

Relations within the political camp of the Fourth Republic of Poland and the media in the context of conducting media relations activities - selected examples

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyze the relationship between the political camp of the Fourth Republic and the media in the context of theoretical assumptions of conducting media relations policy. The Law of the Republic of Poland included Law and Justice, a political party that won in the parliamentary elections in 2005, as well as Lech Kaczyński, who won the presidential election in 2005. While their electoral campaigns in 2005, both Law and Justice and Lech Kaczyński declared the need to build the Fourth Republic, which was supposed to consist of a fundamental rebuilding of the country. The analysis presented in the article was based on case studies. It covers selected situations from the period of the Law and Justice rule in the years 2005-2007, as well as the events from the period when PiS, after losing parliamentary elections in 2007, passed to the parliamentary opposition.

Keywords: political camp, political party, political PR, election campaign

The objective of this article is to analyze the relationship between the political camp of the Fourth Republic of Poland and the media in the context of theoretical assumptions of conducting media relations policy. The Law and Justice, a political party that won in the parliamentary elections in 2005, as well as Lech Kaczyński, who was the winner of the presidential election in 2005. Both Law and Justice and Lech Kaczyński ran their electoral campaigns in 2005 under the slogan of the need to build the Fourth Republic, which was supposed to be based on a fundamental rebuilding of the country. In contrast to the Third Republic of Poland, it was to be cleared of accretions after the PRL system¹.

The presented analysis includes selected situations from the period under the rule of the Law and Justice, in the years 2005-2007, as well as the events from the period when the PiS, after losing parliamentary elections in 2007, passed to the parliamentary opposition.

The analysis conducted in the article was based on research of selected case studies. The article is another element of the author's research, which concerns the analysis of the relations between the camp of the Fourth Republic of Poland and the media. So far, certain articles have been published as part of this project: *Leaders and political parties of the IV Republic of Poland in chosen daily opinion newspapers in 2005. Analysis research* (Studies in Politics and Society, no. 1, 2017); *Idea IV Rzeczypospolitej na łamach dzienników opinii w Polsce w roku 2005 – analiza wstępna* (Lublin 2017), *The formation of the government Law and Justice, the Polish Family League and Self-Defence as an element of the structure of IV Polish Republic – a press analysis of selected daily opinion-forming newspapers* (Studies in Politics and Society, no. 4, 2017).

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

According to „Lexicon of public relations” media relations means building good and mutually beneficial relations between the organization and the media. The purpose of such activities is to build relationships with journalists in such a way that one can effectively communicate information to target groups² via the media. Public relations practitioners emphasize the fact that effective relations with the media should be based on dialogue and the rules related to the work of a given journalist or editor³ should be also taken into account. One of the basic elements of an effective cooperation with the media and a public organization, a politician or a private enterprise in terms of media relations is the knowledge of the principles of journalists' work and the rules of the media. This applies to both, technical and organizational elements which influence for instance, terms of providing

¹ K. Józwiak, *Takich dwóch, co zdobyło elektorat [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), Wybory parlamentarne 2005. Analiza marketingowa*, Toruń 2006, p. 56.

² *Leksykon public relations*, J. Olędzki, D. Tworzydło (ed.), Rzeszów 2009, p. 106.

³ D. Tworzydło, *Public relations praktycznie*, Rzeszów 2017, p. 217.

information to the media and the ability to make media statements, as well as understanding how media and journalists perceive the reality. It seems to be helpful when assessing the "media" of organized own events, it also facilitates the ability to predict the behavior and reactions of journalists in specific, genuine situations⁴. In the organization's policy, which is to be used to gain media interest, accessibility for journalists, nurturing contacts with representatives of the media and appropriate media policy in which "one should not burn bridges" are absolutely essential⁵.

As Adam Łaszyn indicates, the ability to communicate with the media is important for all people who perform public functions or intend to perform such functions, manage valued institutions or intend to function in the public sphere as recognized experts. All such people are, by definition, doomed to cooperate with the media. Even if they do not need contacts with journalists themselves, media representatives will be asking for such a contact⁶. In the case of politicians, such skills become even more important in the context of the promotional function of the media and the phenomenon of "media visibility". Due to the mass media, political actors can present their programs and arguments in order to gain citizens' support. As noted by J. Thompson, the media publishes information about politics and political groupings and the presence in the media translates into their recognition at home and abroad. From the point of view of the politicians' interest, the awareness of the benefits and losses that may result from the presence in the media is seen as an important element. As J. Thompson emphasizes that a politician who ignores his functioning in the conditions of new media visibility can harm himself⁷. The importance of the media influence on politicians, political parties and people who are in power can be indicated by the opinion of former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who said that he needs "Bild" in order to govern, so a tabloid and television⁸ that are well known in Germany.

