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WACŁAW KOMARNICKI (1891–1954) – SOCIO-POLITICAL VIEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Słowa kluczowe: Wacław Komarnicki, Narodowa Demokracja, prawo, praworządność

Keywords: Wacław Komarnicki, National Democracy, law, rule of law

ABSTRACT

An in-depth analysis presented in this article concludes that the views and socio-political activities of Wacław Komarnicki were aimed at reasserting the Polish national interest and realizing the idea of the state of law associated with the rule of law. The analysis is based on archival and printed sources and selected literature on the subject. It required the use of appropriate research methods. The biographical method, in conjunction with the content analysis method, proved to be most helpful. Among the research techniques, the analysis of testimonies of political thought proved to be particularly useful.

The science of constitutional law both in the Second Polish Republic and on the eve of regaining independence emanated a spirit of freedom and concern for the Polish state's proper arrangement. It was in line with European science, as it analyzed issues relating to the law-observing state, the fundamental principles of the socio-political system, the judiciary, the research into

the constitutionality of law, the activities of political parties, the rights and duties of citizens, the local and professional self-government.

Within this scientific discipline, the center of constitutional law at the Stefan Batory University (USB) in Vilnius, represented by scientists such as professors: Wiktor Sukiennicki, Michał Król, Henryk Zahorski, or Wacław Komarnicki, older than them, deserves attention. The latter, as professor of political law and theory of the state, an eminent expert on the legal and political system of Poland and international law, was part of an array of well-known and respected Polish lawyers of the 20th century¹.

The “hero” in this article was born on 29 July 1891 in Warsaw. He was the first son of the well-known industrialist Tytus Grzegorz Komarnicki and Józefa née Sas-Suszyńska. He was five years older brother of Tytus Komarnicki, lawyer and diplomat, author of many articles and historical and legal treatises. In Warsaw, occupied by the Russians, those years’ socio-political atmosphere was dark and gloomy and had been grief-stricken since the fall of the last January Uprising. Despite the passage of thirty years from those pessimistic events, the scars were still fresh, and the memory of the defeat and humiliation suffered was painful.

Wacław Komarnicki was, therefore, the representative of the generation that grew up and shaped its intellectual and ideological stance during the period of national captivity and increased Russification on the one hand and in the atmosphere of national liberation traditions on the other. According to the generational delimitation within the national camp² proposed by Ewa Maj³, Komarnicki could be entered into the generation of independent Poland if vital records were considered. However, throughout he remained his socio-political activity in organizational structures, typical of the older generation of Naro-

¹ K. Pol, *Poczet prawników polskich*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 1227–1241.

² Speaking of a political national camp, I mean the historically shaped organizations that are part of it, such as: Liga Polska [Polish League] (LP), Liga Narodowa [National League] (LN), Związek Młodzieży Polskiej “Zet” [Association of the Polish Youth “Zet”] (ZMP “Zet”) and Stronnictwo Demokratyczno-Narodowe [National-Democratic Party] (SDN), Obóz Wielkiej Polski [Camp of Great Poland] (OWP), Związek Ludowo-Narodowy [Popular Nation Union] (ZLN), Stronnictwo Narodowe [The National Party] (SN) operating in each of the partitions.

³ E. Maj, *Komunikowanie polityczne Narodowej Demokracji 1918–1939*, Lublin 2010, pp. 29–31.

dowa Demokracja [National Democracy] (ND) i.e. in Stronnictwo Demokratyczno-Narodowe [National-Democratic Party] (SDN), Związek Ludowo-Narodowy [Popular Nation Union] (ZLN), Stronnictwo Narodowe [National Party] (SN), which identifies itself with the generation of the rebellious one⁴.

In these circumstances, it is also worth noting that Komarnicki's intellectual maturation, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century on Polish soil, coincided with the dynamic development and experience of many ideas: positivism, socialism together with its extreme variations in the form of Marxism, and finally nationalism. These were significant determinants, which, together with the patriotic atmosphere brought from the family home, attachment to Polish national traditions, respect, and recognition for organic work, impacted his assimilation of the contents of the national characteristics and subsequent socio-political projections within nationalist political thought⁵.

The primary home education of both brothers was taken care of by their mother. After completing the initial school, they continued their education in a good and highly regarded private St. Adalbert Philology Gymnasium [im. Św. Wojciecha] in Warsaw, headed by an experienced teacher and education organizer, Wojciech Górski. The schooling in this institution was crowned in 1909 with the school leaving certificate (matriculation examination). In these problematic social and political conditions for the Polish youth, the Komarnicki brothers, together with their high school friends, took part in the general school strike of the Kingdom's youth and a demonstration picket organ-

⁴ R. Wapiński, *Pokolenia Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1991. According to the author, the generation of the rebellious ones: "[...] played a major role in the creation of mass political movements, in setting out the concept of the struggle for reconstruction of the Polish state and then in its organization. Poland reborn between 1918 and 1939 was, if we may say so, a dream come true, and in principle a creation".

