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THE ASCENT AND DESCENT OF THE POMERANIAN
VOIVODE WIKTOR LAMOT (1928–1931):
FROM THE HISTORY OF THE POST-MAY ELITE*

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The case of Wiktor Lamot stands out among the careers of post-May voivodes in the Second Polish Republic. It is one of its kind, taking into account his rapid promotion and dismissal after several years in office. Another characteristic feature of Lamot is the controversy he generated. Indeed, having held the office for a few years in Toruń he was dismissed in infamy, as reflected in many diaries. Apart from his personnel policy in the state administration, which was referred to as Pomeranian “rugi” [English: rebukes], and his prompt actions to develop the influence of the political camp that held power, another factor which contributed to his negative image was the press campaign. The voivode's activity in Pomerania, was criticised by historiographers, particularly during the period of the Polish People's Republic, owing to the methods he used to fight the opposition and to develop the influence of the Pomeranian Sanation. It was only recently that a broader perspective of his activity, which took into account the complete economic, political and national context on the threshold of the world economic crisis, appeared.¹ It is worth looking closer at his career in Pomerania, which should provide us with valuable information concerning the personnel policy in the post-May political

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¹ Comp. Kazimierz PRZYBYSEWSKI, *Ludzie Torunia Odrodzonej Rzeczypospolitej (1920–1939)*, Toruń 2001, pp. 420–423; Janusz KUTTA, *Druga Rzeczpospolita i Kaszubi 1920–1939*, Bydgoszcz 2003, pp. 214–217, 268–273; as against the policy of the ruling political camp: Przemysław OLSTOWSKI, *Obóz pomajowy w województwie pomorskim w latach 1926–1939*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 142–147, 153–155.

entourage, its administrative policy, the activities of the authorities and the relations within the ruling political camp. Even if the case of the ambitious lower-rank official and the engaged social activist who was unexpectedly appointed voivode cannot be considered representative enough, a closer observation may prove quite informative.

Wiktor Lamot came from the former Kingdom of Poland. He was born on 14 October 1891 in Stary Zamość in the county of Zamość, from a family of peasants, who were ambitious enough to provide their child with appropriate education. After finishing the state lower-secondary school [“progimnazjum”] in Zamość, he continued his education in a private Polish secondary school – a gymnasium school – in Lublin, where in 1910 he passed his high-school exit exam [“matura”]. He went on to study law at the Jagiellonian University (UJ), which he did not finish for financial reasons.² According to his birth certificate, he was the son of an unmarried Christian woman named Marianna Wrona.³ He used the surname Wrona until the beginning of 1918, when he started to appear as Lamot Wrona only to officially change his surname into Lamot in November 1921. One of the reasons why he changed his surname was the fact that he used to be mistaken for another Wiktor Wrona, who came from the county of Krasnystaw and in November 1918 “made himself infamous in the Lublin land for a series of loud and tactless public speeches.”⁴ Still, it seems that this was not the only reason as for a long time he could not free himself from the public odium associated with the criminal proceeding and the trial of 1914, to which he was exposed while in the position of the secretary of the editorial team of the paper “Ziemia Lubelska.” After years the media, unfavourably disposed to Lamot, returned to the issue when he took up the office of the Pomeranian voivode. His planned wedding with Jadwiga Zofia Niezabitowska (concluded in October 1919) might have also affected the situation. In fact, there were several reasons which caused him to stop using his family name. What is more, after the death of his first wife in 1922, he married Countess Maria Ponińska in 1926. After years, as an immigrant in Paris, he confessed that “on the family tomb, where I buried somebody very precious to me and where I was going to rest, I ordered both surnames (Wrona Lamot) to be engraved so that people may remember the routes our life had gone through, and so that my son, now partly connected with the aristocracy, may recall the peasant origins of his father

² Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie [New Records Archive] (further cit. AAN), Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych – dopływ [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – supply] (further cit. MSW – dopływ), entry no. 935: Akta osobowe Wiktora Wrony-Lamota, fol. 156 (Życiorys).

³ Archiwum Państwowe w Zamościu [State Archives in Zamość], Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Starym Zamościu, entry no. 16: Akta urodzeń, małżeństw i zgonów, 1891, fol. 60, entry no. 222.

⁴ AAN, MSW – dopływ, entry no. 935, fol. 43 (p.o. starosty koneckiego Wiktor Lamot Wrona do Województwa w Kielcach z 21 IV 1921 r. nt. “Wiktor Lamot Wrona – odróżnienie od imiennika”); fol. 157 (Życiorys); see also: [Wiktor LAMOT WRONA ppor.], *Listy do Redakcyi*, Głos Lubelski, no. 332, 3 December 1918, p. 3.

in order to be aware of what a price one should sometimes pay [for] maintaining one's faith and nationality not to give in to the temptation of snobbery."⁵ Still, there are grounds to think that the change of the surname was caused by an intention to obliterate the social background and the memory of the trial of 1914.

Little is known about the family relations of Wiktor Lamot, but his statement that after years owing to "tragic circumstances affecting many families in the Chełm land [during the Russian occupation], from which I come from [...], I was forced to bear the surname of my mother" is doubtful, as is another statement of his that "after the Russian occupation collapsed, I took on the family name."⁶ In Lamot's personal files, like in his birth certificate, there is no information about his father. Consequently, there is no evidence to think that the future Pomeranian voivode's father's name was Lamot. Unclear explanations provided by Lamot in the years 1930–1932 that the use of his mother's surname (Wrona) resulted from the concern to keep the Catholic faith and the Polish nationality under the Russian occupation in the Chełm land and Podlasie could be associated with the persecutions of the Uniates. But why should a person bearing the surname of Lamot have problems with being a Pole and Catholic while the surname of Wrona did not cause such difficulties? What is more, during his work in the editorial office of "Ziemia Lubelska" Wiktor Wrona signed his articles with the pseudonym "Lamotte,"⁷ which led to the assumption that the Polish version of his pseudonym became his officially accepted surname.⁸ The announcement of the Home Ministry published in the central and regional press in March 1930 repeated the explanation of the voivode,⁹ but due to its laconic character it failed to explain anything and left many doubts.

There also remained doubts in connection with his criminal proceedings which ended in a trial in Siedlce in June 1914, where he was acquitted from blame and punishment, and his honour was confirmed by the civil court in Lublin, all on his own initiative. After years he said that "as a young inexperienced lad of impetuous personality he got himself involved in a nonsensical situation."¹⁰ On the basis of the verbatim records from the trial in the Siedlce court in June 1914,¹¹ which were published in March 1930, it may be concluded that Lamot told the truth.

⁵ Archiwum Instytutu Józefa Piłsudskiego w Londynie [Archive of Józef Piłsudski Institute in London] (further cit. AIJPL), Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota: Raport podporucznika rezerwy w służbie czynnej Wiktora Lamota z 22 XI 1939 r. do Ministerstwa Spraw Wojskowych przez Dowództwo Stacji Zbornej w Paryżu, p. 5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Comp. *Dwóch Lamotów*, *Myśl Niepodległa*, no. 1011, 1 March 1930, p. 137.

⁸ *Tajemnice kartoteki wojewody Lamota*, *ibid.*, no. 1013, 15 March 1930, p. 170.

⁹ Comp. "Myśl Niepodległa" a pan wojewoda Lamot. *Komunikat PAT'a*, *Słowo Pomorskie*, no. 56, 8 March 1930, p. 2.

¹⁰ AIJPL, Wiktor Lamot's collection, p. 4.

¹¹ Comp. *Sprawa Wojewody Lamota pod sąd opinii publicznej. Sprawozdanie z przebiegu procesu sądowego*, *Dzień Pomorski*, no. 71, 26 March 1930, pp. 5–9; *Tło procesu p. Wiktora Wrony*, *Słowo Pomorskie*, no. 81, 6 April 1930, p. 3; no. 86, 12 April 1930, p. 4; no. 87, 13 April 1930, p. 5; no. 88,

When in 1910, with the intention of starting law studies, he asked the priest Jan Włodzyński in the parish church in Skierbieszów in the Lublin land to give him a certificate of poverty, he learnt from people from the parish about the priest's sexual conduct with young boys. He himself took measures to make the priest leave the parish, but, as a result of his gullibility and inexperience, he got involved in the dangerous game of the devious priest. The game consisted in the priest's paying Wiktor Wrona a deposit of 150 roubles, the aim of which was to secure the priest's translocation to another parish. Moreover, the priest was to promise to support Wrona financially during his university studies in Cracow. Wiktor Lamot was arrested in June 1912 by the police on the charge of the physical assault of the priest Włodzyński. As he wrote in "Życiorys" in 1923, he "was a mental and physical wreck"¹² – he awaited the trial, during which he was eventually acquitted in June 1914. Still, years later when he was the voivode, the opposition press labeled him a blackmailer, who on the pretence of fighting the evil had intended to turn the priest into a source of permanent and not insignificant income. The voivode and the pro-government press never managed to convince the opposition about the clear intentions of Wiktor Wrona in his dealings with the parish priest in Skierbieszów. Such an outlook was apparent even in his own political camp and to some extent caused his resignation from "Ziemia Lubelska." The criminal proceedings and the forthcoming trial might have been important reasons for dropping out of his university studies at the Jagiellonian University.

In his memoirs from the first half of 1920 he maintained that prior to the outbreak of WW I and in the first year of the war he had been involved in secret military activity, which seems quite probable as during his secondary education he belonged to the underground National Youth Organization run by the "Zet" Association of Polish Youth.¹³ After the outbreak of the war, this organisation got involved in the works of the independence camp including the Polish Military Organization. During the summer offensive of the central states in 1915, which led to the removal of the Russian army from the territory of the Polish Kingdom, on 5 August 1915 he joined the First Brigade of the Polish Legions becoming an uhlán (a light cavalry soldier) in the cavalry division of Captain Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, which in January 1916 took on the official name of the First Regiment of the Uhlans of the Polish Legions. With the regiment he endured the long-lasting and arduous Volhyn military campaign that ended in the autumn of 1916 when the Legions withdrew from the front. To recognise his contribution to the military actions of the First Regiment of Uhlans, he was awarded the decora-

15 April 1930, p. 5; no. 90, 17 April 1930, p. 3; *Zeznania Wiktora Wrony na procesie w Siedlcach*, Mysł Niepodległa, no. 1015, 29 March 1930, pp. 199–205.

¹² AAN, MSW – dopływ, entry no. 935, fol. 156 (Życiorys).

