>. And there is no element of exaggeration in this statement. After 1989, the Sejm in fact became the arena of political struggle for honouring individuals and historical events. At its meetings in the 1990s, it „fought” for the honour of generals Maczek or Okulicki and disputed over the figure of Józef Piłsudski, who to this day evokes many emotions. At a time when Electoral Action Solidarity wielded power, the anniversary resolutions of the Sejm had been more critical of the previous system than those passed after 2001 when Democratic Left Alliance returned to power<sup>9</sup>. The increase in the number of historical draft resolutions forwarded by politicians can be observed after 2005. It is also worth noting that the projects commemorating Catholic Church figures in Poland, Primate Stefan Wyszyński, Archbishop Kazimierz Majdański or Father Zdzisław Peszkowski among others, became popular. As noted by the above-mentioned M. Henzler, the draft resolution for „Jesus to become the king of Poland” was negatively received. Archbishop Leszek Sławoj Głódź advised the members „to pray and repent” and stay away from church matters”<sup>10</sup>.

During its 6th term, the Sejm adopted over 70 anniversary resolutions (historical). In 2007, the members disputed two resolutions, i.e. the first instituting 13 April the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Katyń Massacre<sup>11</sup>, and another related to the commemoration of the 26th anniversary of the introduction of martial law. In the project, the members suggested a paragraph stating that the „Sejm of the Polish Republic is in favour of settling all accounts with martial law and try those responsible for all the crimes of the period, as well as against relativisation of the then committed crimes and blurring individual liabilities of the instigators of martial law”<sup>12</sup>. In the face of such record, the representatives of the left faction noted (forwarding separate draft resolutions on the matter) that the decision of the Parliament should give particular tribute to the victims of martial law and be subservient to national reconciliation, rather than divide Poles. In the conclusively adopted

<sup>8</sup> M. Henzler, *Sejm pisze historię*, „Polityka”, 27 marca 2010.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Uchwała w sprawie ustanowienia Dnia Pamięci Ofiar Zbrodni Katyńskiej, M.P. of 2007 No. 87, item 944.

<sup>12</sup> Parliament issue no. 94, 5 December 2007.

resolution, it was stated that the Parliament was in favour of settling all accounts regarding martial law. The resolution also recalled the estimated 100 fatalities of this period, 10 thousand detainees and the Poles who had been forced to emigrate. The document concluded with the following sequence: „We remember the merits of all the Poles who during the communist regime sought democratic solutions for the Polish state, in which power authorities as representatives of a sovereign nation would uphold law, justice and civil liberties”<sup>13</sup>.

In this context, Ryszard Terlecki, the representative of PiS, pointed out that the lack of agreement of the left faction to include the sentence about the necessity for settling all accounts in the resolution and its reluctance to use the adjective *communist*, both constituted „attempts to plant lies in a resolution of the Parliament”<sup>14</sup>. 362 deputies voted in favour of the resolution, 33 against and there were 5 abstentions. The MPs dispute about the past at the beginning of the new term had been an announcement of a number of ensuing conflicts over history, particularly in light of the upcoming important, round anniversaries, such as the formation of a government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the commemoration of the anniversary of the Soviet aggression on Poland.

In 2008, Sejm passed several anniversary documents. One of the first was the resolution announcing 2008 the Year of Independence. It was meant to refer not only to 6 October 1788, inauguration date of the Great Sejm session concluded with enactment of the Constitution of 3 May, but also 11 November 1918, when - as stated in the resolution - „the act of rebirth of the independent, sovereign and free Polish Republic, a just and democratic state, equal among equals in Europe was accomplished”<sup>15</sup>.

Several months later, on 5 November 2008, the Sejm approved by acclamation a resolution to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Poland's independence. The document, prepared by the Presidium of the Sejm, recalled

<sup>13</sup> Uchwała w sprawie upamiętnienia 26. Rocznicy wprowadzenia stanu wojennego, M.P. of 2007 No. 100, item 1084.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Uchwała w 26. Rocznicę wprowadzenia stanu wojennego* - <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/title,Uchwała-w-26-rocznicę-wprowadzenia-stanu-wojennego,wid,9507484,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=1d91b> (11 XI 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Uchwała w sprawie ogłoszenia roku 2008 Rokiem Niepodległości, M.P. of 2008 No. 14, item 145.

the commitment of the entire nation in the struggle for independence. The MPs expressed their gratitude and paid tribute to the entire nation, which „in the difficult period of captivity had upheld its devotion to freedom, which had led to the reinstatement of independence and to the establishment of the Second Republic”<sup>16</sup>.