⁵ For the purposes of this article, the definition of the term political thought by Jan Jachymek and Waldemar Paruch has been adopted, according to which: "Political thought – all forms of reflection on political reality, regardless of the degree of development, internal cohesion and systematization, as well as theorizing and concretization. The main (but not the only) subject of this reflection is politics, understood as a form of social activity through relations and mechanisms related to the exercise of power, aimed both at achieving one's own political order and at satisfying specific interests". See: J. Jachymek, W. Paruch, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Więcej niż niepodległość. Polska myśl polityczna 1918–1939*, eds. J. Jachymek, W. Paruch, Lublin 2001, p. 11.

ized by them in front of the German consulate in Warsaw, in defense of the repressed Polish children in Września⁶.

Most likely influenced by the arguments of parents worried about the dynamics of revolutionary events and afraid that their older son might get involved in clandestine political activities, he decided to study law and philosophy outside the Kingdom of Poland. The choice fell on Lviv, which in the era of autonomy became an important center of cultural, scientific, and political life⁷ and a city of scientific opportunity for young, educated, and ambitious individuals. As a newcomer from the Russian partition, he gradually adapted to the new conditions and blended into the landscape of Lviv: "which, several years before the war [World War I – note by W. W.] was a small Vienna for the inhabitants of Galicia. [...] here was the only Polish university of technology and a university which was at that time extremely famous"⁸.

At that time, Lviv was vibrant with national and cultural life. Komarnicki was recognized and perceived by the university community as a participant in the school strike in Warsaw. In the academic year 1909/1910, he delved into the secrets of law, attending lectures of outstanding professors; among others, Oswald Balzes, a historian of law; Władysław Abraham, a historian of canonical and Polish law; Józef Buczek and Tadeusz Pilat, a lawyer, economist, and statistician⁹. However, soon after a one-year stay in Lviv, aware of his earlier or later return to the Kingdom, where Russian legislation was in force, he moved to the University of Dorpat (now Tartu in Estonia). It was reactivated in 1902 and at that time enjoyed a high reputation in Europe. Before World War I, it had educated about 2,300 Poles, referred to in the literature on the subject as "Dorpatians"¹⁰.

⁶ K. Pol, op. cit., p. 1230; *Wojciech Górski i jego szkoła*, ed. J. Lasocki, J. Majdecki, Warszawa 1982, p. 49.

⁷ S. Głąbiński, *Wspomnienia polityczne*, Pelplin 1939, p. 163. Stanisław Głąbiński, an organizer of national structures in the Austrian district, close to Komarnicki, stated that: "Lviv was a school of independent, political thinking in the national spirit".

⁸ S. Lam, *Życie wśród wielu. Przygotował do druku A. Lam*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 20–21.

⁹ A. Redzik, *O naukach historycznoprawnych w Uniwersytecie Jana Kazimierza we Lwowie*, [in:] *Nauki historycznoprawne w polskich uniwersytetach w II Rzeczypospolitej. Praca pod redakcją M. Pyter*, Lublin 2008, pp. 131–183.

¹⁰ P. Cyjuńczyk, *Wydział Prawa Uniwersytetu w Dorpacie i jego polscy studenci do 1918 roku*, "Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica" 2014, vol. XIII, no. 1, p. 190. As the author states:

At the beginning of his studies in Dorpat, among many Poles from the Kingdom of Poland, who belonged to numerous academic youth, clandestine, and legal organizations¹¹, he became involved with the national movement's organizational structures, more precisely with SDN [National-Democratic Party]. Together with the ideologically involved Poles, he studied Polish nationalism theoreticians, including Jan Ludwik Popławski, Zygmunt Balicki, and Roman Dmowski. The works of the first of them, probably familiar to Komarnicki, who formulated the foundations of national ideology, became a signpost for subsequent generations of nationalists, a signpost toward an interest in the western Polish lands and the introduction of the people into the space of political influence of national democrats. The second one, the author of a study considered an ideological manifesto of the Polish nationalist formation *Egoizm narodowy wobec etyki* [National egoism to ethics], was perceived as an ideologist and an experienced researcher of social phenomena. Roman Dmowski, on the other hand, as a politician with a strict mind, endowed with political intuition and a talent for conducting multifaceted political action, had over the years become the undisputed leader of the national camp and promoter of its doctrine. Therefore, it can be assumed that the entire literary output of opinion-forming circles of Polish nationalism influenced Komarnicki's future. An example is the famous phrase of Roman Dmowski: "I am Polish, it means...", contained in *Myśli nowoczesnego Polaka* [The thoughts of a modern Pole]¹². The influence was confirmed by further stages of Komarnicki's social

"In the Second Polish Republic it was advisable to be a 'Dorpatian'. This term meant a person who was well educated in every respect. The success of the independent Poland project was largely due to university graduates in today's Tartu".

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 189. An important role in shaping patriotic attitudes among the Polish academic community studying in Dorpat, was played by Polish student associations and corporations, and among them the "Konwent Polonia" [Polonia Convention] established in 1826 by students from Vilnius, legally reactivated only after the revolution of 1905. After 1918 it was moved to Vilnius and after the end of World War II to Gdańsk, where it has been operating until now by publishing a magazine: "Historia Akademica. Studia i Materiały".