Therefore, the question arises as to what practical elements should be taken into account when conducting and organizing the media policy of a person or organization. Especially, if we analyze media activities in terms of effectiveness for the institution that is said to be the author.

A. Łaszyn points out that one of the important elements is treating the media as a "transmission belt" which mediates in the transmission of information that reaches the recipient. This assumption makes sense when a politician or an organization realizes that he wants to convey his own content and messages⁹ to recipients. This assumption is important

⁴ D. Tworzydło, P. Kuca, *Relacje z mediami w samorządach. Teoria i praktyka*, Rzeszów 2010, p. 21-25.

⁵ K. Wojcik, *Public relations*, Warszawa 2009, p. 462.

⁶ A. Łaszyn, *Media i TY*, Warszawa 2017, p. 15.

⁷ B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Porozumienie czy konflikt?*, Warszawa-Bielsko-Biała 2009, p. 76-77.

⁸ M. Janota, *Bild-Zeitung, paper*, www.samorząd.uw.edu.pl, in P. Kuca, *Wizerunek polityków i ugrupowań politycznych w Gazecie Codziennej „Nowiny” w latach 1990-2005*, Rzeszów 2010, p. 7.

⁹ A. Łaszyn, *Media...*, op. cit., p. 45.

when it comes to current contacts with journalists but also during crises that arouse natural media interest. It is even greater when it concerns more important issues or people of a greater public importance. One of the mistakes that appear when it comes to the management of the image crisis situation, is the identification of journalists who formulate questions on behalf of the public with the party to the conflict, and not treating the media as an arena where this conflict takes place. The goal of an organization or a person who became the hero of a crisis situation should therefore be an attempt to reach recipients with their messages. This can be done through the media¹⁰. In terms of media attention, and thus the way, in which a person is presented when it comes to media coverage, also influences personal predispositions, understanding the essence of media and journalists and the right attitude towards contacts with the media (contact with the media is a chance to reach recipients with one's own message)¹¹.

In terms of building relations with the media, shaping personal relationship with journalists should also be taken into account. In this context, A. Łaszyn formulates the principle of a friendly distance. Its elements are kindness, according to the rule that "a journalist likes one who likes a journalist", combined with a distance that is a measure of professionalism. As A. Łaszyn claims „ Being nice doesn't always mean being friends”¹².

RELATIONS BETWEEN LAW AND JUSTICE – MEDIA

Relations between the Law and Justice camp and the media can be described as full of tension. Politicians of this group believed that they were treated by the media in a particularly negative way. Such opinions did not concern only the period of the IV RP project implementation, but also earlier periods. Jarosław Kaczyński when describing media information about himself, he assessed that it was often “calumny, renouncing, complaining”¹³. Lech Kaczyński also admitted that his relations with the media were not the best. It was a consequence of the fact that, according to L. Kaczyński, he read a lot of false information about himself¹⁴. Personal feelings about the media also had a bearing on the sphere and political practice. Michał Kamiński, the minister at the office of President Lech Kaczyński claims that in terms of both Kaczyński brothers they „were dishonestly treated” by the media and in the period of Lech Kaczyński's presidency "no media standards" were in force. In his opinion, the media used very strict criteria for Lech Kaczyński. As a result, even minor blunders were the source of several days of media scandals. It was not a substantive

¹⁰ A. Łaszyn, *Komunikacja kryzysowa [in.] B. Janiszewska (ed.) Sztuka public relations. Z doświadczeń polskich praktyków*, Warszawa 2006, p. 145.

¹¹ A. Łaszyn, *Media...*, op. cit., p. 47.

¹² Tamże, p. 49-50.

¹³ Kaczyński J., *Porozumienie przeciw monowładzy*, Poznań 2016, p. 391.

¹⁴ M. Karnowski, P. Zaremba, *O dwóch takich... Alfabet braci Kaczyńskich* Kraków 2006, p. 31.

criticism, but the method which aimed to "consistently strip out of the seriousness the president's office." According to M. Kamiński, also bad relations with the media of J. Kaczyński and the emerging spiral of reluctance resulted from the fact that the PiS leader did not go on the agenda over the situations he had suffered from the media. On the other hand, M. Kamiński emphasizes that such a behavior of the politician, justified in moral terms, was a political malpractice¹⁵. Especially that, as the representatives of the media world themselves admitted, for example, Donald Tusk as a politician, "often under a fake smile" can hide his grudges against journalists¹⁶.