¹³ In November 1936 he was present at the anniversary assembly in Warsaw on the 50th anniversary of the creation of "Zet," see: Tomasz PIKORSKI, *W pięćdziesiątą rocznicę powstania "Zetu". Sprawozdanie ze zjazdu uczestników ruchu niepodległościowego Związku Młodzieży Polskiej ("Młodzież Narodowej") 28 i 29.XI.1936 r. w Warszawie*, Warszawa 1937, p. 159.

tion of the First Brigade "For devoted service," which was highly appreciated by Józef Piłsudski's soldiers. In October 1915 he became a senior unhlán, and in April 1917 – a corporal. In April 1917 he finished the officers' course of administration and accounting¹⁴ which was organised by the German military authorities as part of the development project of the Legions and their conversion into the Royal Polish Army. When he was the Pomeranian voivode, he sentimentally called himself the "corporal of the 1st Brigade," which many people (not only from the opposition circles) looked down on with irony. It should be noted that as a corporal of the First Brigade he had the opportunity to spend time with some interesting people, since many non-commissioned officers from the First Brigade later played important roles in the army, politics and social life of the Second Polish Republic. The 1st Regiment of Uhlans of the Polish Legions included such people as the writers Waław Sieroszewski and Andrzej Strug, or Leon Kozłowski – an archeologist and future professor at Lviv University, the minister and sub-secretary of the state in several cabinets, who during the years 1934–1935 held the office of prime minister of the Rzeczpospolita.

After the 1st Regiment of Uhlans was dissolved as a result of the crisis of July 1917, Corporal Wrona was sent to the territory occupied by the Austrians, where in Lublin as a secretary of the committee for the protection of interned legionnaires he helped such people from the territory occupied by the Austrians who had not sworn loyalty to the central states to hide and produced fake identity documents so that they avoided being recruited to the Austro-Hungarian army. In November he was arrested by the Royal Polish Army (Polnische Wehrmacht) and was imprisoned in Warsaw on Dzika street, where he almost lost his life due to the extremely poor conditions. He was released from prison and on 5 January 1918 was dismissed from the Polish Legions. He passed a course for civil servants in Lublin with distinction. From 1 July 1918 to 31 January 1919 – at the end of the Austrian occupation and in the first months of the formation of the independent Polish state – he was the secretary of the county dietine [sejmik] of the county of Koneck. He played there an important role in setting up the Polish military units and security forces. He proved to be an energetic official who undertook many initiatives. In the army he served in the rank of second lieutenant during the Polish-Soviet war in the summer and autumn of 1920 as an assistant to the commander of the General District in Łódź.

Before Wiktor Lamot was promoted to be the head of the Provincial Office in Toruń in July 1928, he had developed his career in the county of Kielce. From February 1919 to June 1921 he was the deputy commissioner, the referendary in the 7th rank, the deputy starost (temporarily running the office when the starost was absent). For a month he ran the starosty of Opatów temporarily replacing the Opatów starost. At the end of July 1921 he became the head of the starosty in Pińczów

¹⁴ AAN, MSW – dopływ, entry no. 935, fol. 345 (Wiktor Wrona – Karta wojskowa Legionów Polskich).

only to become the starost of this county in the 6th rank in February 1922 and to hold the office until the end of July 1928.¹⁵ During his term of office in Pińczów, like in Końskie and Opatów, he was a skilful and energetic leader of the work of the starosty and the county department (the body of the local administration),¹⁶ and received many positive comments from his superiors. After a relatively short time, he became the permanent starost. He was adept at obtaining funds for the development of the transport infrastructure in the county (the network of roads and the railway system in the county) from the subsidies from the province and the ministry in the years 1923–1924 as well as bank loans. He managed to win the support and assistance of the military authorities in the construction of the railway in the county.¹⁷ His work as the Pińczów starost was highly appreciated. The voivode of Kielce presented Lamot as a candidate for the Gold Cross of Merit,¹⁸ but in December 1924 Lamot was awarded a much more important decoration – the Order of Polonia Restituta.¹⁹

The experience acquired while administering the county, running the work of the starosty and the county department and supervising the administration of the town and the commune, won him the reputation of a good manager and influenced the manner he perceived the administrative issues, which in his future career as the Pomeranian voivode had both positive and negative consequences. In terms of the state and local administration he was mainly a practitioner, despite the fact that he had some knowledge about the administration of the county municipal unions. This proved to be indispensable knowledge for the starost of the county. It was also useful for the voivode of Pomerania (he was unexpectedly appointed to the office in the summer of 1928) on the condition that he was capable of adopting the perspective proper for the voivode, not for the starost. He complemented his education on his own. He had learnt foreign languages (Russian, French and German) in the secondary schools in Zamość and Lublin. His service for the Legions, participation in the formation of the Polish state and local administration, relatively quick career meant that the vicissitudes of his youth led him to social advancement that he could only have dreamt about as a young man from a peasant family. Both of his marriages also contributed to his social advancement: the first to Jadwiga Niezabitowska in October 1919 and, after her death, the second to Countess Maria

¹⁵ Ibid., fol. 362 (Wiktor Lamot – Qualification card).

¹⁶ In Opatów during the plenary session of the county dietine in July 1921 the members of the County Department even put forward the project of the motion to appoint Lamot the starost of the county; the motion was declined, see: *ibid.*, fol. 61 (the Head of the Starosty in Opatów Wiktor Lamot to the Presidium of the Province in Kielce of 12 July 1921).

¹⁷ Ibid., fol. 142 (the starost of Pińczów Wiktor Lamot of 21 April 1923 to the Presidium of the Province in Kielce); fol. 171 (the starost of Pińczów Wiktor Lamot of 20 Feb 1924 to the Voivode in Kielce).

¹⁸ Ibid., fol. 161–162 (the motion to decorate the Starost of Pińczów Wiktor Lamot with the Gold Cross of Merit).

¹⁹ Ibid., fol. 362 (Wiktor Lamot – Qualification card).

Ponińska in February 1926. The second marriage made it easier for him to distance himself from the Polish Peasant Party “Piast” after the May coup d'état in 1926. The loosening of political and social bonds between Lamot and “Piast” was only a matter of time if he wanted to stay in the state administration irrespective of his probable sympathies towards the post-May political camp. Lamot's involvement in supporting the post-May politicians was very transparent in the period preceding the elections to the Sejm and Senate on 4 and 11 March 1928, when the state administration led by him became actively involved in promoting the candidates of the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR). His unexpected promotion to the office of voivode was associated with this fact.²⁰

Lamot himself associated his appointment with the critical letter he sent to Józef Piłsudski after the May coup d'état.²¹ It is possible that it was taken into account while he was chosen as a candidate to succeed the post-May voivode of Pomerania Kazimierz Młodzianowski, who died in July 1928. His virtues such as intransigency and dynamic approach might have been noticed and appreciated. Moreover, he managed to become an advocate of the ruling political forces, which might have made him useful for convincing the inhabitants of Pomerania to support the state authorities when the conciliatory policy of the voivode Młodzianowski towards the opposition did not bring the expected results. In the elections to the Sejm and Senate in March 1928, during which the ruling political camp in Pomerania failed to put forward any candidates from the BBWR, both pro-governmental lists – the Catholic Union of Western Lands and the National-State Labour Bloc – did not manage to get any seat in the Parliament.²² That is why, after the sudden death of the voivode Młodzianowski, the young thirty-seven-year-old ambitious starost, energetic manager and successful social activist – Wiktor Lamot – was appointed a new voivode. His military past and post-May involvement allowed him to be permanently associated with the figure of Józef Piłsudski and his political camp. He was expected to take decisive actions to develop the weak influences of the ruling political party in the Pomeranian voivodeship, which required breaking the dominant position of the parties of the centre and the right wing, particularly the national camp. He was also considered to be a protégé of the president of the BBWR – Walery Sławek,²³ who had a decisive role in appointing people to important offices in the state administration. It seems that it was the General Secretariat of the BBWR and its president that led to Lamot's appointment to fill the vacancy in Toruń, which did not apply only to this voivodeship. The situation of Lamot, the starost in the 6th rank of office, who was suddenly entrusted with the admin-

²⁰ Comp. *Dwóch Lamotów*, p. 138.

²¹ AIJPL, Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota, pp. 2–3 (“[...] napisałem pełen goryczy i rozpacz list do Marszałka, ostro występując przeciwko temu, co się stało [“I wrote a bitter letter full of despair to the Marshall, opposing sharply what had taken place”]).

²² See: P. OLSTOWSKI, *Obóz pomajowy*, pp. 68–132.

²³ Roman WAPIŃSKI, *Lamot (właśc. Lamot-Wrona) Wiktor (1891–1959)*, [in:] *Słownik biograficzny Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego*, vol. 3, ed. Zbigniew NOWAK, Gdańsk 1997, p. 25.

istration of the voivodeship, was not unique. He was one of the many post-May voivodes who was promoted from a position of lower-rank.²⁴ Unlike most of them, he failed to have experience in the state administration. That is why despite temporarily assuming the duties of the Pomeranian voivode, Lamot, on the strength of a decree issued by the Minister of Home Affairs Sławoj Felicjan Składkowski of 28 July 1928, was appointed only the head of the Department in the 5th rank of office in the Pomeranian Voivodeship Office, having been told to hold the office “until a further decree is issued.”²⁵ Although he was ordered to assume his duties immediately, it was not until 19 August that he arrived in Toruń and took over the office of the voivode from the deputy voivode Mieczysław Seydlitz, who has assumed the duties of the voivode Młodzianowski after his sudden death.²⁶

Why was the official of the county administration appointed to become the voivode after the sudden death of Młodzianowski? It is probable that originally it was meant to be a temporary solution as the starost could not officially be appointed directly to the post of the voivode. Besides, both voivodeships of the former Prussian territory: the Pomeranian and Poznań voivodeships were difficult to handle for the post-May political camp. Their administration was a major challenge for the voivodes. That is why Lamot was temporarily appointed to assume the duties of the Pomeranian voivode in July 1928; the formal appointment for the position depended on the evaluation of his performance in the new office. It turned out that such a careful policy concerning the appointment to the central authorities was not groundless. Piotr Dunin-Borkowski (formerly the Lviv voivode), appointed the Poznań voivode on 10 May 1928 to replace his pre-May predecessor Adolf Bniński, finished his term of office after one year and a half and was replaced by the representative of the pro-governmental conservatives in Greater Poland – Roger Raczyński.²⁷ The appointment of the landowner Dunin-Borkowski after Bniński had been dismissed as a result of the unsuccessful results of the elections in March 1928 was a favour granted to the inhabitants of Greater Poland since the mistakes committed by the new voivode had led to the end of his mission in a very short period of time. His successor, Roger Raczyński, wrote in his report to the authorities in October 1929 that Borkowski had made a decision to resign from

²⁴ Comp. *Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Jacek Maria MAJCHROWSKI, Kraków 1994, pp. 162–177.

²⁵ AAN, MSW – dopływ, entry no. 935, fol. 330 (letter of the Home Minister of 28 July 1928 to Wiktor Lamot – the starost in Pińczów in the sixth professional grade; *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych*, no. 4, 1928, p. 52).

²⁶ AAN, MSW – dopływ, entry no. 935, fol. 327 (letter of the Home Minister of 28 July 1928 to the vice-voivode of Pomerania Mieczysław Seydlitz); fol. 328 (telephonogram of Wiktor Lamot to the Pomeranian Provincial Office of 17 August 1928 about the arrival in Toruń of 19 August 1928 in order to take the office); Roman HAUSNER, *Pierwsze dwudziestolecie administracji spraw wewnętrznych*, Warszawa 1939, p. 62; *Pomorski Dziennik Wojewódzki*, no. 14, 18 August 1928, item 95, p. 101.