¹² I write about this in more detail in the article: W. Wojdyło, *Biografie intelektualne twórców i kreatorów endeckiej myśli politycznej w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Rekonesans bibliograficzny*, [in:] *Myśl polityczna w społeczeństwie informacyjnym*, eds. E. Maj, E. Kirwiel, E. Podgajna, Lublin 2015, pp. 327–339.

and political activity. “[...] as a patriot brought up in the Kingdom, was close to the views related to the resistance against Russification, the fight for the rights of the Polish language, or the preservation of the remnants of the legal personality of the Kingdom, and, especially after the facts of persecution in the Prussian partition of Poland had been revealed, the defense against the threat to Polishness from the Germans”¹³.

Exploring an intellectual dimension, the legal research topics were completely absorbing him at the Faculty of Law of the University of Dorpat. The issue of defending the Polish national interest¹⁴ also caused him to deal much more closely with issues concerning political (state) law and the (international) law of nations not excluding the alternative of undertaking scientific work within these disciplines. It was determined mainly by the fact that in August 1914, he obtained the diploma of a legal science candidate, the same degree as that of a doctor of law, honored in the other partitions. After returning to Warsaw, he immediately took up a job as a history teacher in a well-known and valued private girls’ boarding school run by its owner, educator, and organizer – Jadwiga Sikorska. In this way, he referred to the school’s glorious traditions in the past, when the teachers within its walls were renowned Polish historians, including Bronisław Chlebowski, Piotr Chmielowski, Władysław Smoleński. However, being involved in the activities of the capital’s national community, from 1917, he became a member of the board of the organization called Liga Państwowości Polskiej [League of Polish Statehood] (LPP) and then a secretary of Związek Odbudowy Państwa Polskiego [Union for the Reconstruction of the Polish State] (ZOPP). This activity was followed by scientific work. His first work was published one year earlier: *Powstawanie państw ze stanowiska nauki o państwie i prawa międzynarodowego* [Establishment of states from the position of the theory of the state and international law], Warszawa 1916¹⁵.

¹³ K. Pol, op. cit., p. 1230.

¹⁴ I discuss this issue in the article: W. Wojdyło, “*Solus nationis seprema lex*”. *Refleksje o idei narodu w myśli politycznej Narodowej Demokracji 1918–1939*, [in:] *W kręgu iluzji i realiów. Oblicza polskiej myśli politycznej XX i XXI wieku*, G. Radomski, M. Strzelecki, P. Tomaszewski, Toruń 2016, pp. 113–128.

¹⁵ J. Zieliński, *Wacław Komarnicki*, “Polski Słownik Biograficzny” 1967–1968, vol. 13, pp. 378–379.

In 1918–1921, he took up employment as a clerk (legal adviser) and then head of the Wydział Stowarzyszeń [Associations Department] in the Ministry of the Interior (MSW), which “was the most important department from a political point of view”¹⁶. In the structures of the Ministry of the Interior, he analyzed on ongoing basis issues related to the functioning of international law, dealt with the study work on the draft of the so-called Small Constitution of 20 February 1919, and gave opinions on draft laws relating to private international and inter-district law adopted by the Sejm in 1921.

In the vast panorama of the early Polish statehood's turbulent events, he almost simultaneously took up scientific work on the USB (Universitas Batoreana Vilnensis), reactivated by the decree of Commander-in-Chief Józef Piłsudski on 28 August 1919. There he participated in the organization of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences (WPiNS). He was then entrusted with a lecturer position in international and political law, within the framework of a compulsory lecture subject in the second year of studies. It coincided with the defense of his 1920 doctoral dissertation at the Jagiellonian University¹⁷.

In the same year, at the turning point in the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, he volunteered to join the Polish Army like many other young Poles. He was then assigned to the Legal Department of the 2nd Division of the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army. At the same time, he was acting as a legal expert in the Command of the 4th Polish Army, commanded by the Polish Army General Stanisław Szeptycki. In the first days of August 1920, he participated as a legal expert in war negotiations with the Bolsheviks in Baranavichy, and three months later, he was transferred to the reserve. In this so-called “first military and war episode” in Komarnicki's life, it should be added that then he applied for admission to the officers of the reserve of the Judicial Corps (KS). It took place de facto: “in 1925, with seniority from 1 June 1923, in the military rank of second lieutenant [podporucznik] of the

¹⁶ J. Gołębiowski, *Członkowie Rady Ministrów*, cz. II, *Wstęp biograficzny*, [in:] *Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej?*, eds. J. M. Majchrowski, G. Mazur, K. Stepan, Warszawa 1994, p. 19.

¹⁷ Archive of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, I. B/6/737, Personal file of W. Komarnicki (hereinafter referred to as AUSB).

reserve of the Polish Army – auditor [military judge of the Polish Army – note by W. W.]”¹⁸.

After the cessation of hostilities and the conclusion of the peace treaty on 18 March 1921 in Riga, he took the chair of the State Law and Theory of the State at the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences of USB. In the academic year 1923–1924 and 1924–1925, he was the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. In 1924–1926 and 1926–1927, following the academic community’s will, he was appointed Dean of the said Faculty. In 1921, he took up the post of Associate Professor of Political Law and State Studies at the USB University. On 18 January 1923, Stanisław Wojciechowski, the President of Poland, appointed him a full professor¹⁹.