It is also worth adding that the politicians of the Law and Justice camp, when describing the election campaign in 2005, formulated the thesis that the PiS won the elections against the media, which largely supported the Civic Platform. Jarosław Kaczyński assessed that the Civic Platform had enormous media support, and the media advantage of the Platform was "crushing". However, he added that the advantage in the media, which is seen as an asset, did not work so clearly in the election campaign due to the fact that a political party that has no media support but has subsidies from the state budget can reach its voters with its message, for example, using political advertising. As a result, the message formulated by the political camp of Law and Justice was in 2005 perceived by citizens in a more appealing way¹⁷.

It is worth noting that in the camp of supporters of the Fourth Polish Republic there is a conviction that the way in which the media reported on political events from 2005-2007 was one of the factors influencing the failure of this political project, ending with earlier elections in 2007. One can refer to the theses included in publications of Paweł Szałamacha or Ryszard Legutko¹⁸.

In the context of methods and forms of criticism addressed to President Lech Kaczyński and the camp of the Fourth Polish Republic, the notion of "contempt industry" introduced into the public debate by the journalist Piotr Zaremba is worth mentioning. In the press text which also dealt with political divisions and which was published after President Lech Kaczyński's death in 2010, he wrote that while the PiS promoters of the war with the Civic Platform were politicians, headed by Jarosław Kaczyński, "who often slogged blindly in the name of their reasons", the process that was triggered against them was described by the publicist as the "industry of contempt, depriving from dignity. Not only politicians who were reluctant to PiS took part in it, but also DJs, authors of seemingly non-political TV

¹⁵ *Koniec PiS-u, z Michałem Kamińskim rozmawia Andrzej Morozowski*, Warszawa 2012, p. 61-62 i 116.

¹⁶ Tamże, p. 62.

¹⁷ M. Karnowski, P. Zaremba, *O dwóch takich... Alfabet braci Kaczyńskich*, Kraków 2006, p. 5.

¹⁸ R. Legutko, *Antykacyzm*, Kraków 2013, P. Szałamacha, *IV Rzeczpospolita. Pierwsza odsłona*, Poznań 2009.

programs, actors and singers. Expressing mockery in a public manner became an element of "a specific legitimacy of belonging to the elite"¹⁹.

On the other hand, there were also opinions in the right-wing camp that political failures should not be justified by the attitude of the media to political subjects. As noted by Marek Jurek, from October 2005 to April 2007 the Speaker of the Sejm, the media are never impartial, and their support or disapproval are not divided in the media properly. The Speaker of the Sejm stated that during the rule of Law and Justice, some media "created a certain aura of rejection of the Kaczynski's family". However, it was a political camp's mistake to provoke journalists and opinions, because such actions, in effect, made the situation even worse²⁰.

THE PRACTICE OF MEDIA RELATIONS IN THE POLITICAL CAMP OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF POLAND

When it comes to practical use of the political principles of media relations in terms of politicians of the 4th Republic of Poland, various case studies and different approaches can be presented. The example of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, who in July 2005, surprisingly was indicated by Law and Justice as a candidate for Prime Minister seems to be worth paying attention to. He served as a prime minister until July 2006. According to the CBOS survey, in October 2005, 57 per cent of Polish people could not judge if K. Marcinkiewicz was a good candidate for prime minister while 25 per cent of citizens who took part in the survey, claimed to be positive about his candidacy²¹. It can be concluded that at the time of indicating and then taking over the function of prime minister, this politician was not widely recognized among citizens. His functioning as a prime minister was also influenced by the fact that until May 2006 the government functioned in the form of a minority cabinet (this was a consequence of the failure of the coalition between Law and Justice and the Civic Platform that was announced in the election campaign in 2005). It is also worth emphasizing that when K. Marcinkiewicz left the post of the head of government after 10 months, he enjoyed relatively high public support. His cabinet, according to the CBOS survey, was supported by 43 per cent of respondents. The Prime Minister was supported by 53 per cent of respondents²². Among many opinions that appeared, some people claimed that a way of conducting government public relations and media relations had a positive influence on opinion polls for the Prime Minister and his government.

¹⁹ P. Zaremba, *Przemysł pogardy*, <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/471389-Przemysl-pogardy.html> [available: 23.12.2017].

²⁰ M. Jurek, *Dysydent w państwie POPIS*, Dębogóra 2008, p. 123.

²¹ http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2005/K_166_05.PDF [available: 29.12.2017].

²² <https://www.pb.pl/cbos-ostatnie-notowania-rzadu-marcinkiewicza-43-proc-poparcia-323990> [available: 29.12.2017].