²⁷ R. HAUSNER, op. cit., pp. 62–63. More about the reasons of the voivode's dismissal: Piotr OKULEWICZ, *Obóz sanacyjny w województwie poznańskim w latach 1926–1935*, Poznań 2014, pp. 280–281.

the office “as he himself admitted that the community he had faced in Poznań was tough to deal with and made his mission impossible to fulfil.”²⁸

It was obvious that the successor of the voivode Młodzianowski would have to deal with an equally difficult community in Pomerania. “The clergy supporting the national democracy. People very tough and silent.”²⁹ This is how in September 1930 the priest Bronisław Żongołłowicz, the vice-minister of religious denominations and public enlightenment, described the population of the Pomeranian voivodeship prior to his tour of the voivodeship. The reason why the starost of Pińczów was appointed the Pomeranian voivode might have been the fact that he had been able to establish good relations with various political groups during his administrative work. He was an energetic leader of his county, a social activist, which could have convinced the president of the BBWR if it was indeed Walery Sławek who stood behind Lamot’s appointment. Lamot’s aristocratic affiliations resulting from his marriages also played a significant role in establishing relations with the aristocratic conservatives in Pomerania. On the other hand, Lamot’s associations with the Polish Peasant Party “Piast” in the Kielce voivodeship, where he had been the starost, could have helped him to win the support of the activists of “Piast” and recruit new members to the new Pomeranian structures of the BBWR.

The policy of the post-May government towards the Pomeranian voivodeship was the continuation of the policy of the pre-May cabinets. This resulted from the awareness of how important the Pomeranian voivodeship, Poland’s “window to the world,” was for the Polish state.³⁰ That is why, during the opening speech of the voivode Młodzianowski to the workers of the Pomeranian Voivodeship Office, when the strong call “Everything for Gdynia”³¹ was heard, this was only to flatter the Pomeranian public opinion. Lamot was meant to continue this policy, with the reservation that he was expected to develop the influence of the ruling political camp, which during Młodzianowski’s term of office did not have its own political representation, but concentrated various political and interest groups. The period during which Lamot held the office of the voivode is associated with the formation of the national political group in the form of the BBWR in Pomerania. The first actions commenced at the end of June 1928. Soon after Lamot had installed himself in Toruń, the actions became more dynamic following the suggestions of the

²⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

²⁹ Bronisław ŻONGOŁŁOWICZ, *Dzienniki 1930–1936*, comp. by Dorota ZAMOJSKA, Warszawa 2004, p. 48.

³⁰ Comp. Przemysław OLSZOWSKI, *Państwo a społeczeństwo na Pomorzu w latach Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1920–1939)*, [in:] *Państwo i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Janusz ŻARNOWSKI, Warszawa 2014, pp. 65–83.

³¹ *Dziennik Urzędowy Województwa Pomorskiego*, no. 33, 23 October 1926, item 213, p. 112 (the opening speech of the Pomeranian voivode Kazimierz Młodzianowski given to the employees of the Pomeranian Provincial Office on 20 Oct 1926). Comp. J. KUTTA, *Druga Rzeczpospolita i Kaszubi 1920–1939*, pp. 210–212.

General Secretariat of the BBWR. The development of the influence of the ruling political party in the territory which opposed the post-May authorities, winning the support of society for the policy of the ruling political camp and running the effective administrative policy by the voivode required the appointment of an influential and skilful official. Objectively, Lamot had the weakest position among all the post-May Pomeranian voivodes,³² which after years turned out to be the major cause of his failure.

The pre-May voivodes – Stefan Łaszewski, Jan Brejski, Stanisław Wachowiak – had been important figures in the Polish national movement in the territory occupied by the Prussians; they had also held a significant position in the politics of the country. Kazimierz Młodzianowski – who was a high-ranking military officer and had been the pre-May voivode of Polesie, and before coming to Toruń he had been the Minister of Home Affairs in the first three governments of Kazimierz Bartel – had to successfully replace a good administrator and a universally respected voivode Wachowiak, dismissed by the post-May authorities. As an outstanding and captivating character, he lived up to the challenge, as did the last voivode of Pomerania, Władysław Raczkiewicz, in 1936–1939. Although from the beginning Młodzianowski was in a difficult situation, facing the almost uniformly oppositional attitude which the Pomeranian political scene adopted towards the post-May governments (which was most pronounced in the case of the National Democracy prevalent in Pomerania), he was a respected man and the political elites of Pomerania knew that he fully comprehended the strategic importance of Pomerania for Poland and that this fact was of the greatest importance for his administration. When the politicians of the opposition parties were invited to the voivodeship office to discuss difficult talks, they knew that they would meet the voivode, a government representative, who understood the Pomeranian issues and the reasoning of his opponents. Naturally, owing to his position in the government camp, Młodzianowski could afford to behave in this way. Besides, the period 1926–1928 was the time when the government camp was still forming and was relatively conciliatory towards the moderate groups in the opposition. This particularly related to the western voivodeships, where the influence of Piłsudski's adherents was negligible. The year 1928 was here a clear watershed. From the point of view of the authorities in Warsaw, the upcoming years would require more diversified tactics. The appointment of Lamot to the administrator of the voivodeship office was also a symbol of this change. However, while the voivode Młodzianowski, due to his presence, position and personality, after a period of curious distrust had been kindly accepted by the Pomeranian public opinion and enjoyed due respect during his whole time in office, Lamot – also unknown outside Pomerania – had to work for his position.

³² Comp. Przemysław OLSTOWSKI, *Wojewodowie pomorscy w latach II Rzeczypospolitej (1920–1939)*. *Szkic do portretu zbiorowego*, *Zapiski Historyczne* (further cit. ZH), vol. 80: 2015, no. 3, pp. 273–285.

According to one memoir writer, an observer who was not unbiased, yet sometimes pertinent, the place of Młodzianowski was taken by a “mysterious man, unknown to anybody here, very tall, thin as a rake, pale, wearing pince-nez, and behaving quite charmingly, named Wiktor Lamot. He was said to be a protégée of the one and only Colonel Sławek, the most powerful man in Poland, of course after Marshal Piłsudski. [...] He was above all a diplomat, possessing a certain amount of cunning. By hook or by crook he tried to recruit for the Sanation more influential figures among the traditional opposition parties and non-party people. He must have had some results in that matter as even in Pomerania there were people who in the name of national unity were ready to cooperate with the Sanation camp if only to neutralise the danger posed by the Germans.”³³ This observation is general enough to be considered basically accurate, all the more so as without the position or advantages of his predecessor, Lamot could not count on such a friendly attitude towards his official persona when he came to Pomerania on the mission of spreading the government influence in the province. Instead, trying to meet the expectations of his superiors, he used and developed the directions in administrative policy that had been already established by the voivode Młodzianowski.

Defining the issues in the Pomeranian voivodeship, Młodzianowski perceived them against the background of the internal and international policy of the country, as quite recently – though for a short time – he had also been the Minister of Home Affairs. As the voivode, in Pomerania he implemented the plans of the government and was certain of their support, including financial, for his policy. Being fully conscious of the political, economic and military importance of this seaside province for Poland, he perceived it as inhabited mostly by Polish people, whose cultural return to Polishness after a century and a half of being annexed by Germany was still an unfinished process, with German cultural and economic influences still persisting. A particular problem was not the German minority itself, which at the beginning of January 1927 constituted together with the optants and the citizens of the Reich 12,9% of the voivodeship population,³⁴ but its economic and political dependence on Germany, dangerous in the context of the question – raised by Germany on the international forum – of the state affiliation of Pomerania, effectively labelled by German propaganda as the “corridor.” In this situation, the economic strengthening of the German minority as well as the development of their organisational potential together with their ability to influence the attitudes and opinions of Polish citizens was considered by him to be a threat to Polish national interests in this province. Therefore at the subsequent meetings of *starostas* he stressed the necessity for working towards an expansion of Polish ownership in industry, trade and agriculture, and for the authorities and organisations to

³³ Konstanty BĄCZKOWSKI, *Wojewodowie pomorscy*, Litery, 1968, no. 12, p. 32.

³⁴ Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy [State Archives in Bydgoszcz] (further cit. APB), Urząd Wojewódzki Pomorski w Toruniu [Pomerania Provincial Office in Toruń] (further cit. UWP), sign. 5142, fol. 89–90 (Ethnic relations in the Pomeranian Province as of 1 Jan 1927).

undertake cultural and educational actions that would be more widespread than before, along with consistent limiting – through administrative pressure – of the economic potential of the German minority as well as German public and private education.³⁵ Such an attitude, typical for the post-May ruling elite, was not solely the result of political calculations aimed at winning the support of the Polish society of the western voivodeships. Its sources can be, to a much greater degree, attributed to the political tradition of this camp, in which the tradition of the armed struggle for independence and its role in the rebuilding of the state had a prominent position. This cult of military tradition and armed struggle dictated also the break with the inheritance of the time under foreign rule, which in the western provinces included Polish-German interdependencies, perceived from this angle not as an effect of long-term coexistence and life in a cultural borderland but as a form of persistent dependence of the Polish inhabitants on the influences of German culture. For the voivodes coming from other provinces, former Piłsudski's soldiers and legionnaires of the 1st Brigade such as Młodzianowski and Lamot, for whom military service in this voluntary formation was a factor that shaped their later lives, this situation was not only impossible to understand but also unacceptable, not from a nationalist point of view – as in the case of the national-democratic camp – but from the point of view of the state. It was thought that the Polish society of Pomerania, who inhabited a province of strategic importance for Poland and were to participate in building a strong, efficient and modern country, could not function in a state of passive dependence on the former occupants, represented by the remaining German minority. They had to be the official hosts in this land.

In this context, Młodzianowski pointed out that in the everyday life of the Pomeranian citizens the material aspects were of primary importance, which resulted in their disinterest in political matters. He perceived that the reasons for this lay “in the temperament of the local man, in the structure of social relations, as well as in the political tradition from the times of the foreign rule, when the sole political slogan of the Polish society was to defend Polishness.”³⁶ It is difficult to avoid the impression that this also was perceived as a chance to expand the influence of the government camp: through the return to the formula of relatively uniform national movement as the political representation of the Polish society in this province and as a form of its political organisation. The political rivalry in the years 1920–1926 can also be considered an attempt to return to this formula and for the domination in the Pomeranian policy, even despite the increasing differentiation of the political scene in the Pomeranian voivodeship. Yet then it was a contest for the leadership between the representatives of the traditional leading groups gathe-

³⁵ Ibid., sign. 30018 (the Minutes from the assembly of starosts and mayors of the towns of the Pomeranian Province 19 May 1927 in Toruń), fol. 301–304; sign. 2181 (The minutes from the assembly of starosts and mayors of the towns of the Pomeranian Province 12 June 1928 in Toruń), fol. 28–32.