Recognizing and appreciating in creative work the need for scientific publications in established and respected journals, he initiated in his home department, together with the Wileńskie Towarzystwo Prawnicze im. Ignacego Daniłowicza [Ignacy Daniłowicz Vilnius Law Society], the publication of a scientific journal called “Rocznik Prawniczy Wileński” [Vilnius Law Yearbook]. In 1925–1939, he was the scientific editor of the magazine. The editorial team of the “Yearbook” comprised, among others, well-known and valued professors, not only in the Vilnius working environment: Franciszek Bossowski, Eugeniusz Włodzimierz Waśkowski, Władysław Marian Zawadzki. The secretaries of the editorial office of the periodical were, in turn, young doctors and, in the future, professors of law at the USB University: Witold Staniewicz, Stanisław Swianiewicz, and Wiktor Sukiennicki. The “Yearbook” published scientific treatises, Polish legislation reviews, court rulings, scientific studies, and reports on the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences activities. A total of 10 volumes of the “Yearbook” were published during the period in question²⁰.

His socio-political activity in the academic youth community of “Alma Mater Vilmensis” should also be noted. From 1932 until the outbreak of World War II, he was the curator of the Polska Akademicka Korporacja “Polesia”

¹⁸ P. Majewski, G. Mazur (eds.), *Posłowie i Senatorowie Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1919–1939. Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. III, K–Ł, Warszawa 2005, p. 155; *Rocznik Oficerski Rezerw*, Warszawa 1934, p. 201, Reprint Warsaw–London 2003, p. 201.

¹⁹ AUSB, op. cit., sheet 8–9:20.

²⁰ A. Supruniuk, M. A. Supruniuk, *Nauki prawne w Uniwersytecie Stefana Batorego w Wilnie w latach 1919–1944*, [in:] *Nauki historycznoprawne...*, p. 269.

[Polish Academic Corporation "Polesia"] as honorary graduate member. In 1919–1939, on behalf of the rectoral authorities of the USB, he took care of many other organizations. The following can be enumerated here: "Stowarzyszenie Bratnia Pomoc" [Brotherly Aid Association], "Akademickie Koło Łomżan" [Academic Circle of Łomża Citizens], "Koło Prawników Studentów USB" [USB Student Lawyers' Club], "Akademicki Klub Włóczęgów Wileńskich" [Academic Club of Vilnius Wanderers], "Akademickie Stowarzyszenie Ligi Narodów w Wilnie" [Academic Association of the League of Nations in Vilnius], "Związek Akademicki Młodzież Wszechpolska" [All-Polish Youth Academic Association], "Związek Polskiej Młodzieży Akademickiej" [Union of Polish Academic Youth], "Młodzież Narodowa" [National Youth]²¹. The role and influence of the last two organizations is mentioned, among others, by an adversary of the national structures of National Democracy, later an excellent professor and historian of the state and law – Julius Bardach, according to whom: "The greatest influence, as in other universities, was enjoyed by "Młodzież Wszechpolska" [All-Polish Youth]. It was the political exposition of National Democracy. At the university, its professors Wacław Komarnicki, Stefan Glixelli, and associate professor Stanisław Cywiński were its patrons"²².

This segment of the professor's activity was complemented by university teaching. The classes, proseminars, seminars, and, above all, academic lectures on political and international law aroused keen interest among students, not only among the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. He also conducted scientific and teaching activities at the Szkoła Nauk Politycznych [School of Political Sciences] in Warsaw. His cooperation with the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, to which he was invited to give a series of lectures, dates back to 1924. It was undoubtedly recognition of his scientific competence. And from the archival documentation deposited in the resources of USB, it appears that between 1921 and 1922, he continued his post-graduate studies at the Institute of Higher International Studies operating within the Faculty of Law of the University of Paris. From there, he brought knowledge and understand-

²¹ P. Tomaszewski, *Polskie Korporacje akademickie w latach 1919–1939. Struktury, myśl polityczna, działalność*, Toruń 2011, p. 186; Idem, *Uniwersytet Stefana Batorego w Wilnie w latach 1919–1939. Studia z dziejów organizacji i postaw ideowych studentów*, Toruń 2018, pp. 103; 147; 162; 287; 337.

²² P. Tomaszewski, *Uniwersytet...*, p. 337.

ing of current constitutional issues, discounted subsequently in his numerous scientific deliberations²³.

Throughout the interwar period, he was involved in various socio-political life manifestations, including nationalist formation structures, which were close to him in terms of political ideas. From 1927 until the outbreak of the Second World War, he was a member of Koło Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe [Christian-National Circle], Rada Miejska Wilna [Vilnius City Council], together with Professor Stefan Ehrenkreutz and Dr. Zygmunt Jundziłł, among others and in 1934–1939 in Rada Naczelna Związku Miast Polskich [General Council of the Union of Polish Towns and Cities]. In the latter, he had the opportunity to become more familiar with local government activities and soon become alongside the co-creators of national doctrine, for example, Stanisław Grabski, Stanisław Głąbiński, Joachim Bartoszewicz, Roman Rybarski, or two outstanding lawyers such as Bohdan Wasiutyński and Bogdan Winiarski, one of the leading creators of this idea²⁴. Exposing its role in one of his works, he stated: “I believe that self-government must become the cornerstone of the Polish statehood. Only work in self-government can teach us political phraseology and get used to real work and how state phenomena are presented at the right administrative and economic level, which is the right way to raise political culture”²⁵. According to Komarnicki, the Polish system’s reconstruction should be carried out by changing citizens’ moral awareness. Although he attached great importance to social discipline itself, to achieve this, it was necessary to construct state institutions, which educational influence he saw and appreciated.