In 2008, the Sejm honored in its resolutions the memory of General August Emil Fieldorf „Nil” among others, recognising him as „a man who had devoted his life to the struggle for independence and sovereign existence of the Polish Republic”<sup>17</sup> (by acclamation), Alexander Świętochowski as „one of the greatest figures of Polish culture”<sup>18</sup> (resolution adopted by voting, i.e. 270 Members were in favour, three votes against), Bronisław Geremek, labelling him as „one of the pillars of the democratic opposition in the 1970s and 1980s, who had left „abundant evidence of his wise patriotism”. The Sejm recalled Geremek’s merit for the construction of a „free, democratic and sovereign Poland in strong and united Europe”<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the MPs decided to recognise Bronisław Geremek naming by acclamation one of the rooms of the Sejm by his name.

In October 2008, the Parliament commemorated the 30th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II. This draft resolution was also adopted by acclamation. The Chamber shared the widespread belief that the selection of a Polish pope had opened a new era in the history not only of the Catholic Church, but also Poland and the world<sup>20</sup>.

It is worth noting in this context that in that period the Parliament did not make any efforts to commemorate any individuals connected with the communist rule. Krzysztof Pilawski in „Przegląd” summarised it the following fashion: „PRL – pure evil, its opponents – pure good”, while pointing out that

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<sup>16</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 90. rocznicy odzyskania przez Polskę niepodległości, M.P. of 2008 No. 85, item 748.

<sup>17</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 55. rocznicy śmierci generała Augusta Emila Fieldorfa – „Nila”, M.P. of 2008 No. 19, item 198.

<sup>18</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Aleksandra Świętochowskiego w 70. rocznicę śmierci, M.P. of 2008 No. 47, item 422.

<sup>19</sup> Uchwała poświęcona pamięci Bronisława Geremka, M.P. of 2008 No. 55, item 489.

<sup>20</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 30. rocznicy rozpoczęcia pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II, M.P. of 2008 No. 80, item 699.

the axiological order had been reflected in the documents adopted by the Parliament in the last 20 years<sup>21</sup>. This is also evidenced by the resolutions adopted by the Sejm of the 6<sup>th</sup> term.

The year 2008 also marks the anniversaries of two other important events of the past, i.e. the 65th Anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a symbol of bravery and generosity<sup>22</sup> and the 40th anniversary of the events of 1968, a resolution adopted by acclamation in March. The Chamber expressed its appreciation and respect to all, especially to students who had protested against „communist dictatorship”. The resolution states that this commitment „was a clear sign and proof of the fact that the Poles were not reconciled to the system imposed on them by force”<sup>23</sup>.

The documents adopted by the Sejm depict the period of communist rule as a period maimed by persecution and repression of the Poles. However, taking into account the public opinion polls about the past, we may conclude that the Poles' assessment of the communist period is divided. The surveys of the Public Opinion Research Centre published in 2009 reveal that 44% of the population appreciates PRL as a period in the country's history, and only 1% fewer respondents express a negative opinion on the subject. Studies showed that the perception of the bygone era had only slightly changed throughout the recent years, i.e. the number of respondents assessing the system critically had slightly fallen and the number of people with an opinion on the matter had increased. Naturally, generational change plays an important role in the shift, i.e. the younger the respondents, the higher the proportion of people devoid of their own view on the matter. However, when taking into account respondents older than 35 years, 54% were in favour of the period, and 42% expressed a negative attitude<sup>24</sup>.

Poles, when asked about the issue of settling the post-war reality in Poland, in majority believe (76% of respondents) that the period of settling

<sup>21</sup> K. Pilawski, *Widmo Polski Ludowej*, „Przegląd” no. 26, 26 lipca 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Uchwała w 65. rocznicę wybuchu Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim, M.P. of 2008 No. 33, item 287.

<sup>23</sup> Uchwała w 40. rocznicę Marca 1968 r., M.P. of 2008 No. 24, item 234.

<sup>24</sup> Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, *Oceny i rozliczenia okresu PRL w opinii publicznej*, Komunikat z badań BS/93/2009, Warszawa 2009.

accounts should be terminated and it should be left to historians. Almost one in five respondents expresses an opposite view<sup>25</sup>.

In 2008, the Parliament also commemorated the victims of the „Golgotha of the East”. The draft resolution had been prepared by the Presidium of the Sejm. The Chamber referred in the adopted text of the document to the historical events of 1939, which – as we read in the resolution – „had initiated the suffering of millions of Polish citizens”. Moreover, the MPs pointed out that the memory of „Golgotha of the East” also constituted a plea for reconciliation<sup>26</sup>.