³⁶ Ibid., sign. 30018 (The minutes from the assembly of starosts and mayors of the towns of the Pomeranian Province 19 May 1927 in Toruń), fol. 300.

red in the broadly understood national camp (unifying national democrats and periodically Christian democrats and conservative landowners) on the one hand, and the political representation of the plebeian movement, initially predominantly the National Workers' Party and later also "Piast" PSL on the other. However, after May 1926 the intentions of the new authorities were directed more and more towards depoliticising social life, which was understood in terms of a society that would seek their political representation not in the existing political groups, but in socially and economically oriented organisations affiliated with the government camp and in the local administration, which was an extension of the government.³⁷ Also, the questions of the interests of social and professional groups and of the coherence of the Polish society in Pomerania in the face of the German threat were seen as strictly interconnected. However, while before the parliamentary election of March 1928 the idea – promoted by the voivode Młodzianowski – of a single Polish list of candidates unifying the government camp and the centre opposition groups (an agreement with either the National Democracy or the class party PPS was out of question) was torpedoed by protest from the main leadership of those groups; during Lamot's term in the office the main problem was the appearance in May 1928 of the BBWR, a national group affiliated with the government camp, and the nationwide exacerbation of the conflict between the government and the opposition. This had a decisive influence on Lamot's mission in Pomerania (which had both administrative and political goals), notwithstanding the mistakes and gaffes ascribed to him at that time.

The post-May camp – with its top-down approach that was becoming increasingly authoritarian after the parliamentary elections of March 1928 – strived to repair and modernise the country. Its political organisation, the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), besides being the local representation of the government camp, was to be primarily a social movement that, through cooperation with social organisations, would give the citizens a sense of participation in public life and teach them responsibility for their own state. This concept did not include traditional political parties, generally seen as the refuge of the previous party system, which the adherents of Piłsudski perceived as the main cause of Poland's internal weakness. The organisational development of the BBWR and pro-government parties which took place during the tenure of Lamot (and his successors) with the extensive help of administrative measures, was met with outright resistance from the opposition groups, whose visions of the state and the society differed from those of the Sanation camp. This was particularly relevant in the case of the National Democracy camp, the strongest in Pomerania in terms of organisation and influence.

Basically, with the help of top-down action and methods, before the parliamentary election of November 1930, the structures of the BBWR had expanded enough to cope with the election campaign, naturally with the help of local admin-

³⁷ Comp. P. OLSTOWSKI, *Obóz pomajowy*, pp. 17–67.

istration. That election, won in Pomerania by candidates from the opposition lists, gave the BBWR three seats in the Parliament and one in the Senate. Previously, in the years 1928–1930, the BBWR clubs gained a position of significance in the voivodeship assembly, county assemblies and city and *gmina* councils. Over time, Voivode Lamot played a significant role in drawing to the government camp the representatives of landowners, their associate farmers' organisations and – distinct from the former – groups of small farmers and settlers as well as certain proportion of urban professional associations. However, it must be mentioned that before the formation of the Voivodeship Council of the BBWR in June 1929, politicians sent by the General Secretariat of the BBWR in Warsaw played a significant role in the Pomeranian organisation of the Bloc. This was the effect of the voivode's position being still too weak and of the strife among various interest groups that constituted the Pomeranian BBWR at the time, as well as of attempts to secure in this territory the interests of different fractions of the BBWR Parliamentary Club. In the end Lamot managed to overcome these obstacles and, although his main supporters were the conservative landowners from the Christian Farmers' Association, he also knew how to woo other political and professional groups gathered in the Nonpartisan Bloc. His initiative to implement the elements of the immediate economic program for Pomerania in 1930 clearly helped him in this case.³⁸

The base of the government camp and the main tool of a voivode was the local administration at the level of the voivodeship and the county. A voivode was a representative of the government and the head of general administration gathered in the voivodeship office and in the offices of the *starostas* of the counties. The voivode's powers, including the authority over non-combined government administration, were expanded by the ordinance of the President of Poland on the organisation and scope of activity of general administrative authorities from 19 January 1928, which intended to introduce nationwide unification. By strengthening the voivode's prerogatives, the regulation also abolished collegial governing in the voivode's offices, characteristic for both former Prussian provinces; so that they became only the voivode's agencies.³⁹ This was accompanied by the reorganisation of the voivodeship office aiming at raising the quality of its work, which resulted in a significant reduction of lower-ranking staff to employ more specialists.⁴⁰ The change in the employment structure resulted in dismissals, mostly of Pomeranians, who predominantly held those lower posts. Besides the replacement

³⁸ Ibid., *passim*.

³⁹ Comp. Melania DERESZYŃSKA-ROMANIUK, *Kancelaria Urzędu Wojewódzkiego Pomorskiego w Toruniu w latach 1919–1939*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 19–23, 29–33; Anna TARNOWSKA, *Z dziejów unifikacji administracji II Rzeczypospolitej. Rola przepisów pruskich*, Toruń 2012, pp. 46–47, 62–64, 84–93.

⁴⁰ M. DERESZYŃSKA-ROMANIUK, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–68; see more: Przemysław OLSTOWSKI, *Urząd Wojewódzki Pomorski w Toruniu (1920–1939) jako instytucja pracy*, [in:] *Praca i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Włodzimierz MĘDRZECKI, Cecylia ŁESZCZYŃSKA, Warszawa 2014, pp. 243–260.

of the voivodship office department heads (of public security and of self-government – during Lamot's term such changes were still isolated cases), some of the county *starostas* were also replaced.⁴¹ This brought the accusations that the voivode was pursuing the policy of "Pomeranian expulsions." However, changes in the key posts within the administration, which also included the heads of the most important voivodeship departments and the *starostas*, were inevitable considering the post-May human resource policy of the Ministry of Interior. Thus, besides the aforementioned changes in the voivodeship office, it was not coincidental that in January 1929 Lamot associated the perspectives of spreading the Sanation influence with an "appropriate choice of *starostas*."⁴² As he himself had been a *starosta* not so long before, he considered a county to be the basic and most important administrative level, so he wanted this group of officials to consist of dependable and trusted people, especially when considering the political tasks ahead. However, he did not replace all the pre-May *starostas*; this was done by his successor during his first year in office. Still, it seems that Lamot did not act completely independently in this matter, at least until 12 July 1929 when he was nominated to the position of voivode in the fourth service grade, which ended his time as a department head in the fifth service grade, when he was only the acting voivode of the Pomeranian voivodeship.⁴³ Those of the pre-May *starostas* who remained in the office were loyal to Lamot. Sometimes they were extremely helpful, for example in advertising and implementing the Pomeranian economic program or while collecting – under administrative pressure – funds for establishing a local paper presenting the Sanation camp views, which started to appear in the autumn of 1929 as "Dzień Pomorski." So, if Lamot announced later with certain satisfaction that he was a godfather of this newspaper,⁴⁴ some of the *starostas* could be called its "midwives." Also their testimonies concerning methods of obtaining money for the newspaper fund and other methods of developing the influence of the government camp during Lamot's term were among those revealed at the beginning of 1932 when Lamot, by then an ex-voivode, was taken to court by one of the leaders

⁴¹ Comp. "Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych" for the years 1926–1932 ("Dział personalny" i "Ruch służbowy") i "Pomorski Dziennik Wojewódzki" for the years 1928–1932 ("Ruch służbowy").

⁴² APB, UWP, sign. 1219 (letter of the head of the Provincial Office Wiktor Lamot of 10 Jan 1929 to the head of the General Department in the Ministry of Treasury Stefan Starzyński), without pages.

⁴³ AAN, MSW – dopływ, sign. 935, fol. 331 (letter of the sub-secretary of the state in the Home Office Bronisław Pieracki of 13 July 1929 to Mr Wiktor Lamot, the Head of the Department in the fifth professional grade and the Head of the Pomerania Provincial Office in Toruń); Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych, no. 14, 30 September 1929, p. 15; Pomorski Dziennik Wojewódzki, no. 26, 16 August 1929, item 181, p. 351.

⁴⁴ About the role of the voivode in providing the daily with the financial resources and later – thanks to the intervention of the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice – the printing of court announcements, see: Wiktor PEPLIŃSKI, *Prasa pomorska w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1920–1939. System funkcjonowania i oblicze społeczno-polityczne prasy polskiej*, Gdańsk 1987, pp. 38–39, 163–164, 169–170.

of the Pomeranian National Democracy, the Rev. Senator Feliks Bolt.⁴⁵ This situation affected the way in which his rule was remembered, because while the covert system of governing and spreading Sanation influence in Pomerania was developed under Voivode Stefan Kirtiklis⁴⁶ (1931–1936), the first signs could be observed in the times of Wiktor Lamot.

However, the most notorious issue during his term were the changes of judges in the district courts and in the Toruń appellate court, which took place at the end of 1930 and during 1931⁴⁷ and, not unreasonably, were commonly associated with the current atmosphere of cracking down on the opposition, of the so-called Brest trials. These dismissals were also perceived as personally instigated by the voivode. The judiciary system was in Pomerania the foundation of law and order in the public space, a measure of righteousness in that space. Therefore, public opinion blamed the voivode in particular for the “expulsions” among the judges, which became yet another reason for attacks in the press. Another accusation of comparable weight levelled at the voivode, also in the local and national press, was that the department of public security at the Pomeranian voivodeship office was collecting data on the political activists, including Catholic priests involved in the National Democracy camp.⁴⁸ Some time before (in 1928/1929) the Minister of Interior Sławoj Felicjan Składkowski renounced such practices in his ministry, describing them as short-term and soon to be abandoned.⁴⁹ The opposition papers, not without justification, found that implausible, all the more so as the preserved official correspondence regarding this matter – although the Ministry letters were really signed by a department head, thus corroborating Składkowski’s statement – clearly proves that the system of keeping files on political and social activists in Poland was not a personal initiative of that official, but a ministerial plan.⁵⁰ It was actually an element of the new security policy issued by the top authorities at the

⁴⁵ Ks. sen. Feliks Bolt *contra* Wrona-Lamot, *Słowo Pomorskie*, from no. 26, 2 February 1932 to no. 58, 11 March 1932, in particular no. 44, 24 February 1932, p. 3 and no. 45, 25 February 1932, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Comp. Przemysław OLSTOWSKI, *Procesy “starościńskie” w województwie pomorskim w latach 1936–1937. Polityka obozu rządzącego i niejawnie mechanizmy władzy na szczęblu powiatu w pierwszej połowie lat trzydziestych w świetle kilku procesów karnych*, Warszawa 2014.

⁴⁷ Comp. Pomorski Dziennik Wojewódzki, from no. 2, 15 January 1931 to no. 24, 1 December 1931 (“Ruch służbowy”).

⁴⁸ *Okólnik wojewody pomorskiego, p. Lamota*, *Słowo Pomorskie*, no. 72, 27 March 1929, p. 2; *Poufna działalność Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych*, *ibid.*, no. 73, 28 March 1929, p. 1; *Tajemnice kartoteki wojewody Lamota*, *Myśl Niepodległa*, no. 1013, 15 March 1930, pp. 165–170.