We also see Komarnicki next to Feliks Raczkowski, Fr Jan Świrkowski, Józef Hłasko, and Aleksander Zwierzyński among the organizers of the Vilnius national environment. Beginning in 1928, he was a member of the Polish Parliament for the second term (1928–1930) from state list no. 24 of the Blok Katolicko-Narodowy [Catholic-National Block] (ZLN [Popular Nation Union], OWP [Camp of Great Poland], Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet [National Women’s Organization], Komitet Wyborczy Młodych [Election Committee for

²³ AUSB, op. cit., sheet 20.

²⁴ More detailed i.a. G. Radomski, *Samorząd terytorialny w myśli politycznej Narodowej Demokracji 1918–1939*, Toruń 2009, p. 87.

²⁵ W. Komarnicki, *O znaczeniu konstytucji polskiej*, Wilno 1927, p. 13.

Youth]). In 1930, he was re-elected as a parliamentarian, this time from list 4 (Lista Narodowa [National List]) in constituency 63 – Vilnius. In the second term, he was also a member of the Club of ZLN and the National Club of SN acting in the Constitutional Committee, while in the third term, which fell between 1930 and 1935, he became a member of the National Club again. His parliamentary activity has generally focused on constitutional and educational issues and issues relating to universities' functioning²⁶.

Sympathizing with the National Democracy, he proved to be a staunch opponent of the political solutions adopted through the August 1926 amendment and the April 1934 Constitution. He presented the draft revision of the Constitution proposed by the national circles in Parliament, and a publication entitled *O Konstytucję Narodową: stanowisko Stronnictwa Narodowego w sprawie rewizji konstytucji oraz tekst projektu rewizji złożonego przez Klub Narodowy w Komisji Konstytucyjnej Sejmu* [For the National Constitution: the position of the National Party on the revision of the Constitution and the text of the draft revision submitted by the National Club to the Constitutional Committee of the Sejm], Warszawa 1930.

In the initial part of the mentioned project, entitled “Nie abstrakcja, lecz doświadczenie” [Not abstraction, but experience], he stated: “Therefore, the constitution must not be an artificial product of abstract reasoning, but must be based on the experience of collective life and take into account the characteristics of the nature of the nation concerned. The transplantation of foreign patterns is possible only to a limited extent, and in any case, they must be adapted to the living conditions and characteristics of the nation”²⁷. He also referred with disapproval to Józef Piłsudski's military coup d'état of May 1926. In Komarnicki's opinion, it was not connected to repair the state system after 150 years of lack of statehood, but with the political struggle for power. The revision proposal put forward by the SN [National Party] was based on the assumption of a strong state by strengthening the executive, which would nevertheless be politically responsible. He also opposed the parliament's overrule, any form of dictatorship, and the individual's omnipotence. Among the proposals submitted was a proposal to create a Constitutional Tribunal: “as

²⁶ *Posłowie i senatorowie*, op. cit., p. 156.

²⁷ S. Kilian (ed.), *Wacław Komarnicki o ustroju państwa i konstytucji*, Warszawa 2000, p. 95.

guardian of the constitution, resolving all constitutional disputes and doubts based on law”²⁸.

He was equally critical that members of the “Centroleem” [Centre-Left] were arrested and imprisoned in the Brest Fortress. Participating in the KN SN [National Club of the National Party] works, he was seen as a representative of his political group’s club colors and as a persistent specialist in constitutional law. His substantial qualifications were probably the basis for his appointment in March 1934 by the Senate Constitutional Committee to participate in the deliberations on the new Basic Law draft. At that time, he referred both to the content of the Sejm’s draft and the amendments tabled. Noticing the shortcomings and deficiencies of the prepared project, he criticized: “The draft Constitution, adopted by the Sejm on 26 January 1934, is presented as incomplete, undeveloped and does not exhaust the political system. It is a draft constitutional law rather than a completely edited text. The draft has a nature of programme theses and merely resolves issues in question [...]. The project does not care about their strict definition, but the final definition, and it completely omits technical and legal issues, without the regulation of which there can be no question of launching the system, its functioning”²⁹. Finally, he stated that the draft was an antithesis of the March Constitution. In the latter, although he saw one-sidedness, ultrademocratic grounds, and an overpowering of the legislature, he also saw that its primary concern was to safeguard civil liberties.