In the context of the resolution on „Golgotha of the East”, we must mention the significance of one of the most important historical resolutions adopted by the Parliament in 2009, i.e. that commemorating Soviet aggression on Poland on 17 September 1939. The work on the final text of the resolution divided the MPs. The wedge issue was the recognition, postulated by PiS, of the Katyń massacre as genocide. The conflict accompanying the resolution, which was labelled by most of the media as „embarrassing”, threatened the adoption of the document or its adoption after the anniversary. In fact, there existed two draft resolutions, the first proposed by the then Speaker of the Sejm, Bronisław Komorowski and another forwarded by the other members of PiS. Although the substantive content of the two projects was similar, the project presented by Jarosław Kaczyński’s party was of much more severe character. The authors wrote in it that every day of spreading propaganda glorifying Stalin and Soviet Union had been an insult to the Polish state and that the Red Army had brought death, havoc, genocide, murders, rape, looting and atrocities to the Polish land<sup>27</sup>. The project was criticised both by the members of PO, as well as by members of other clubs, who announced that they would not support the resolution in the form proposed by PiS. Zbigniew Chlebowski, the head of the PO club, stated that it was a resolution which „sought absolute confrontation. (...) was characterised by anger and aggression.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> Uchwała w sprawie upamiętnienia ofiar „Golgoty Wschodu”, M.P. of 2008 No. 70, item 628.

<sup>27</sup> See: *Uchwała na 17 września* – <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=15735> (3 XI 2013).

(...) A large part of this resolution is the language of confrontation with Russia”<sup>28</sup>.

In response, the PiS MPs submitted a new draft resolution to the same effect as the resolution on 17 September adopted two years earlier by the Senate, co-authored by Stefan Niesiołowski. Zbigniew Girzyński of PiS expressed hope that „this time, PO, and Parliament Speaker Stefan Niesiołowski in particular, would withdraw their insofar policy (referring to Niesiołowski”s statement for one of newspapers that the Katyń crime had not been a genocide). According to PiS, Niesiołowski had exceeded „all measures of national disloyalty” - ed. BS) and adopt that text of the resolution”<sup>29</sup>. In its resolution of 14 September 2007, the Senate stated that „the Soviet attack on Poland, being the result of the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact, had conclusively shattered any chances for a successful, long-lasting resistance to the German aggression. It had been not only a denial of reciprocal and international agreements, but also a cynical, brutal and bloody act of violence against a country defending its independence. (...) The Polish Senate recalls this tragic chapter in Polish - Russian relations, rejecting the attempts to falsify history, to diminish the crimes the Communists and to deny the label of genocide in connection to the Katyń massacre”<sup>30</sup>.

The leader of PiS Jarosław Kaczyński stated that he would not consent to the adoption of the resolution on the 17 September attack, if the word „genocide” was not included in relation to the massacre at Katyń. During a press conference he said: „In this case, there is no question of compromise or political games”<sup>31</sup>. On 15 September 2009, after a meeting with the Parliament Speaker Komorowski, the representatives of all parliamentary clubs reached an agreement on the resolution. The agreed text featured the term „signs of

<sup>28</sup> See: *Chlebowski: uchwałą PiS ws. 17 września – nacechowana złością, agresją* - [http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/349603,chlebowski\\_uchwala\\_pis\\_ws\\_17\\_wrzesnia\\_nacechowana\\_zloscia\\_agresja.html](http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/349603,chlebowski_uchwala_pis_ws_17_wrzesnia_nacechowana_zloscia_agresja.html) (3 XI 2011).

<sup>29</sup> See: *PiS ma nową propozycję dotyczącą uchwały ws. 17 września*, <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=15793> (3 XI 2013).

<sup>30</sup> See: *Uchwała Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 14 września 2007 r. w 68. rocznicę agresji sowieckiej na Polskę* - <http://ww2.senat.pl/k6/dok/uch/039/539uch.pdf> (3 XI 13).

<sup>31</sup> See: *Szef PiS: nie zrezygnujemy ze słowa „ludobójstwo” w uchwale* - <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=15812> (3 XI 13).

genocide”, but it did not solely refer to the murder of Polish officers at Katyń. The resolution adopted by acclamation on 23 September 2009 stated that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had caused „the fourth partition of Poland” and the country „fell victim of two totalitarian regimes: Nazism and Communism”. The passage of the resolution which had instigated such a fierce dispute read as follows: „The fate of Poland was shared by many other nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia lost their sovereignty and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Finland and Romania were threatened. The Gulag Archipelago claimed millions of lives of all peoples of the region, including many Soviet citizens. The organization of the system, its perseverance and the scale of the phenomenon marked these crimes, including the Katyń massacre. Polish Parliament is of the opinion that the Polish-Russian reconciliation requires respect for historical truth. It must not be silenced or manipulated. Polish Parliament condemns all attempts to falsify history and calls upon all people of good will in the Russian Federation to adopt a stance of common solidarity in favour of disclosure and condemnation of the crimes of the Stalinist era”<sup>32</sup>.