⁴⁹ *Wrona-Lamot contra Niemojewski*, *Słowo Pomorskie*, no. 64, 18 March 1933, p. 2.

⁵⁰ APB, UWP, sign. 2024, fol. 1–13 (Naczelnik Wydziału Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego UWP z 3 XII 1928 r. do Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych Departament Polityczny Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny w Warszawie w sprawie kartoteki polskich działaczy politycznych. Ścisłe tajne; MSW do Pana Wojewody w Toruniu z 9 II 1929 r. Kartoteka polskich działaczy politycznych i społecznych. Poufne; UWP (b.d.) do Panów Starostów Powiatowych na Pomorzu, Starosty Grodzkiego w Gdyni i Prezydentów Miast Torunia i Grudziądza. Kartoteka polskich działaczy politycznych i społecznych. Poufne!).

Ministry of Interior, which envisioned stricter control over political parties and voluntary associations, both Polish and those including national minorities. Anyway, also during voivode Młodzianowski's term of office, in accordance with the directive of the Ministry of Interior, the *starostas* and mayors of the towns of Toruń and Grudziądz were ordered in a strictly confidential circular letter to start assembling files for the German minority, including their political and social activists.⁵¹

The administrative policy of Voivode Lamot included more equally controversial situations and moves, arising – as one may conclude – for several main reasons. He represented the political interest of the government camp, so he did not shirk from resolute decisions in implementing directions from his superiors or reflecting his own understanding of the situation. Furthermore, his style of administering the voivodeship was guided by the methods of governing the state developed in the years following the May Coup d'État. That was why, on the one hand, he expected his subordinate authorities and offices to work efficiently and meet the needs of the customers, and on the other, he not infrequently showed mistrust towards his local apparatus, doubting their professionalism and loyalty.⁵² The interests of the governing camp – even only symbolically, as in the case of the voivode's motion resulting in the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers from 20 February 1929 on the dissolution of the City Council in Toruń⁵³ – also played a role when Lamot exercised his powers regarding control over self-government bodies, which must have undermined the professionalism of many of his decisions. Another factor was characteristic of all post-May voivodes – he came not only from another province, but also from the former territory of another occupant, which forced

⁵¹ Comp. Przemysław HAUSER, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Pomorzu w okresie międzywojennym*, Poznań 1998, pp. 73–75; Albert KOŹOWSKI, *Polska polityka narodowościowa wobec mniejszości niemieckiej w latach 1919–1939*, Toruń 2002, pp. 126–128.

⁵² Józef BORZYSZKOWSKI, *Chojnice w II Rzeczypospolitej – w latach wolności i okupacji hitlerowskiej*, [in:] *Dzieje Chojnic*, ed. Kazimierz OSTROWSKI, Chojnice 2003, p. 405 (an extract from the account by Tadeusz Młyński, in 1929 the deputy starost in Chojnice, worth quoting thanks to its being unique: “Moving to Chojnice. The voivode asks for it. He treats me like as if I were a prince. He explains extensively that I should feel honoured. The country of Chojnice is important, because it is situated on the border with Germany. The starosty is not on a good level there. Deficiencies everywhere. I will have to repair all this. A nice conversation until he suggests to me that I should send him private reports [...], that I should denounce. I thought this proposal insulted me. I became silent and we said good bye to each other. Never have I sent to him any private letter. His description of the relations in Chojnice was rightful [...]” Comp. Janusz KUTTA, *Starostowie chojnickcy w latach 1920–1939*, [in:] *Rola starosty w administracji zespolonej na przykładzie powiatu chojnickiego*, ed. Jacek KNOPEK, Chojnice 2006, p. 43. Also – the opinion of the Toruń branch of counter-intelligence about officers and common policemen of the State Police in Pomerania, prepared upon the request of the voivode Lamot in September 1928, see: Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe w Warszawie [Central Military Archives in Warsaw], Samodzielny Referat Informacyjny Dowództwa Okręgu Korpusu nr VIII w Toruniu, sygn. I.371.8/A.475, fol. 529–530; APB, UWP, sign. 1218, fol. 305–307. Those opinions might have resulted in some officials being moved outside the Pomeranian voivodeship.

⁵³ Comp. Anna TARNOWSKA, *Niegospodarność czy echa wielkiej polityki? Kazus rozwiązania Rady Miejskiej w Toruniu w 1929 roku*, ZH, vol. 80: 2015, no. 1, pp. 21–37.

him, an official suddenly promoted from a significantly lower level, to discover Pomerania starting essentially from the basics. The rapid promotion in turn forced him also to learn very quickly how to be a voivode. In the following decade, the 1930s, it probably would have been less important, also due to the widespread personnel changes in the whole administration. In the second half of the 1920s, however, it was a fundamental issue. Maybe that was why – apart from replacing the heads of the departments of public security and of self-government as well as the inspector of the counties – no changes were made among the higher officials of the voivodeship office. Among them, besides the two new heads of the departments crucial for the needs of the government camp, the most important collaborators of the voivode were the heads of the department of industry and trade and the department of agriculture, in accordance with the main directions of Lamot's policy. Little is known about what kind of a superior Lamot was. The commander of the 67th Infantry Regiment stationed in Brodnica, Col. January Grzędziński, who was hostile to Lamot, recalled in his memoirs written after WWII, when describing the background of his duel with the voivode in October 1931, that “the voivode's rapid rise, what is today called «climbing the social ladder» influenced him negatively, went to his head. He became supercilious, overbearing, played favourites, desired adulation, had the complexes of the Shchedrinian governor.”⁵⁴ Some traces of this opinion are visible in the previously mentioned observation of Tadeusz Młyński, the short-term deputy of the *starosta* of Chojnice. Maybe it was adopted demeanour. He knew that the world of clerks, including many higher officials of longer seniority, along with the political world, were watching and drawing conclusions, and the *starosta* of Pińczów, previously unknown to anybody in Pomerania, at the beginning was basically a man from nowhere. So, on the one hand, he could be charming, while on the other nervous and impetuous, using peremptoriness to make up for the insecurity resulting from his unexpected promotion; this in the long run could not benefit his further career in the state administration. Yet it was not administering that turned out too difficult – he was a good administrator – but the political matters strictly connected with holding that office.

As mentioned above, Lamot's time in the Toruń office concurred with the period of intensification of the conflict between the government camp and the opposition. The latter, particularly the National Democracy camp, quite quickly understood that Warsaw had decided – after the period of relative conciliation during the office term of voivode Młodzianowski – to begin spreading the Sanation's influence in Pomerania through administrative methods, which meant expanding the organisational structures of the BBWR, gain the cooperation of the moderate part of the opposition and marginalise the determined opponents of the government camp. This was nothing new anyway: such a direction had been already picked by Kazimierz Młodzianowski. The aggressive policy of the post-May

⁵⁴ Agnieszka J. CIEŚLIKOWA, *O człowieku, który się nie zgadzał. Biografia pułkownika Januarego Grzędzińskiego 1891–1975*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 135–136.

camp on one side, and the National Democracy camp on the other, created during Lamot's term the foundation for the polarisation of the previously varied Pomeranian political arena between the two strongest political groups: the National Democracy and the Sanation, with a weakening of the position of the national and workers' movements, atrophy of the Christian Democracy and marginalisation of the peasant movement. Lamot personally contributed to the destruction of the previously strong position of "Piaśt" PSL in Pomerania due to cancellation of the state loans after he revealed the financial problems of the Parcellation and Settlement Credit Union in Grudziądz, which was one of the foundations of the peasant movement's influence in Pomerania.⁵⁵ Thus, he also undermined the position of the leader of Pomeranian "Piaśt," Senator Wiktor Kulerski. Being so clearly invested in the political success of the BBWR, during his whole time in Pomerania, Lamot worked at gaining the support of society for the government camp.

His starting point was the policy of his predecessor in office, particularly in economic and national matters. Acceleration of the process of integrating Pomerania – also with regards to military policy – with the remaining Polish lands as well as increase in Polish ownership in agriculture and urban services and crafts were at that time closely connected with the German issue in the Pomeranian voivodeship. Yet, while Młodzianowski aptly defined the problems related to this matter, Lamot definitely exaggerated the German threat, even if he was doing so years later, shortly after the September 1939 defeat and with the aim of favourably presenting his official mission in Pomerania, supposedly obstructed by the narrowly understood party interests of the opposition leaders and the obstacles piled up by the central authorities and people from his own camp.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Młodzianowski, besides his position in the government camp and a certain charisma which facilitated his work in Pomerania, still had been able to treat political parties as partners in discussion. Lamot in turn wanted and expected cooperation and – consequently – subordination. Comprehending Pomerania in his own way, he thought that the Pomeranian society could be convinced to work together with the government camp for the benefit of the state, yet this was hindered by the opposition furthering their own interests. The opinion concerning the particularism of the opposition's actions and aims was not unjustified; however, politics apart from implementing autonomous, sometimes great visions, also assumes the existence of current party interests. The development of Polish economic potential in Pomerania in the context of internal and international politics certainly constituted a common ground

⁵⁵ W. PEPLIŃSKI, op.cit., pp. 258, 261. Comp. Tomasz KRZEMIŃSKI, *Polityk dwóch epok Wiktor Kulerski (1865–1935)*, Toruń 2008, pp. 216–219. The state authorities also underlined the influence of the conflict between the voivode and the leader of the "Piaśt" in Pomerania on the collapse of the Settlement Credit Union, see: Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu [State Archives in Toruń] (further cit. APT), Starostwo Powiatowe w Grudziądzu, sign. 278, fol. 10 (the document prepared by the country starost of Grudziądz of 13 September 1935 titled: "Społeczne instytucje finansowe na terenie miasta Grudziądza").

⁵⁶ AIJPL, Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota, pp. 3–5.

for the voivodeship authorities and the Polish society of that province. Nevertheless, as the voivode together with the BBWR, linked the problem of the German threat with the attitude towards the post-May camp, it set Lamot and the camp he represented as the antagonists not only of the opposition, particularly the National Democracy, but also of a significant section of Polish society in Pomerania, including the clergy who were very influential there. In this situation the involvement of the Bishop of the Chełmno diocese Stanisław Wojciech Okoniewski, who was willing to cooperate with the government camp, was of little help, and the October 1929 conference with the voivode in Pelplin – which the bishop organised with a view to gaining the support of the clergy for the government camp – gathered few participants and resulted in a negative backlash from the press affiliated with National Democracy, with whom the majority of the diocesan clergy sympathised.⁵⁷ In this situation, Lamot could not maintain long-term social credibility, unlike his predecessor.