The parliamentary activity is undoubtedly marked negatively by his speech at the meeting of the Komisja Oświatowa Sejmu [Sejm’s Committee on Education] on 3 March 1932 with the subsequently published paper under the imprint of the OWP [Camp of Great Poland] *Numerus clausus w szkołach akademickich* [*Numerus clausus in academic schools*]. Therein, he presented the position and interpretation of ZLN [Popular Nation Union], defending the Polish school’s national character. When analyzing the historical, economic, and legal reasons for the regulation of the numerus clausus principle, he did not hesitate to use the following argument: “However, the Jews themselves admit in their publication *Judisches Lexikon* that the tendency to normalize

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 110.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 198.

the number of Jewish students has existed and exists at different times and in different countries so that it is not an artificial phenomenon, but a natural one, either because the Jewish population is too dense in a certain territory or because they are seeking to become dominant in a certain country”³⁰. Issues relating to the “*numerus clausus* principle” returned to the Sejm, even though legislative work was halted in 1923 under pressure from the Liga Obrony Praw Człowieka [League for the Defense of Human Rights] (LOPC).

He was also involved in educational issues. In the zeal of the ideological dispute between the ND [National Democracy] and Sanacja [Sanation] concerning the nature of education (“national or state education”), he defended the educational ideals created by the former Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education (MWRiOP), the primary constructor of ZLN – Stanisław Grabski. In the public space, he had proved to be an ardent adherent to the educational values of national pedagogy and a radical opponent of the entire educational policy of the Pilsudski camp. He was equally pessimistic about the direction and extent of interference by representatives of this ideological formation in higher education matters, limiting its autonomy, which was supposed to lead to universities’ complete subordination to the Sanacja circles³¹.

In the years 1937–1939, he joined the current of the public discussion related to the new political concept of the younger generation of National Democracy, the vision of which was outlined by Tadeusz Dworak in his article entitled *Totalne państwo narodowe* [Total National State], published in the famous national democracy weekly “*Myśl Narodowa*” [National Thought]. While excluding the alternative of building a total system in Poland, he stated that the nation-state’s development and future could only be based on constitutional solutions that consider the specificity of the Polish nation. While denying Dworak’s ideas, he stated in a polemical reply at the end of November 1937: “The Polish state will be a nation-state in the sense of a constitutional and social state. It can only draw its strength from a system that corresponds

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 126.

³¹ The edge of this criticism is presented in the study: *W obronie kultury narodowej narodowej*, Wilno 1933. See: M. Strzelecki, *Wizje wychowania społecznego w polskiej myśli politycznej lat 1918–1939*, Bydgoszcz 2008, pp. 244–245; W. Wojdyło (ed.), *Wychowanie a polityka, Między wychowaniem państwowym a narodowym*, Toruń 1999.

to the national psyche”³². The form of a total system, questioning the legitimacy of the *trias politica* principle and parliamentary rules, violates civil rights, incapacitating the individual with the human being’s individualism, excluding freedom of human thought. Any attempt to modernize the social and political system should respect the law in force and be made in parliamentary debate.

He also expressed his views in polemical, quite popular, articles presented in the paper “Kurier Warszawski” [Warsaw Courier], speaking about political and political issues. A collection of these comments is entitled *O praworządność i zdrowy ustrój państwowy: aktualne zagadnienia konstytucyjne z okresu maj 1926 – marzec 1928* [For the rule of law and a healthy state system: current constitutional issues from May 1926 to March 1928]. In the introduction to this work, there was, among other things, a timeless and still valid statement that for the state to have a proper and healthy system: “The first cardinal condition in this respect is the complete and effective safeguarding of the rule of law in the state. The rule of law is not a theoretical demand or a political ideal, but is a categorical imperative of life: it is a premise for the normal functioning of the state organism”³³.

Less than a year after adopting the April Constitution, following the organizational and ideological changes taking place in the national camp, he withdrew from active political life. Like many other older activists of the National Democracy, he could not find a thread of understanding with the younger generation, which dominated the SN. In the memories written down after years in political exile under the telling title *Wśród dwóch światów* [Among two worlds] (typescript 1947) – not yet published and deposited in the Archives of the Polish Institute and General Władysław Sikorski Museum in London – stating the reasons for his decision (among other things, that this was dictated by the increase in the radicalism of the “young” who were looking at totalitarian patterns) “influenced not only by Italian fascism but unfortunately also by Hitlerism [for whom – note by W. W.], the Jewish question has become a central and almost exclusive issue”³⁴.

³² W. Komarnicki, *Totalizm a Polska*, “Myśl Narodowa” 28 XI 1937, no. 49, pp. 751–752.

³³ W. Komarnicki, *Aktualne zagadnienia konstytucyjne z okresu maj 1926 – marzec 1928*, Wilno 1928, p. 5.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 12.

At the outbreak of World War II, as the second lieutenant of the Polish Army reserve, he was mobilized and assigned to the intelligence structures of Branch II in Division N “Germany” at the Wyższa Szkoła Wojenna [War College] in Warsaw, where, according to the mobilization plan, he appeared on 1 September 1939. In the general disarray and chaos of war since the first days of the war, his intelligence unit’s evacuation began on 7 September. It took place by rail and led through Siedlce, Łuków, Brześć, Kowel to Krasny and from there to Tarnopol in the vicinity of which he was taken prisoner. He spent precisely “23 months and 8 days”, i.e. until 19 August 1941, in camps for prisoners of war, including Kozelsk, Gryazovets near Vologda, and Moscow prison. The critical scientific analysis of the Stalinist Constitution of 5 December 1936, published in the “Rocznik Prawniczy Wileński” [Vilnius Law Yearbook] in 1937, did not help him to survive in the forced-labor camp in Gulag Archipelago. As I mentioned, he was not released until 19 August 1941, following a personal intervention by the British Foreign Office at Władysław Sikorski’s request³⁵.