After reaching the compromise on the parliamentary resolution, Speaker Bronisław Komorowski, when addressing the media, stated that the dispute had been unnecessary and harmful, but had led to important elucidations for the sake of future solutions<sup>33</sup>. It is however worth noting that it had not been the first and the last - in the words of the Speaker – „unnecessary and harmful” dispute between the MPs of the sixth term Sejm over historical resolutions, as the adoption of the document on the 20th anniversary of the formation of the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki had been accompanied by strong emotions as well.

The parliament vote was preceded by a heated debate on the draft resolution, whose provisions met with objections on the part of PiS. The Sejm stated in the act that the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki „taking over

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<sup>32</sup> Uchwała upamiętniająca agresję Związku Radzieckiego na Polskę 17 września 1939 r., M.P. of 2009 No. 63, item 831.

<sup>33</sup> See: *Koniec sporu o uchwałę ws. 17 września*, <http://www.rm24.pl/fakty/polska/news-koniec-sporu-o-uchwale-ws-17-wrzesnia,nId,124220> (30 X 2013).

the power in the conditions of deep economic and financial dilapidation, undertook a series of reforms of historic significance for the future of Poland” and that it was grateful to this government. During the debate, PiS representative Zbigniew Girzyński denied that PiS opposed the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Mazowiecki’s government, or depreciated the Prime Minister, but according to the representative, „the truth is that there appeared three million unemployed, economic pathologies and many other aspects of social life, of which the state of national football is to this day a perfect example. [...] We really see no reason to express gratitude to Czesław Kiszczak, who held a function of minister in this government, or Florian Siwicki, both of whom are today sitting in the dock”<sup>34</sup>.

At the same time, the MP informed the Chamber that PiS would submit amendments to the content of the resolution. The club wanted to change the content so that the Parliament did not express gratitude to the first non-communist government, but rather that it thanked „Prime Minister Mazowiecki and the Solidarity members in his government”. The debate - among other members - featured Marek Borowski, who among other things said: „In the fashion for quotes, there is a quote that comes to my mind after hearing and seeing everything that has been going on, which is: *„I am sad, O Lord!”* Now, we have become specialists in historical policy - parliamentary historical policy. Here, in the Sejm, 460 deputies are trying to determine by voting who was good and who was bad, which historical events to judge. This is a wrong path. It simply makes no sense”<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, the deputy warned against „voting or stating that Mazowiecki was a great Prime Minister. I think it is humiliating even for the Prime Minister Mazowiecki and for this government”<sup>36</sup>.

After the amendments tabled by PiS among others were rejected, Zbigniew Girzyński requested a change in the method of voting and adoption of the resolution by acclamation. The deputy explained it by the willingness of his

<sup>34</sup> See: *Stenogram 49 posiedzenia Sejmu VI kadencji, 2 dzień (10-09-2009), Zbigniew Girzyński* - <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata6.nsf> (3 XI 2013).

<sup>35</sup> See: *Stenogram 49 posiedzenia Sejmu VI kadencji, 2 dzień (10-09-2009), Marek Borowski*, <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata6.nsf> (1 X 2013).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

club to compromise and to venerate Mazowiecki and the people of „Solidarity” in his government. The Girzyński’s application caused consternation among other deputies, and Speaker Bronisław Komorowski called the Council of Seniors, after which he stated that the adoption of the resolution by acclamation was now impossible without violating the Rules of Parliament. After the break, which was requested by Z. Girzyński, the Parliament adopted the resolution. 374 deputies were in favour, two against and there were 11 abstentions. Among the voting 127 PiS members, 121 voted in favour, 2 against and 4 absented.

The text of the resolution stated that „the Parliament of the Republic expresses its gratitude to the first non-communist government of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki”<sup>37</sup>. Among other resolutions adopted by the Parliament in 2009, was a document commemorating the anniversary of the initiation of the Round Table and Poland’s acquisition of freedom. It was recalled that these events had begun the transition to democracy throughout Central and Eastern Europe and that it had not only changed Poland, but also the entire continent. The MPs praised in the resolution the „wisdom and foresight of the authors of the transformation’ and stated that the peaceful transfer of power in 1989 had been an inducement to build a stable democracy in a country with secure borders and good relations with its neighbors<sup>38</sup>.

Less than a month later, the deputies recalled the 90th anniversary of the elections to the Legislative Sejm. Members of VI Sejm of the Third Republic expressed their appreciation for the members of the Chamber selected on 26 January 1919, the first, „after 123 years of slavery, political representation of the Polish nation”. The resolution exposed a huge role of the Sejm in the process of reconstruction of Polish statehood and parliamentarism<sup>39</sup>.