Still he did a lot to establish connections with the society and its local elites. His numerous visits to towns and counties, participation in state and national ceremonies and the speeches he then gave (also for voluntary and professional associations) usually had a positive reception and facilitated current activities and getting in touch with those valuable for the government camp and therefore for the implementation of the “Pomeranian program” initiated with the voivode’s participation. He was also active in the press. Besides, he himself wrote his own speeches and articles. If one reads them today, one can perceive the overwhelming desire to convince others to his arguments, identified not only with the interests of his own political camp, but above all with the interest of the state.⁵⁸ The voivode’s arguments were often misunderstood and frequently quoted out of context in order to either ridicule the author or to outrage public opinion in Pomerania. Lamot generally said what he thought and thus many of his speeches contained elements that were very risky in the eyes of both the opposition and the influential members of the government camp in Toruń and Warsaw.⁵⁹ Day to day, this aspect of his public activity evoked a reaction from the press and some leaders of the National Democracy camp, such as Rev. Bolt, and the voivode’s anger resulted in – what turned out to be futile and hopeless – polemics printed in the pro-government “Dzień Pomorski.” Later, when Lamot was no longer the voivode, this led to him losing a lawsuit brought by the Reverend senator. The whole situation, including his tactless statements, was noticed in Warsaw. There is no doubt that Lamot was

⁵⁷ See: *Pacyfikacja Pomorza. Uwagi na tle konferencji w Pelplinie*, Słowo Pomorskie, no. 245, 23 October 1929, p. 1. Comp. Jan WALKUSZ, *Duchowieństwo katolickie diecezji chełmińskiej 1918–1939*, Pelplin 1992, pp. 336–338.

⁵⁸ Comp. Wiktor LAMOT, *O Twórczą Myśl Państwową na Pomorzu (Przemówienia, artykuły, fragmenty)*, selected and compiled by Adam BRZEG, Toruń 1931.

⁵⁹ Comp. the speech given by Lamot on 4 July 1931 at the assembly of the Pomeranian District of the Polish Legionnaires’ Union: “Co kapral I Brygady chciał osiągnąć w swej pracy na Pomorzu” (ibid., pp. 77–102). The voivode later considered the speech to be the reason of his dismissal.

looking for chances to gain the support of public opinion and its leaders for the government camp. However, this task required charisma and an appropriate position, both of which were lacking. Ultimately, the circumstances turned out to be unfavourable as well.

The last issue was paradoxically connected with Lamot's ambitious enterprise undertaken in cooperation with the leading representatives of Pomeranian economy – *i.e.* the immediate economic program for Pomerania prepared since the autumn of 1929, which was the voivode's greatest service to the province during his term in Toruń office. On 9 December 1929 the Council of Pomeranian Productive Associations was founded in the voivodeship's capital under the voivode's patronage, and 12 June 1930 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw a delegation of 90 representatives of Pomeranian productive spheres, led by Lamot, handed the President of Poland Ignacy Mościcki an extensive letter from the Council of Associations. It propounded support for the Pomeranian economy and listed the means that would facilitate this, focusing primarily on problems in agriculture which was facing a growing economic crisis. The external context of this program was the German "Sofortprogramm" which had been implemented for some time not only for the eastern provinces of the Reich but also for the German minority in the western voivodeships of Poland, especially – as it was considered – in Pomerania. Therefore during the audience with the president the delegates also suggested expanding Polish ownership by the "degermanization" of land ownership through a forced parcellation of German properties.⁶⁰ Shortly afterwards, the voivode sent a strictly confidential letter to the *starostas* informing them about the first batch of loans amounting to 1050 thousand zlotys, which was to be soon made available to them.⁶¹ The total sum of the medium-term loans from the State Agricultural Bank and the Bank of State Economy increased significantly over time, exceeding 5 million zlotys.⁶²

Years later Lamot stressed that during the meeting with the President at the castle he clearly sensed the Prime Minister's lack of interest in the program for Pomerania.⁶³ While at the beginning of 1930 a representative of the Pomeranian landowning conservatives Leon Janta-Polczyński became the Minister of Agriculture, and the pro-government Pomeranian press published the foundations of the economic program for Pomerania, the fifth – and as it turned out, the last – government led by Kazimierz Bartel that had been in the office since December 1929. However, in mid-March the Prime Minister resigned and was replaced by Waleśy Sławek, whose priority at that time were political rather than economic matters, particularly as this was a time of decisive action taken against the opposition

⁶⁰ Comp. J. KUTTA, *Druga Rzeczpospolita i Kaszubi 1920–1939*, pp. 268–269.

⁶¹ APB, UWP, sign. 1224 (letter of the voivode of Pomerania [top secret!] of 17 June 1930 to the Starosts of the Counties of the Pomeranian Province, without pages.

⁶² J. KUTTA, *Druga Rzeczpospolita i Kaszubi 1920–1939*, p. 272.

⁶³ AIJPL, Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota, pp. 3–4.

parties, particularly those gathered in Centrolew, and separately against the National Democracy. In the summer and autumn of 1930 the key issue for the government camp were preparations for the election for the Parliament and the Senate planned for November, which the government had to win if they wanted to stay in power. The deputy Minister of Religious Faiths and Public Education Rev. Bronisław Żongołłowicz noted on 22 October 1930 that "Lamot complains that the matters of merchants which he has been arranging in Pomerania went haywire in the capital, as Warsaw cancelled the whole long-running action, which makes any creative work impossible."⁶⁴ All the more to the voivode's credit that in this situation he was able to be a persistent petitioner at the ministerial economic departments. Thus at the district congress of the Polish Legionnaires' Union in Toruń in July 1931 he had the right to talk about loans for Pomeranian merchants, craftsmen and farmers: "I myself obtained them and begged for them [...]"⁶⁵ However he then expressed his conviction that they were given both to the adherents and the opponents of the government camp. Yet this question was not so straightforward, as it was proven by the testimonies of many competent witnesses (including former and current clerks in the state administration) given in February and march of 1932 during the case of the former Voivode Lamot vs Rev. Bolt.⁶⁶ Those members of the Council of Pomeranian Productive Associations who were associated with the National Democracy were distancing themselves from the process of creation of analogous county councils which began in July 1930; this was due to their conviction that it would also be an opportunity for the government camp to extend their influence.⁶⁷

That is why at least part of the leaders of Pomeranian National Democracy, such as Stefan Sacha, were alarmed by the foundation of the Council of Pomeranian Productive Associations in December 1929, joined by many respected figures from Pomeranian social and business spheres, frequently due to the efforts of and invitations from the voivode, who was the patron of the whole enterprise. The national democrats were justifiably worried that the government camp would reap profits from the success of the program for Pomerania, and in time the attitude of a significant section of Pomeranian public opinion towards the voivode would become more positive. Therefore, Lamot's assessment that the press campaign which was at that time directed against him was connected with the program for Pomerania that he was promoting seems to be accurate.⁶⁸ It was no coincidence that a series of articles criticising the voivode and published in Warsaw "Myśl Niepodległa"⁶⁹ started soon after the public announcement of the basic principles of the program

⁶⁴ B. ŻONGOŁŁOWICZ, *Dzienniki 1930–1936*, s. 66.

⁶⁵ W. LAMOT, *O Twórczą Myśl Państwową na Pomorzu*, p. 86.

⁶⁶ See footnote 45.

⁶⁷ Comp. *Echa wywiadu p. Lamota*, *Słowo Pomorskie*, no. 187, 14 August 1930, p. 3.

⁶⁸ AIJPL, Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota, pp. 4–5.

⁶⁹ *Myśl Niepodległa*, from no. 1010, 22 February 1930 to no. 1047, 8 November 1930.

for Pomerania.⁷⁰ The hit was well aimed. The anonymous author (probably Adam Niemojewski) wrote this long-running weekly series in a witty and wicked way so that the readers, also those from outside Pomerania, enjoyed the reading. Lamot later wrote: "They hired a libellous writer, who week after week for a year wrote articles about me that were hideous in content and intention."⁷¹ He referred to the fact that the articles referred to his court case from 1914, and through this also his difficult family matters, coincidentally recalling his previous name. Those issues were actually in the framework of most of those articles, which does not change the fact that the texts were often fed by the voivode's current activities. The publication of the stenographic record from the 1914 Siedlce trial in "Gazeta Polska," an unofficial paper of the central government, and also in its voivodeship paper "Dzień Pomorski"⁷² did not let Lamot recoup much of the damage to his image and prestige, all the more as the publications from "Myśl Niepodległa" were reprinted or quoted in other national and local papers opposing the government camp. They were really tasty tidbits for the Toruń daily paper "Słowo Pomorskie," which for a long time had been carrying out attacks against the voivode, also of personal nature,⁷³ as well as for many other local Pomeranian newspapers. Confiscations of papers, although painful, could not be an effective antidote. In this situation, the win in the 1933 court case against Adam Niemojewski provided the – already former – voivode with some bitter satisfaction.⁷⁴

The offensive against Lamot, not only in the press but also through cleverly circulated rumours, significantly weakened the voivode's position in Warsaw, particularly as the attacks were not limited to the Polish press. The leadership of the German minority in Pomerania unofficially joined in the attack on the voivode, inspiring – also through the German consulate in Toruń – articles in Berlin papers that were defaming Lamot, and spreading malicious gossip, perhaps originating also from Polish sources hostile to the voivode.⁷⁵ This was in connection with what the voivode had been mentioning and what he clearly stated during the castle meeting with the head of state on 12 June 1930, that is, with the intention to "degermanize" land ownership in Pomerania through the forced parcellation of German landed properties on the ground of the Act on Agricultural Reform from

⁷⁰ Wiktor LAMOT, *O uzdrowienie atmosfery politycznej na Pomorzu*, Dzień Pomorski, no. 11, 15 January 1930, p. 3; *Dr. Janta-Polczyński ministrem rolnictwa*, *ibid.*, no. 13, 17 January 1930, p. 1; *Pomorzanin ministrem rolnictwa*, *ibid.*, no. 14, 18 January 1930, p. 2; *Program pracy państwowej na Pomorzu*, *ibid.*, no. 46, 25 February 1930, p. 2.

⁷¹ AIJPL, Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota, p. 5.

⁷² Comp. *O Honor i cześć Woj. Pomorskiego Lamota. Dokumenty i materiały*, Dzień Pomorski, no. 71, 26 March 1930, pp. 5–9. Earlier from no. 64 of 18 March 1930 to no. 69 of 23 March 1930 protests of people and social organizations against attacks on the Pomeranian voivode were published in the provincial authorities.

⁷³ Comp. K. BĄCZKOWSKI, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁷⁴ *Wrona-Lamot contra Niemojewski*, Słowo Pomorskie, no. 68, 23 March 1933, p. 1

⁷⁵ Comp. A. KOTOWSKI, *op. cit.*, p. 145, footnote 52.