In October 1941, he managed to get out of the USSR and, together with Stanisław Grabski, left for Great Britain by sea as a civil servant of the Polish Government in London. In the City on the Thames, he took over as Minister of Justice in Sikorski’s government. After the tragic death of the General in the Gibraltar disaster, in 1942–1944, his successor Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who was associated with the environment of peasant activists. He was a representative of the national camp. However, he was removed from the list of SN members by an arbitrary decision of Tadeusz Bielicki, President of the ZGSN, who was in conflict with Sikorski. As head of the ministry, he participated in the study of the reform of the justice system. He was also, together with Stanisław Grabski, co-author of *Zasady przyszłego ustroju państwowego Polski* [Principles of the future state system of Poland], which were then submitted to the Komisja Prac Ustrojowych [Committee on Constitutional Affairs], but their solutions deemed too radical and premature. Thus, they were withdrawn from the Rada Narodowa RP sessions [National Council of Poland] (the so-called Council of the Second Term). The work on the draft of the future constitution indeed continued in Komisja Prac Ustawodawczych [Legislative

³⁵ A. Bień-Kacała, A. Tarnowska, *Wacław Komarnicki (1891–1954)*, [in:] *Konstytucjonaliści polscy 1918–2011. Sylwetki uczonych*, eds. A. Szmyt, P. Sarnecki, R. Mojak, Warszawa 2012, p. 205.

Committee], set up at the end of 1942 in the Ministry of the Interior, but the tragic death of Sikorski slowed it down considerably. More insightful and analytical information on this period of Komarnicki's activity can be found in several scientific studies³⁶.

One of Komarnicki's recent political undertakings in allied London was the *Open letter to Winston Churchill*, sent on 1 March 1945 and addressed directly to the Prime Minister's office on Downing Street. He referred to the content of the British statesman's speech just after his return from the Yalta Conference. In this document: "written from the position of a minister of the Polish Government and, above all, a citizen of Vilnius, whose name he represented for many years in Związek Miast Polskich [Union of Polish Towns and Cities] and where, from 1927, he sat on the City Council for two terms, he protested against the decisions of Yalta to leave this city outside Poland"³⁷.

After withdrawing from active political life, he returned to teaching and scientific activities. It became possible since April 1944, when the then Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education [WRiOP] in the government in exile, Father Zygmunt Kaczyński, appointed him to give lectures on state and administrative law at the Polish Faculty of Law, established within the structures of the University of Oxford. He also found scientific cooperation with the Polska Szkoła Nauk Politycznych i Społecznych [Polish School of Political and Social Sciences] (SNPS) in London. He also made a tangible contribution to the development of the Polski Uniwersytet na Obczyźnie [Polish University Abroad] in London (PUNO), being part of the academic community of the Faculty of Humanities³⁸.

³⁶ For example, S. Grabski, *Pamiętniki*, t. II, ed. W. Stankiewicz, Warszawa 1989; A. Jankiewicz, *O poszukiwaniu idei państwa prawa. Koncepcje Komisji Prac Ustawodawczych Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości Rządu RP (1942–1945)*, Warszawa 1992; M. Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne wśród polskiego uchodźstwa politycznego i wojskowego we Francji i w Wielkiej Brytanii 1939–1945*, Wrocław 1999; E. Duraczyński, R. Turkowski, *O Polsce na uchodźstwie. Rada Narodowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1997; K. Kaczmarek, *O Wielką Polskę na wojennym uchodźstwie. Stronnictwo Narodowe wobec rządu gen. Władysława Sikorskiego (1939–1943)*, Rzeszów 2013; J. Rabiński, *Stronnictwo Pracy we władzach naczelnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na uchodźstwie w latach 1939–1945*, Lublin 2011.

³⁷ M. T. Góras, op. cit., p. 283; W. Wojdyło, *Stanisław Grabski (1871–1949). Biografia polityczna*, Toruń 2003.

³⁸ R. Habielski, *Życie społeczne i kulturalne emigracji*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 184–185.

He was a member of many scientific societies, both Polish and foreign, including Polska Akademia Umiejętności [Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences], Polski Instytut Administracyjny [Polish Administrative Institute], Centralny Komitet Polskich Instytucji Nauk Politycznych [Central Committee of Polish Political Science Institutions], Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie [Society of Friends of Science in Vilnius], the Institute of Administrative Sciences in Bucharest, Société de Legislation Comparée in Paris, Institut International de l'Histoire Politique et Constitutionnelle, he was also a member of Conférence Permanente de Hautes Études Internationales. He was also awarded the Medal of the Decade of Regaining Independence and the Commander's Cross of the Order of the Star of Romania³⁹.