In March, the Parliament commemorated the 10th Anniversary of Poland’s accession to NATO and the 60th Anniversary of the North Atlantic

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<sup>37</sup> Uchwała w sprawie 20. rocznicy utworzenia pierwszego niekomunistycznego rządu – Premiera Tadeusza Mazowieckiego, M.P. of 2009 No. 59, item 792.

<sup>38</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia rocznicy rozpoczęcia obrad Okrągłego Stołu i odzyskania przez Polskę wolności, M.P. of 2009 No. 6, item 93.

<sup>39</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 90. Rocznicy wyborów do Sejmu Ustawodawczego, M.P. of 2009 No. 9, item 85.

Treaty. Poland's accession to the pact, together with the Czech Republic and the Republic of Hungary, was recognised by the Members as an act that had conclusively undone the Yalta order. The resolution emphasised the role of the Poland's security in the international arena and expressed readiness to undertake efforts leading to its further consolidation and expansion<sup>40</sup>.

Yet another resolution of the Parliament concerned the anniversary of John Paul II's address on the forum of the Sejm in 1999. Once again, the Pope's merits in relation to the democratic changes that had taken place in Poland were remembered. The resolution also became an opportunity to recall that John Paul II had supported Poland's integration with the European Union, at the same time referring to the need to „build the European building on the basis of common values”<sup>41</sup>.

Among other resolutions adopted by the Parliament in the second half of 2009, there were the following acts of commemoration: the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles<sup>42</sup>, the 440th anniversary of the Union of Lublin<sup>43</sup>, remembering the victims of crimes committed in 1937-1939 against the Poles living in the Soviet Union<sup>44</sup>, the tragic fate of the Poles in the Eastern Borderlands<sup>45</sup> and the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II<sup>46</sup>. In 2009, there was no shortage of resolutions reminding particular individuals.

The Parliament paid tribute to the memory of Jerzy Grotowski (recognized for „the international dimension of his creative achievements”)<sup>47</sup>, Eugeniusz F. Kwiatkowski („eminent author and implementer of the concept of development of the Polish economy, whose prudent initiatives in the field of industrial policy and foreign trade had produced one of the fastest economic growth in

<sup>40</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 10. rocznicy przystąpienia Polski do NATO i 60. rocznicy istnienia Paktu Północnoatlantyckiego, M.P. of 2009 No. 18, item 228.

<sup>41</sup> Uchwała w 10. rocznicę wystąpienia Jana Pawła II w Sejmie Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, M.P. of 2009 No. 39, item 593.

<sup>42</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 90. rocznicy podpisania Traktatu Wersalskiego, M.P. of 2009 No. 41, item 645.

<sup>43</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 440-lecia Unii Lubelskiej, M.P. of 2009 No. 41, item 646.

<sup>44</sup> Uchwała upamiętniająca ofiary zbrodni dokonanych w latach 1937-1939 na Polakach zamieszkałych w ZSRR, M.P. of 2009 No. 47, item 684.

<sup>45</sup> Uchwała w sprawie tragicznego losu Polaków na Kresach Wschodnich, M.P. of 2009 No. 47, item 684.

<sup>46</sup> Uchwała w 70. Rocznice wybuchu II wojny światowej, M.P. of 2009 No. 55, item 766.

<sup>47</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 10. rocznicy śmierci Jerzego Grotowskiego, M.P. of 2009 No. 3, item 12.

Europe at the time and improved the living conditions of Polish society”)<sup>48</sup>, Mieczysław Karłowicz („etched in the history of Polish musical culture as one of the most outstanding composers, a great symphonist, author of brilliant symphonic poems, comparable to the most eminent contemporary European composers in terms of artistic mastery of the genre, creator of the canon of Nouveau Polish songs, a great publicist”)<sup>49</sup>, Grażyna Bacewicz („world famous composer”, Parliament pays tribute to her memory, „in the hope that her work will accompany the next generations, promoting the name of Poland in the world”)<sup>50</sup>, Maciej Rataj („the outstanding figure of the Pole is a model for future generations”)<sup>51</sup>, Ryszard Siwiec („the hero of three nations, faithful to the motto of Polish insurgents and soldiers “For our freedom and yours” „),<sup>52</sup>, Zygmunt Krasiński („one of the greatest writers of Polish Romanticism”)<sup>53</sup>, Helena Modrzejewska („she spread the fame of Polish art across the ocean and in her own glory, she sought the glory of her Fatherland”)<sup>54</sup>, Jan Karski („one of the heroes of the 20th century”, „well deserved recognition for the Fatherland”)<sup>55</sup>, Wojciech Korfanty („is one of the leading figures in the gallery of our national history”, „a symbol of Polish national identity in Upper Silesia”)<sup>56</sup>, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz („he was a very colorful personality, hiding his concern for the fate of the country and European culture under a clown’s mask”)<sup>57</sup>, Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko („His life was a gift for the history of Poland, the most fully expressed in the words of St. Paul: „Overcome evil with good”, „his attitude served Poland well and left the memory of his martyrdom in our hearts”)<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Uchwała w 70. Rocznice wybuchu II wojny światowej, M.P. of 2009 No. 55, item 766.