Several assumptions underlying the media policy of K. Marcinkiewicz's Office and be listed. One of them was the awareness of the state of the media market in Poland. As Konrad Ciesiołkiewicz described, the press spokesman of the government that was in charge of K. Marcinkiewicz, was perfectly aware of the great importance of live television broadcasting, the important position of tabloids on the press market (Fakt and Super Express) and the growing role of online portals. It was assessed that *Gazeta Wyborcza* presents a critical attitude towards the government while the media focused around Radio Maryja are considered to be a favorable center. The assumption that politicians function in a new media era, the goal of building relations with the media is not "the media itself" and building the image but the ability to develop relationships and communicate with citizens is considered to be the essence of media policy. The aim of these activities was to show the government's openness to the media and to direct contact with people²³. A rule was also adopted that media cannot be divided into better or worse due to the fact that "all of them can be useful". Media were not treated as an opponent but as a place where a discussion or a dispute can take place and where one can present his opinion. They were supposed to be a partner in the process of communicating with the society²⁴. Hence, editorial offices were offered to organize briefings with the participation of the Prime Minister and this fact is seen as an element of the government's media policy. Proposals were also directed to those editors who were said to have negative attitude towards the government, as for example, editors of *Gazeta Wyborcza*²⁵.

The effect of such media policy assumptions was the practice of actions and applied methods of governmental media relations. Their manifestation was a quick reaction to sudden and tragic events (for instance, the PM's visit to the Zofiówka mine after the methane explosion, as the press spokesman of the government of K. Marcinkiewicz previously mentioned in similar situations, the minister appeared on the spot of such tragic events). The element of media relations policy was also the transmission of substantive decisions in a way that would enhance their attractive media coverage (for example, talking about building highways and being present on a section of such a road which is still being built, announcing the program of feeding children in the Caritas center; informing about plans for petrol prices through letters to readers of the Fakt tabloid)²⁶. Also, events that were considered to be interesting in form and message were created, which became an attractive media product. In accordance with principle of creating pseudo-events that is often used in political spinning, events are prepared for the needs of the media. In this group, the most desirable by the

²³ K. Ciesiołkiewicz, *PR dla rządu* [in:] A. Łaszyn, D. Tworzydło (ed.), *Pierwsze ćwierćwiecze, 25 lat, public relations w Polsce*, Warszawa-Rzeszów 2016, p. 168-169.

²⁴ Tamże, s. 170 oraz K. Ciesiołkiewicz, *Rzecznik rządu o polityce informacyjnej*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17 listopada 2005, p. 6.

²⁵ K. Ciesiołkiewicz, *PR dla rządu...*, op. cit., p. 170-171.

²⁶ Tamże, p. 169.

media are allegedly spontaneous situations²⁷. One can mention, for example, the staged situation in which the Prime Minister is eating a chicken during the epidemic of bird flu in Poland. Such photos, published in the tabloid, were intended to make farmers less anxious due to the bird flu which had a negative impact on the situation of poultry farmers. In this context, the Prime Minister's visit at the pre-graduation ball in high school in Gorzów²⁸ seems to be worth mentioning.

However, if we recall the concept of treating the media as a transmission belt which allows us to reach out to the prepared and thought-out message to the citizens, it should be noted that in the political camp of the Fourth Republic of Poland there were many situations that instead of building good relations with the media, introduced tensions to such relations. One of them was the situation related to the signing of the so-called stabilization pact between Law and Justice, the League of Polish Families and Self-Defense in February 2006. The manner of signing the pact between Jarosław Kaczyński, Roman Giertych and Andrzej Lepper was at the same time, a demonstration of aversion towards a large part of the media. The pact was signed twice. On the first occasion representatives of Radio Maryja and Telewizja Trwam were present. Only then, there was a meeting available for journalists of other editorial offices²⁹. The press conference at which the document was signed for the second time was boycotted by some journalists. Some members of the management of these editorial offices, whose representatives were not present at the first meeting, believed that there was a breach of equal media access to important public events³⁰.

In the context of this issue it is also worth to analyze particular situations that concern the political camp of the Fourth Polish Republic that were realized after the formal attempt of building this political project implemented in 2005-2007. It is about the period when PiS after losing elections in 2007, became a parliamentary opposition.

One example of such situations is the boycott of information programs presented by TVN and TVN 24, which was announced by the authorities of PiS in July 2008. The reason for this decision was the conviction of PiS politicians that the politicians of this party are treated in programs of these TV stations as "second-class"³¹. PiS accused journalists of lacking objectivity. Allegations were repelled by TVN, whose representatives argued that both TVN and the TVN24 channel give equal opportunities to all subjects of political and social life, and

²⁷ A. Drosik, *Media spinning jako realizacja strategii komunikacyjnej w ramach politycznego public relations*, http://www.academia.edu/10090050/Media_spinning_jako_realizacja_strategii_komunikacyjnej_w_ramach_politycznego_public_realtions [available: 30.12.2017].