Komarnicki's close interest was the Polish political system in which he lived and issues related to the state's theory. In his numerous scientific achievements, he addressed all the organization's current problems and its functioning. Among the most important early scientific works of Komarnicki are the following: *Powstawanie państw ze stanowiska nauki o państwie i prawa międzynarodowego* [Establishment of states from the position of the theory of the state and international law], Warszawa 1916; *O prawach i zobowiązaniach nowo powstałego państwa* [On the rights and obligations of the newly created state], Warszawa 1918; *Ustrój państwowy Austro-Węgier w oświeceniu historycznym i prawnym wraz z przekładem tekstu konstytucji* [The state system of Austria-Hungary in the historical and legal enlightenment with a translation of the text of the constitution], Warszawa 1918; *Prawo polityczne (Geneza i system)* [Political law (origins and system)], Warszawa 1922.

The last of the mentioned publications, a kind of extensive monographic study, was the first study of the Polish political system in the Second Republic's legal literature. It contained, among other things, a current commentary on the March Constitution of 1921 woven into a comparative legal background. Its expanded and completed version from 1937 has retained its relevance to this day despite the passage of years. What is noteworthy are the observations contained therein on the overgrowth of parliamentarism moving toward the directorial system, referring to France's example. According to Komarnicki, in reborn Poland, both the Small Constitution of 1919 and the Constitution

³⁹ A. Śródka, op. cit., p. 229.

of March 1921 gave an advantage to political freedom to the detriment of the state's authority. In subsequent work parties, he comprehensively analyzed the new constitution's institutions [the one of April 1934 – note by W. W.], defining its entire system as a democratic Caesarism. The introductory paragraphs concerning the systematics, ideological theses, the state's organizational structure, and government concept are worthy of note. However, he expressed the opinion that: "The changed state system has not brought about a total state in Poland, and the evolution of the system must lead to a harmonious balance between the principles of authority and freedom"⁴⁰.

In addition, Komarnicki's output includes such publications as: *Geneza terytorium państwowego Polski ze stanowiska prawa narodów* [The origins of Polish state territory from the position of the law of nations], Wilno 1925; *O zmianie konstytucji polskiej* [On the amendment of the Polish Constitution], Wilno 1927; *Ustrój współczesny Polski* [Contemporary Polish political system], Warszawa 1931–1932; *Ustrój państwa polskiego* [The Polish state system], Warszawa 1932; *Nowy ustrój państwowy Związku Sowiektów* [New state system of the Soviet Union], Wilno 1932. The latter is considered to be one of the best analyses of the Soviet system in the 1930s. Also, in political exile, his writing activity did not diminish. Among other things, in 1942, he published a paper *Rola prawnika w powojennej Polsce* [The role of a lawyer in post-war Poland], London 1942; *Prawo konstytucyjne dla polskich studentów Szkoły Nauk Politycznych i Społecznych* [Constitutional law for Polish students of the School of Political and Social Sciences], London 1950; *Konstytucja 3 Maja 1791 r. na tle porównawczym* [Constitution of 3 May 1791 on a comparative basis], London 1951. In the latter, consciously abandoning the general-historical method in favor of the comparative one, he presented in its background the position of Polish and foreign science on the role of the Constitution in the development of the social and political ideas of the 18th century, in accordance with the canon of constitutional law. At the end of that treatise, he stated: "Many times Poland has been abandoned by the West and left to a bad fate. But this does not change our attitude to Western civilization. This is our civilization. We belong to it spiritually. The principles of respect for human dignity, civil freedom and

⁴⁰ A. Bień-Kacała, A. Tarnowska, op. cit., p. 208.

the rule of law are deeply rooted in the Polish and Christian culture of our nation”⁴¹.

He spent the last years of his arduous – and, in the end – wandering life in London. In the city, together with other professors and graduates of the Faculty of Law of the USB, he was the member of the authorities of the scientific structure initiated in the foreign lands, entitled “Społeczność Akademicka Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego na Obczyźnie” [Academic Community of Stefan Batory University Abroad]. From 1948 until his death on 19 March 1954, he was President of the organization’s Council⁴². Funeral ceremonies related to the burial took place four days later in the Catholic temple at St. John’s Avenue. Wacław Komarnicki rested at Putney Valley Cemetery in south-west London⁴³.

SUMMARY

The article discusses the views and socio-political activities of an outstanding constitutionalist lawyer, professor of state and international law at the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, an activist of the national movement associated with National Democracy, member of the Polish Parliament, author of numerous scientific publications, prisoner of Soviet gulags in Kozelsk and Gryazovets, Minister of Justice on behalf of Stronnictwo Narodowe [National Party] in the office of General Władysław Sikorski and Stanisław Mikołajczyk in political exile in Great Britain, Professor at Oxford University and Polska Szkoła Nauk Politycznych [Polish School of Political Sciences] in London – Wacław Komarnicki (1891–1954).

⁴¹ K. Pol, op. cit., p. 1241.

⁴² M. A. Supruniuk, *Losy profesorów Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego po 1945 roku. Społeczność Akademicka USB na obczyźnie (1947–1987)*, [in:] *60-lecie Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu*, eds. Cz. Łapicz, W. Wróblewski, Toruń 2006, pp. 21–38.

⁴³ M. T. Góras, op. cit., p. 284.

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