<sup>49</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Mieczysława Karłowicza, M.P. of 2009 No. 6, item 62.

<sup>50</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Grażyny Bacewicz, M.P. of 2009 No. 10, item 117.

<sup>51</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Macieja Rataja w 125. rocznicę urodzin, M.P. of 2009 No. 12, item 145.

<sup>52</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Ryszarda Siwca, M.P. of 2009 No. 14, item 171.

<sup>53</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Zygmunta Krasińskiego w 150. rocznicę Jego śmierci, M.P. of 2009 No. 17, item 205.

<sup>54</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Heleny Modrzejewskiej w 100. rocznicę śmierci, M.P. of 2009 No. 22, item 275.

<sup>55</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Jana Karskiego w 95. rocznicę Jego urodzin, M.P. of 2009 No. 40, item 626.

<sup>56</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Wojciecha Korfantego, M.P. of 2009 No. 47, item 685.

<sup>57</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza w 70. rocznicę Jego śmierci, M.P. of 2009 No. 59, item 793.

<sup>58</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci księdza Jerzego Popiełuszki, M.P. of 2009 No. 69, item 889.

The first resolution passed by the Parliament in 2010 was a document commemorating the 90th anniversary of Poland's marriage to the sea. The Treaty of Versailles ending World War I Poland had given Poland a small section of the sea coast stretching from the gates of Sopot up to Wierzychucin, at the height of the Lake of Żarnowiec. On 10 February 1920, in the port of Puck, General Józef Haller had performed a symbolic patriotic act, i.e. ceremonial marrying of Poland to the Baltic Sea. Recalling the event, the deputies of the VI Sejm adopted a resolution by acclamation, in which they stressed the importance the general's act<sup>59</sup>.

In March 2010, the Parliament celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the International Women's Day. The draft resolution had been submitted the Left club. Its content recognised the rigors of women's everyday toil<sup>60</sup>. Moreover, the Parliament pointed to the violation of women's rights, gender discrimination, and to the fact that their share of power did not correspond to their potential and competence. The act was later summed up in one of the social networking portals by Agnieszka Pomaska from PO in the following words: „the parliament, by the so called acclamation, adopted a dumb, sexist resolution to mark the 100th anniversary of the Women's Day. Fortunately, not everyone applauded”<sup>61</sup>. Later, in her statement for Superstacja, she pointed out that Parliament had reduced women to the role of victims. „I was surprised that one wants to refer to women in this fashion on the occasion of 8 March. I hope that on the Day of Man, a similar resolution, with a little more sense, will also be accepted”<sup>62</sup>, she added.

In comparison to the previous year, in 2010 the Parliament adopted far fewer anniversary resolutions. Most of the acts commemorated those who with their attitude and activity had gone down in the pages of Polish history.

<sup>59</sup> Uchwała w sprawie 90. rocznicy zaślubin Polski z morzem, M.P. of 2010 No. 8, item 71.

<sup>60</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 100. rocznicy ustanowienia Międzynarodowego Dnia Kobiet, M.P. of 2010 No. 15, item 147. This is the second parliamentary resolution during the 6<sup>th</sup> term relating directly to women. In December 2008, a resolution commemorating the 90th anniversary of Polish women's right to vote had been passed, M.P. of 2008 No. 94, item 802.

<sup>61</sup> M. Henzler, *op. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> *W Superstacji o przyjęciu przez Sejm uchwały o uczczeniu 100. rocznicy Dnia Kobiet* - <http://www.pomaska.pl/2166/w-superstacji-o-przyjeciu-przez-sejm-uchwaly-o-uczczeniu-100-rocznicy-dnia-kobiet.html> (1 X 2013).

The Parliament commemorated: Irena Sendler (the Sejm „pays tribute to her heroism and merits, and would like to see Irena Sendler’s attitude as a beacon for present and future generations in a constant struggle for a better world”)<sup>63</sup>, King Casimir the Great („his unique political sense, diplomatic and organisational talents had made it possible to overcome a very difficult international situation and to place the reborn Kingdom of Poland in a row of the fastest developing countries in Central Europe of that time”)<sup>64</sup>, Maciej Rataj („eminent statesman, patriot, distinguished in building and strengthening the Independent Republic”)<sup>65</sup>, Jan Karski (a great Pole who dedicated his life to the service of the oppressed nations and to the truth”)<sup>66</sup>, Henryk Wieniawski („one of the greatest virtuosos of the second half of the 19th century”)<sup>67</sup>, Zygmunt Gloger („a great Pole who at the time of partition, in spite of difficulties, consistently pursued his life passion of saving the spiritual heritage of his homeland, its history, culture and traditions, from oblivion”)<sup>68</sup>, Maria Konopnicka („outstanding Polish poet and writer, labeled as a bard of Polish people”)<sup>69</sup>, Ignacy Jan Paderewski („one of the most important figures in Polish history. His work as musician and also as politician and philanthropist distinguished him from among the greatest personalities of world culture and politics of the last century”)<sup>70</sup>.