²⁸ K. Ciesiołkiewicz, *PR dla rządu...*, op. cit. p. 169.

²⁹ A. Dudek, *Główne konflikty polityczne w Sejmie V kadencji* [in:] J. Sokołowski, P. Poznański (ed.), *Wybrane aspekty funkcjonowania Sejmu w latach 1997-2007*, Kraków 2008, p. 167.

³⁰ <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/pis-wybiera-pokorne-media-6036381193667713a> [available: 30.12.2017].

³¹ <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/gosiewski-pis-bojkotuje-tvn-i-tvn24-poniewaz-6036632237356161a> [available: 30.12.2017].

PiS does not understand how the free media functions³². The boycott of television stations by politicians related to PiS lasted until mid-January 2009. One of the reasons for its suspension was the political attack of MP Janusz Palikot on the former Minister of Development in the PiS government, Grażyna Geśicka, who due to being boycotted by two channels, could not respond to allegations in their programs³³. The former minister was one of the first guests of TVN after the boycott ended. In fact, the role of the media as a transmission belt in this context appears again, due to which politicians can reach their voters with their message. The situation in October 2011 so the last days of the campaign before the parliamentary elections, in terms of media relations rules, seems to be worth analyzing. Information appeared in the media that in the book "Poland of our dreams" Jarosław Kaczyński claimed that Angela Merkel had not become German Chancellor as a result of a pure coincidence. This statement triggered media comments in Germany as well as resulted in massive interest of journalists in Poland³⁴. During one of the press conferences, when the journalist of the "Fakty" program from TVN channel asked about this matter, President Kaczyński in response, asked him if he was from the Polish or German editors. He also added that if Chancellor Merkel wrote in a book about him, journalists from Germany would not ask³⁵. Therefore, journalists were treated as a party to the dispute, not a representative of the institution, through which one can convey his own message to voters.

As a consequence, in the final stage of the PiS electoral campaign, apart from the subject of Chancellor Merkel, a new area of commentary appeared in the public space - the party's attitude towards the media and the treatment of journalists. Especially that PiS politicians publicly stated that the materials regarding the election campaign by a journalist who asked a question about the German chancellor, were biased and until the end of the campaign, subjects that were seen as similar should not be covered by him. The TV station rejected this application.

³² <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/pis-zapowiada-bojkot-tvn-i-tvn24,64770.html> [available: 30.12.2017].

³³ <https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/150288/pis-zawiesil-bojkot-tvn.html> [available: 30.12.2017].

³⁴ <https://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/453507,Niemcy-odpowiadaja-na-slowa-Kaczynskiego-o-Merkel> [available: 30.12.2017].

³⁵ http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,10405346,Kaczynski__Pan_jest_z_redakcji_polskiej_czy_niemieckiej_.html; <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/prezes-pis-do-reportera-tvn-pan-jest-z-redakcji-polskiej-czy-niemieckiej,186345.html> [available: 31.12.2017].

RESUME

The ability to build relationships with the media seems to be one of the most important skills of people and organizations that want to function in the public sphere. This also applies to politicians and political parties. This skill is related to several elements. On the one hand, it is awareness and knowledge about how the media functions.

On the other hand, it is also knowledge about the media system in which the organization moves. As quoted in this article Konrad Ciesiołkiewicz, the spokesman for the government of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, analyzed that in 2005, "live" television broadcasts and the strong position of tabloids in the press segment were important when it comes to the media market in Poland. Thus, these elements were taken into account in the activities of government public relations. For instance, it seems that it is currently difficult to function professionally in the political and media area, not including the importance of social media. An important issue in the media relations activities is also understanding the role of the media - treating them as an arena or a transmission belt that will allow to reach recipients with one's own content and messages to the recipients of these media. Therefore, from the perspective of the effectiveness of building relations with the media, media relations carried out by the widely understood IV RP camp can be assessed very differently. There were effective activities among them, as exemplified by the media relations projects of Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz's cabinet, confirmed by favorable opinion polls for the government. There were also ineffective activities in which the subjective attitude of politicians towards the media seems to prevail over the performance of a professional media relations policy. The media, rather than being treated as the transmission belt, were treated as a party to the dispute. And, considering the PiS politicians' assumption that some media were reluctant to this political party, it seems that the particular emphasis on professionally conducted media relations policy is the only way and an essential element of functioning in such a situation.

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