1925. The fact that the names on the list of estates marked for parcellation in 1929 and 1930 were predominantly German while in the previous years these constituted a small percentage of the divided property was a result both of the pragmatic approach aimed at balancing the national proportions among the owners of the parcellated lands and of the objectives of national policy which took into consideration political, economic and military issues. Another motive could have been the voivode's policy of spreading the influence of the post-May political camp. Here an important role was assigned to Pomeranian conservative landowners, who wanted to limit as much as possible their own losses resulting from parcellation.⁷⁶ Afraid that these intentions would be implemented – particularly as the time for ultimate resolutions in Polish policy was approaching, resulting in stricter measures against any opposition, including the German minority and their property – their leadership decided to make the problem international. Either through diplomatic or intelligence channels a document was sent to the editorial board of the British newspaper the “Manchester Guardian.” It purported to be Lamot's strictly confidential letter from 22 December 1929 to the President of the District Land Office in Grudziądz, in which the voivode, refusing to accept the parcellation plan for 1930 prepared by that office, simultaneously pointed out that – for political reasons and for the sake of the state's defensive capability – the subjects of the parcellation should be mostly German estates. This document was published in the “Manchester Guardian” on 11 November 1930.⁷⁷ As it was contrary to Polish international obligations, it caused a sharp reaction from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Adam Zaleski, who was then visiting Geneva, which he expressed in a letter to the Minister of Interior. This prompted an investigation by the Ministry of Interior authorities as well as by the 2nd Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army.

Some Western publications on this topic consider this document to be authentic.⁷⁸ Polish documentation regarding this case can be found in the Ministry of Interior files in the Polish Central Archives of Modern Records⁷⁹ and is known to Polish researchers, who – conscious that the contents of the document were convergent with the objectives of Polish policy – either considered the letter to be bogus⁸⁰ or left the matter open.⁸¹ As the background and the course of the case have

⁷⁶ More: Tomasz ŁASKIEWICZ, *Ziemiaństwo na Pomorzu w okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego – w perspektywie codzienności*, Inowrocław–Toruń 2013, pp. 368–373.

⁷⁷ *A secret Polish document. “Land Reform” Methods. Discrimination against Germans. Complaints of Minority Justified*, Manchester Guardian, 11 September 1930. Photocopies of the article in: AAN, Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych [Ministry of the Interior] (further cit. MSW), sign. 990.

⁷⁸ Comp. Richard BLANKE, *Orphans of Versailles. The Germans in Western Poland 1918–1939*, Lexington 1993, pp. 113–114.

⁷⁹ AAN, MSW, sign. 990 (Korespondencja i wycinki prasowe w sprawie sfalszowanego pisma wojewody pomorskiego do prezesa Okręgowego Urzędu Ziemskiego w Grudziądzu o sposobie wykonywania reformy rolnej i wyłączenia właścicieli ziemskich Niemców zamieszczonego w “Manchester Guardian” z 11 IX 1930 r. [1930–1931]).

⁸⁰ P. HAUSER, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

⁸¹ T. ŁASKIEWICZ, op. cit., pp. 370–373.

been discussed in detail,⁸² we shall focus here on the questions most significant from the point of view of the voivode and his office. Lamot was conscious of both the international and the internal consequences of the publication of that letter. From the beginning until the end he maintained that the letter was not genuine, of which his office provided significant proof.⁸³ As the original version of the document printed in the "Manchester Guardian" is missing, it is difficult today to make an unequivocal judgement concerning its authenticity, particularly as the newspaper, while publishing an English translation of a text considered to be an official Polish document, did not include even as much as a photo of the original. The Pomeranian Voivodeship Office presented then arguments that were fundamental, although it is difficult to say whether they were decisive. Regardless, a reading of the document raises significant doubts. It is more of an open letter than a strictly confidential letter that the voivode would send to the heads of second-level offices of non-combined administration. It also contains too many different issues whose common denominator was that they were touchy subjects in relations between the state authorities and the German minority in Pomerania. However, it cannot be hidden that the letter contained information regarding the real plans of the authorities towards the German minority in the Pomeranian voivodeship, prepared both at the central and at the voivodeship level. That is why in March 1931 one of Grudziądz barristers was accused of espionage and passing information to the government of the German Reich regarding the confidential rules of the parcellation policy towards the German minority. This happened against the wishes of the voivode, who in his correspondence to the authorities, demanded that the lawyer should be accused of forging the document. However, the prosecutor of the District Court in Grudziądz justified his actions in the following way: "Although this letter was described to be false by the Voivodeship Office in Toruń, part of the information published in the form of this letter is genuine."⁸⁴ For the voivode it was a humiliating failure and it is possible that as early as the autumn of 1930, independently of the ongoing parliamentary election campaign, this influenced the decision of the central government to stop the program for Pomerania, which was the sub-

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ First of all, it was stressed that top secret documents written by the voivode held the heading "Wojewoda Pomorski," not "Urząd Wojewódzki Pomorski," so in the British translation of the heading it should say "Office of the Governor of Pomerelia" (which was a serious argument in undermining the authenticity of the document, as was the fact of it being issued on Sunday 22 December). The copies of documents with the number 3471 were sent to the Home Office: they had been issued in 1929 both by the Department of Public Security and the Department of Health of the Office of the Governor of Pomerelia (as indicated in the entry number of the document published in "Manchester Guardian"), but they had concerned issues which differed from the ones described in the British daily.

⁸⁴ AAN, MSW, sign. 990 (pismo prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego w Grudziądzu Hermana z 24 III 1931 r. (Tajne!) do Pana Prokuratora Sądu Apelacyjnego w Toruniu), without pages.

ject of the complaint which, in October of that year, Lamot uttered to the deputy Minister of Religious Faiths and Public Education Rev. Bronisław Żongołłowicz.

It is also possible that this situation was one of the factors that would finally result in the Minister of Interior Bronisław Pieracki's decision to discharge Lamot.⁸⁵ On 12 July 1931 the same Rev. Żongołłowicz noted: "Pieracki sat at my table and told me that he gave Lamot a dressing down for what happened in Chełmno in Pomerania. Maybe Lamot will be dismissed. This is what Pieracki wants." Truly, on 6 July 1931 in Chełmno some serious riots were instigated by the unemployed; they broke into the town hall and then into the town slaughterhouse.⁸⁶ It must have influenced Pieracki's mood and the way he treated the voivode, which also seems to reflect Lamot's position in the government camp. Yet there was something else. It is possible that Lamot was already expecting his dismissal, as in the aforementioned speech at the district congress of the Polish Legionnaires' Union in Toruń on 4 July 1931 – two days before the events in Chełmno – on "what the corporal of the 1st Brigade wanted to achieve in his work in Pomerania" he left the audience the idea of the program for Pomerania which he had been implementing as a "sort of inheritance."⁸⁷ As the speech contained numerous conciliatory elements concerning the importance of the program for Pomerania and thus constituting a call for *sui generis* national, cross-party concord, and simultaneously it was strongly polemical towards the opposition and the elements of the clergy who supported them as well as towards certain elements in the government camp; it was negatively received in the National Democracy press⁸⁸ and had unfavourable repercussions for the voivode in his own political group. The personal impressions of the audience, which included the leaders of the BBWR and many officers serving in Pomerania who were former legionnaires, were strengthened by publication of the speech in the version jotted down by the previously mentioned Col. January Grzędziński in the pro-government "Głos Pogranicza," which the colonel published. The same source was used by "Słowo Pomorskie" and editorial offices of other Pomeranian papers opposing the government camp. It caused a major scandal, as the voivode accused Grzędziński of unreliable transcription of his Toruń speech.

⁸⁵ B. ŻONGOŁŁOWICZ, op. cit., p. 193.

⁸⁶ See: Czesław BASZYŃSKI, Kazimierz CHROŚNIAK, Łukasz KUCZMA, Barbara KWIATKOWSKA, A[dam?] MICHAŁKIEWICZ, Anna PERLIŃSKA, *Bezrobocie na Pomorzu w latach 1921–1938*, [in:] *Teki Archiwalne*, vol. 4: *Materiały do historii klasy robotniczej w Polsce 1916–1938*, Warszawa 1955, pp. 182–186 (letters of the mayor of Chełmno of 7 and 11 July 1931 to the county starost in Chełmno about the riots of the unemployed).

⁸⁷ W. LAMOT, *O Twórczą Myśl Państwową na Pomorzu*, p. 101.

⁸⁸ Comp. "Znamienna mowa wojewody Lamota", *Słowo Pomorskie*, no. 155, 9 July 1931, p. 2; *Kancierz i kapral. Groźne słowa p. Lamota*, *ibid.*, no. 159, 14 July 1931, p. 1; *Pomorzanie chodzą na czworakach. Filozofia polityczna p. kaprala Wrony*, *ibid.*, no. 161, 16 July 1931, p. 1; *Zgraja szalbie-rzy na Pomorzu. Skąd się tu znalazła?*, *ibid.*, no. 162, 17 July 1931, p. 1; *Kapral Mussolini i kapral Wrona. Walka o duszę młodzieży pomorskiej*, *ibid.*, no. 163, 18 July 1931, p. 1. Titles used in no. 161 and no. 162 come from fragments of the voivode's speeches taken out of context, constituting and example of polemical methods of editors of "Słowo Pomorskie."

The result was a duel that took place on 25 October 1931 near Warsaw and ended with Lamot wounding the colonel.⁸⁹ There were earlier speculations⁹⁰ concerning Lamot's dismissal, yet the decision may have been directly influenced by the fact that the duel was reported by the papers. Also, Col. Grzędziński's superior, the commandant of the 8th Corps District in Toruń, General Stefan Wiktor Paśławski tried to mediate in his matter.⁹¹ A year and a half later Lamot stated that the incident with Col. Grzędziński was "a sad misunderstanding, which resulted from the publication of an uncontrolled text of the speech. I sealed the matter with a bullet, leaving my post with tarnished reputation, labelled as a troublemaker and a man with a shady past,"⁹² referring to the negative press campaign against him which recalled the Siedlce trial of 1914. What hurt him most was the attack from his own political camp and from among the legionnaires – "the sanators of the first baptism" as he supposedly called them during the court case in 1933 when he sued Adam Niemojewski.⁹³ Another element were the echoes of old disputes from the last days of the Legions. A year earlier, when he was taken to court by Rev. Bolt, Lamot bitterly remarked that as a consequence of that speech from 4 July 1931, "the Legionnaires began to have a suspicion about me, that my loyalty towards the Commandant may be shaking. [...] And those who suspected me, used to sprawl in the armchairs in the Wehrmacht officer mess while I would eat turnip with water in a German prison in Dzika St. I paid a high price for the right to tell the truth."⁹⁴ He was clearly referring in this way to General Paśławski, Col. Grzędziński and maybe even to General Włodzimierz Maxymowicz-Raczyński, the commandant of the 4th Toruń Infantry Division, who replaced General Paśławski as the commandant of the corps district during the latter's absences. If in his last months in the office the voivode clashed with the military authorities in Pomerania, whose leaders were generals of Legionnaire provenance, this could not have ended well for him as the military people (such as Bronisław Pieracki, then the Minister of Interior) played an increasing role in central administration. Furthermore, critical opinions about him expressed by respected government supporters were reaching Warsaw. On 22 July 1931 Rev. Żongołłowicz wrote that the superintendent of the Pomeranian School District Michał Pollak "spoke a lot about Voivode Lamot, about his constant speeches, hot temper, lack of tact, about keeping the superintendent on a leash as if he was a subordinate official."⁹⁵ In this way, the voivode's impulsiveness rebounded upon himself, and not for the first time. For his adversaries in the government camp, especially in the Ministry of Interior, it was a proof that his quite recent promotion from the post of the Pińczów *starosta* was too

⁸⁹ Comp. A. J. CIEŚLIKOWA, op. cit., p. 135 (including references to the press).