The biggest controversy was sparked by the draft resolution on the establishment of 2011 the Year of Czesław Miłosz. The motion for a complete rejection of the project was forwarded by Anna Sobecka during the work of the Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Media, who among other things

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<sup>63</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Ireny Sendlerowej w 100. rocznicę Jej urodzin, M.P. of 2010 No. 10, item 86.

<sup>64</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci króla Kazimierza Wielkiego w 700. rocznicę Jego urodzin, M.P. of 2010 No. 35, item 485.

<sup>65</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Macieja Rataja w 70. rocznicę śmierci, M.P. of 2010 No. 47, item 648.

<sup>66</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Jana Karskiego w 10. rocznicę Jego śmierci, M.P. of 2010 No. 51, item 675.

<sup>67</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Henryka Wieniawskiego w 175. rocznicę Jego urodzin, M.P. of 2010 No. 51, item 676.

<sup>68</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Zygmunta Glogera w 100. rocznicę Jego śmierci, M.P. of 2010 No. 53, item 716.

<sup>69</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Marii Konopnickiej, M.P. of 2010 No. 70, item 865.

<sup>70</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Ignacego Jana Paderewskiego w 150. rocznicę jego urodzin, M.P. of 2010 No. 94, item 1074.

stated: „Czesław Miłosz insulted the Poles. His books are full of various kinds of contempt directed at Poles. He sneers at all social strata. His insinuation that in Poland illiteracy prevailed and peasants were awful, smelly fools who should be taught to think is a great insult. This is in *Captive Mind*, the Cracow edition of 1990”<sup>71</sup>.

Kazimierz Kutz stood in defense of the poet, claiming that the detachment of quotes from their literary, poetic or social context attests to „terribly ill will and hatred towards Miłosz”<sup>72</sup>. During the vote on the resolution, 16 committee members voted in favour, one against and there were two abstentions. When passing the resolution in the parliament, 362 MPs were in favour, 12 voted against, and there were 28 abstentions. The Chamber paid „homage to one of the greatest authors of our time, who left a permanent mark in the 20th-century Polish and world literature”. The Sejm, convinced „of particular importance for his creative output for national and global heritage”, declared the year 2011 the Year of Czesław Miłosz<sup>73</sup>.

Among the anniversary documents of 2010, the 70th anniversary resolution commemorating the Katyń massacre, adopted by acclamation the day before the Smoleńsk plane crash, is worth noting<sup>74</sup>. This motion was accompanied by no disputes that had been present at the above-mentioned resolution on 17 September 1939. The deputies paid tribute to „the memory of Polish prisoners of war - victims of the genocidal Soviet regime”. The resolution stated that the Sejm „expects all the circumstances of the crime to be clarified, the pertaining documents to be disclosed and the victims to be rehabilitated”. The Act emphasises that decision of the highest national USSR authorities to murder more than 20,000 unarmed Polish army officers, officers of the State Police, administration and judiciary „had violated the most elementary principles of law and morality”. Moreover, the MPs also pointed out that the memory of the Katyń tragedy had been hidden and distorted for half a century and, „to this day the whereabouts of many of remains of the victims are

<sup>71</sup> See: *Spór o Miłosza w Sejmie. „Jego książki są pełne pogardy wobec Polaków”* - <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/311351,spor-o-milosza-w-sejmie-jego-ksiazki-sa-pelne-pogardy-wobec,id,t.html> (1 X 2013).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> Uchwała w sprawie ustanowienia roku 2011 Rokiem Czesława Miłosza, M.P. of 2010 No. 74, item 929.

<sup>74</sup> Uchwała upamiętniająca 70. rocznicę zbrodni katyńskiej, M.P. of 2010 No. 21, item 198.

unknown”. The families of victims who cultivated the memory of their loved ones and who never surrendered their efforts to learn the truth, were exposed to reprisals. In its resolution, the Parliament stressed that “joint participation of the Polish and Russian Prime Ministers Donald Tusk and Vladimir Putin in the ceremony in Katyń (7 April 2010 - ed. B.S.) constituted an important gesture of a symbolic dimension”, and that „the presence of the Russian Prime Minister on the graves of Katyń was a prelude to the determination of the Russian side to instigate the positive outcome in the matter”. According to the resolution, the Polish-Russian reconciliation was only possible on the foundation of respect for truth and memory.

On 24 September, the Sejm honoured the memory of the victims of the mass murder in Pomerania from autumn 1939 to spring 1940<sup>75</sup>, and in the final resolution adopted in December 2010, the members celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the foundation of the Rifle Association in Lviv and „Strzelec” in Cracow<sup>76</sup>.

In 2011, the Parliament adopted the smallest number of historic resolutions throughout its 6th term. The first anniversary act was adopted in March. It commemorated the 67th anniversary of the martyrdom of the family of Józef and Wiktoria Ulm, who had saved Jews. The Sejm by the same token commemorated the many thousands of Poles who, despite the risks of death penalty or a concentration camp, by various means, such as producing false documents, providing shelter, transporting from place to place at the risk of their own and their families’ life loss and providing food, „formed a chain of charity, supporting Jews at the time of the horrible Nazi occupation”. In the opinion of the deputies, „the extraordinary heroism had restored faith in the existence of human dignity, love and justice, and had given hope to defeat evil. It had also been an expression of solidarity with the representatives of the people with whom Poles had lived together for centuries”<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci ofiar masowej zbrodni na Pomorzu Gdańskim – w Lasach Piaśnickich, Lesie Szpegawskim i Mniszku, M.P. of 2010 No. 69, item 859.

<sup>76</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia 100. rocznicy powstania Związku Strzeleckiego we Lwowie i „Strzelca” w Krakowie, M.P. of 2011 No. 1, item 3.

<sup>77</sup> Uchwała w 67. rocznicę męczeńskiej śmierci rodziny Józefa i Wiktorii Ulmów wyrażającej hołd Polakom, którzy ratowali Żydów skazanych na Zagładę przez niemieckiego okupanta, M.P. of 2011 No. 28, item 303.

At one of April meeting, the deputies commemorated two events. The first was the 25th anniversary of the events at Chernobyl (the Parliament beckoned the international community to increase the intensity of activities in favour of socio-economic development and revitalisation of the areas affected by the disaster)<sup>78</sup>, and the second commemorated the 93rd anniversary of the Silesian Uprising. The Parliament through this resolution urged the Poles to follow the model of love for the homeland set by the participants of the Uprising and to see it as a source of pride and satisfaction<sup>79</sup>.

In June, the Parliament commemorated the 100th anniversary of Scouting. However, the resolution was not accepted by acclamation, but by voting, in which 257 MPs were in its favour, 145 against and there were 16 abstentions. In the adopted text of the resolution, the Parliament paid tribute to all generations and all formations of Polish Scouting and expressed hope that the work of the founders, Andrzej and Olga Małkowi, would be continued throughout the century<sup>80</sup>.

In 2011, the Parliament commemorated the memory of Stanisław Brzozowski („a great thinker, supporter of work philosophy in the era of growing capitalism, sought to transform the Polish identity and locate it in the contemporary European context. He occupies an important place in the minds of contemporary Poles”)<sup>81</sup> and Jan Kułakowski, who died on 25 June 2011, so this was not a historical resolution. However, the Sejm, appreciating J. Kułakowski’s merits stated that his death „was a great loss for Poland and that he had been a brilliant politician, one of the key negotiators of our membership in the European Union and builder of the Polish position in the United Europe”<sup>82</sup>.

This historical summary of the resolutions adopted by the VI Sejm illustrates the volume of documents adopted by the Members which relate to the Parliament’s historical policy. It is naturally not my intention to state that

<sup>78</sup> Uchwała w sprawie 25. Rocznicy tragicznej katastrofy w Czarnobylu, M.P. of 2011 No. 34, item 396.

<sup>79</sup> Uchwała w sprawie upamiętnienia 90. Rocznicy III Powstania Śląskiego, M.P. of 2001 No. 34, item 395.

<sup>80</sup> Uchwała upamiętniająca 100-lecie polskiego harcerstwa, M.P. of 2011 No. 50, item 550.

<sup>81</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Stanisława Brzozowskiego w 100. rocznicę Jego śmierci, M.P. of 2011 No. 34, item 397.

<sup>82</sup> Uchwała w sprawie uczczenia pamięci Jana Kułakowskiego, M.P. of 2011 No. 67, item 656.

parliamentary anniversary resolutions are unnecessary, but in my opinion, the deputies should demonstrate greater diligence in this regard. The excessive number of anniversary acts meant that many of them went unnoticed within the society and were exposed only those who bitterly fought in political disputes. Having closely followed the controversies surrounding some particular provisions in the texts of the resolutions, one may ask a question whether their focus was history and commemorating past events of national importance, or whether they were rather rooted in the will to attain short-term political objectives.