⁹⁰ Comp. *Ustąpienie wojewody Lamota?*, Słowo Pomorskie, no. 199, 30 August 1931, p. 1.

⁹¹ *Wrona-Lamot contra Niemojewski*, ibid., no. 64, 18 March 1933, p. 2.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *Ks. sen. Feliks Bolt contra Wrona-Lamot*, ibid., no. 58, 11 March 1932, p. 3.

⁹⁵ B. ŻONGOŁŁOWICZ, op. cit., p. 202.

fast. The same author noted that as Pieracki mentioned on 12 June 1931 the possibility of Lamot's dismissal, he added that he "would like to see Połczyński in the Vatican embassy." His unquestionable usefulness in Vatican aside, Połczyński would as a result leave the post of the Minister of Agriculture, where he was the patron of Voivode Lamot's economic program for Pomerania; Lamot's constant efforts in Warsaw to obtain funds for Pomerania may have exhausted the patience of Pieracki, his direct superior, particularly as in Warsaw the issue of the program for Pomerania might have been associated with the matter of the September 1930 article in the *Manchester Guardian* and its later consequences.

On 18 November 1931, the president of the Republic of Poland Ignacy Mościcki suspended Voivode Lamot on the request of the Prime Minister Aleksander Prystor and the Minister of Interior Bronisław Pieracki.⁹⁶ As he was not recalled for civil service during the next six months, on 21 May 1932 he went into retirement.⁹⁷ After leaving the civil service, he settled on his wife's estate in Żurawniki, Pińczów county, which he managed until the outbreak of the Polish-German war. It was not easy in the face of the crisis, which particularly afflicted agriculture, also due to the financial losses which he claimed to incur in connection with the necessity to terminate the program for Pomerania in its current form. "Besides the letter of thanks I took with me from Pomerania a hundred thousand zlotys of debt, for which I took out a mortgage on my wife's family estate, as I liquidated the works in progress without touching the expense accounts [...]."⁹⁸ It cannot be excluded that in the circumstances of his dismissal from the post there was no other way. The letter of thanks, signed by the representatives of the majority of Pomeranian voluntary and economic associations, was the expression of gratitude for the voivode's deep involvement in the economic program for Pomerania. This, however, did not change the fact that he failed as the voivode of Pomerania. The decisive factors were his lack of experience and expertise necessary for the post, lack of a political support base and a proper position in the government camp, and finally – Lamot's difficult character. As a result, faced with the growing conflict between the government and the opposition, he had no chance to complete the political and economic tasks which he undertook as the voivode. What is more, his impetuosity easily resulting in clashes with others as well as the issues from the pre-war times made him an easy target for the press, which in the long run undermined his authority as the superior of the administration and the representative of the government. As a result, Warsaw decided that through his actions he exacerbated the existing

⁹⁶ AAN, MSW – dopływ, sign. 935, fol. 338 (Prezydent RP Ignacy Mościcki z 18 XI 1931 r. do Pana Wiktora Lamota Wojewody pomorskiego w IV st. sł. w Toruniu); *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych*, no. 21, 31 December 1931, p. 726.

⁹⁷ AAN, MSW – dopływ, sign. 935, fol. 348 (minister spraw wewnętrznych Bronisław Pieracki z 10 V 1932 r. do pozostającego w stanie nieczynnym wojewody pomorskiego w IV st. sł. Wiktora Lamota); *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych*, no. 10, 30 June 1932, p. 343.

⁹⁸ AIJPL, Kolekcja Wiktora Lamota, p. 5.

political situation and worsened the relations between the state government and the society, including the clergy. Therefore, he was recalled for inefficiency in implementing his political tasks rather than administrative ones. This is how the situation was perceived by important representatives of the opposition,⁹⁹ and by his successor, voivode Stefan Kirtiklis.¹⁰⁰ However, one must remember that Lamot was the first of the post-May Pomeranian voivodes to introduce visible changes in the administration and the judicial system and began to construct the foundations of the local organisation of government supporters – i.e. BBWR and its affiliated pro-government associations. He also toughened the policy towards the opposition parties and their papers. He accumulated the resulting odium himself, preparing *nolens volens* the grounds for the further steps of his successor. The latter was already a much more experienced civil servant, with an incomparably stronger position in the government camp, and he did not repeat the mistakes of his predecessor. However, in July 1936 he was recalled after it was revealed during the “*starostas*” trials what was happening behind the scenes of the covert system of power that he had created in the voivodeship. He was also one of the more prominent and long-term post-May voivodes. It was no accident then that “Słowo Pomorskie,” a National Democracy paper wrote soon after Lamot left Pomerania: “The activity of Mr Wrona-Lamot constituted the ending of the time of open strife. The front lines were at that time still clearly delineated. Everybody knew who is on which side. One must admit that in this fight there still were some remnants of chivalry.”¹⁰¹ There seems to have been more chivalry in the actions of the voivode than that of his adversaries from the National Democracy. Certainly it would have been better if in August 1928 Kazimierz Młodzianowski had been replaced by a more experienced politician from the government camp, someone for whom the expansion of the Sanation’s influence in Pomerania would not have been a task of primary importance and who, when faced with the most important problems of this strategically important province, would have looked for common ground with the elites and society. At this stage of the development of political relationships in Poland it was, however, unlikely. Since 1928 the post-May camp strove consequently for full power in the country, so they did not want to and could not let the western voivodeships, including the Pomeranian one, remain the domain of central and right-wing parties, particularly the National Democracy. In this situation, Warsaw for a long time considered it beneficial to keep an efficient and effective administrator as a voivode in Toruń, who would ensure maintaining political control in the voivodeship. This only changed in July 1936 when Stefan Kirtiklis was transferred to Białystok and replaced by Władysław Raczkiewicz, a voivode with

⁹⁹ Ks. sen. Feliks Bolt *contra* Wrona-Lamot, Słowo Pomorskie, no. 58, 11 March 1932, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ APT, Akta miasta Torunia, sign. 1188, fol. 16 (Protokół zjazdu starostów województwa pomorskiego odbytego w Urzędzie Wojewódzkim Pomorskim w Toruniu w dniach 23 i 24 V 1933 r.).

¹⁰¹ *Drenowanie Pomorza. Trzeba ustalić wyraźnie odpowiedzialność*, Słowo Pomorskie, no. 212, 15 September 1932, p. 1.

significant political and administrative achievements, who in this role was better as the government representative than as an administrator.

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HOHEN UND TIEFEN DES POMMERSCHEN WOJEWODEN
WIKTOR LAMOT (1928–1931). AUS DER GESCHICHTE
DER MACHTELITE NACH DEM MAIUMSTURZ

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselwörter: die Zwischenkriegszeit in Polen, Ämter, Parteiloser Block der Zusammenarbeit mit der Regierung, der Maiumsturz 1926

Der Fall Wiktor Lamot ist auf dem Hintergrund eines typischen Karrierelaufs polnischer Wojewoden nach dem Maiumsturz 1926 einzigartig und bestimmt einer eingehenden Untersuchung wert. Bevor er im August 1928, nach unerwartetem Tod des ersten Post-Mai-Wojewoden von Pommern, Kazimierz Młodzianowski, die Leitung des Wojewodschaftsamtes in Thorn übernahm, war er sieben Jahre lang Landrat in Pińczów gewesen. Ein so unerwarteter und hoher Aufstieg war zu damaliger Zeit immer noch eine Seltenheit in dem staatlichen Verwaltungsapparat der Zweiten Republik Polen. In der Zeit seiner Arbeit als Wojewode Pommerns wurde der Kurs der Post-Mai-Regierung gegen die politische Opposition verschärft. Dies prägte bedeutend seine Amtszeit in Pommern in den Jahren 1928–1931. Neben einem wirksamen Verwalten von der Wojewodschaft, forderte Warschau von ihm entschiedene Maßnahmen zur Stärkung der Einflüsse von dem Post-Mai-Lager sowie zur Einschränkung der Einflüsse von oppositionellen Gruppierungen. Nach dem Maiumsturz von 1926 war er der erste Wojewode von Pommern, welcher derartige Handlungen in einem solchen Ausmaß unternahm. Gerade deswegen wird in Pommern seine Amtszeit mit grundlegendem Personalwechsel in der staatlichen Verwaltung, aber auch in der Gerichtsbarkeit assoziiert, des Weiteren mit dem Ausbau – *per fas et nefas* – von den Strukturen des Parteiloser Block der Zusammenarbeit mit der Regierung [Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem] und mit restriktiven Schritten gegen die mit der Regierung in Opposition stehenden Presstitel. Dies hat größtenteils die historische Erin-

nerung an ihn, aber auch die Bewertung seiner Amtszeit durch Historiographie, speziell in der Volksrepublik Polen, geprägt. Es stimmt aber auch, dass seine Erinnerung auch durch die während seiner Amtszeit gegen ihn gerichtete negative Pressekampagne geprägt wurde, die zu seiner Abberufung von dem Wojewodeposten im Jahre 1931 bedeutend beitrug.

THE ASCENT AND DESCENT OF THE POMERANIAN VOIVODE WIKTOR LAMOT (1928–1931): FROM THE HISTORY OF THE POST-MAY ELITE

Summary

Key words: Interwar period in Poland, Offices, the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government, the May Coup d'Etat 1926

The case of Wiktor Lamot, as opposed to the careers of other governors in Poland after the May coup d'état, is worth a closer analysis. Prior to taking over the position of the head of the provincial office in Toruń in August 1928 – after the sudden death of the first Pomeranian governor Kazimierz Młodzianowski – Lamot had held the position of starosta in Pińczów. Such a rapid promotion was still quite rare in the state administration of the Second Polish Republic. As the Pomeranian governor, he had to face the sharper policy towards the political opposition run by the authorities after the May coup d'état. This greatly affected his work in Pomerania during the years 1928–1931. Apart from administering the province in an effective manner, the authorities in Warsaw demanded that he take decisive steps to develop the influence of new political circles and to reduce the influence of the opposition. He was the first Pomeranian governor after May 1926 to take such measures on a large scale. His term of office was characterised by changes of personnel in the state administration, the administration of justice, the extension – *per fas et nefas* – the structures of the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government along with the restrictive measures against the opposition press. All the above mentioned factors have shaped the historical memory of Wiktor Lamot and the way his term of office was evaluated in historiography, particularly in the period of the Polish People's Republic. However, it is beyond doubt that the negative press campaign against him contributed to his being dismissed from his position as governor in November 1931.