

## INTRODUCTION

The publication has been inspired by the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Alliance of Democrats, and the 82<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the emergence of Democratic Clubs, i.e., ordinary associations that preceded the constitution of the new political party in April 1939. So far, these have gone almost unnoticed by researchers investigating the history of ideo-political groups of the last years of the Second Republic of Poland.<sup>1</sup> This is surprising also

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<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of some of the anniversaries of Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats (e.g. on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary) in the period of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL), academic conferences were organized, in the aftermath of which research papers and monographs were published. These were: *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w latach 1937–1965*, by many authors, Warsaw 1967; *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w latach 1937–1971*, by many authors, Warsaw 1972; *Geneza Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego na Ziemi Krakowskiej. Uroczyste sympozjum naukowe z okazji 40-lecia założenia Klubu Demokratycznego*, ed. R. Holly, Warsaw 1978; *Poglądy Stronnictwa Demokratycznego na państwo. Materiały z sympozjum naukowego zorganizowanego z okazji 40-lecia Stronnictwa Demokratycznego. Poznań, styczeń 1979*, Warsaw 1980; *Warszawski Klub Demokratyczny 1937–1939. Materiały z sesji naukowej poświęconej prof. M. Michałowiczowi z okazji 40-lecia powstania Warszawskiego Klubu Demokratycznego*, Warsaw 1980; *Problematyka ekonomiczna w myśli programowej i działalności Stronnictwa Demokratycznego. Materiały z sympozjum naukowego z okazji 40-lecia SD, Katowice, luty 1979*, Warsaw 1980. On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Alliance of Democrats a conference was organised with conference papers published in a few-dozen-page long brochure entitled *Zarys dziejów Stronnictwa Demokratycznego 1937–2007*, Warsaw 2007.

for the reason that the Alliance of Democrats is the only political party that has maintained its original name since 1939 (although, admittedly, it plays a rather marginal role on the Polish political scene nowadays). In any manner, Democratic Clubs and the first period of operation of the Alliance of Democrats have rarely been the focus of academic analyses and in most cases have only been discussed on the occasion of broader deliberations or in the memoirs of their former activists. The historiography of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) includes articles and few printed texts related to the activities of Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats, often presented at the background of the then "hegemonic party."<sup>2</sup> After the so-called systemic transformation, the problem of Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats in the early months of their operation has ceased to be of any interest to political scientists and historians dealing with the latest history of the country.

The interesting problem of the two-phased establishment of the Alliance of Democrats and its programme-related activities has been undertaken by very few academics, perhaps due to the

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<sup>2</sup> A. Andrusiewicz, *Geneza Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego oraz ich ewolucja polityczno-ideowa*, "Rocznik Historyczno-Archiwalny" 1979, vol. 1, pp. 133–163; L. Chajm, *Warszawski Klub Demokratyczny i w warszawska organizacja Stronnictwa Demokratycznego*, [in:] *Warszawa II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939*, vol. 3, Warsaw 1971, pp. 155–181; M. Bandurka, A. Felchner, B. Krzemińska, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w województwie łódzkim w latach 1937–1975*, Warsaw 1981; M. Murek, *Z kart Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w regionie węgla i stali 1937–1974*, Warsaw 1977; A. Czubiński, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (1937–1989). Zarys dziejów*, Poznań 1998, pp. 68–111; A. Andrusiewicz, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w systemie politycznym Polski Ludowej*, Warsaw 1985, pp. 29–70; A. Rajewski, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w PRL. Podstawowe fakty i informacje. Patriotyzm. Demokracja. Postęp*, Warsaw 1984; idem, *Urzeczywistniać Demokrację. Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w PRL*, Warsaw 1987, pp. 11–21; P. Winczorek, *Miejsce i rola SD w strukturze politycznej PRL. (Zagadnienia wybrane)*, Warsaw 1975.

fact that sources are scarce and limited to very few preserved programme documents, memoirs, and testimonies of the members.<sup>3</sup> These can, however, be supplemented with press releases from the period 1937–1939, as well as prior findings by historians and political scientists in articles and studies usually referring to broader research problems. It is worth examining the issues from a perspective not encumbered with the requirements set for historical studies published in Poland before 1989. So far, however, the only anthology of sources related to the history of Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats from the period 1937–1939, edited and prefaced by Leon Chajn, was published in 1964.<sup>4</sup> Entitled “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego,” it includes several reports, memoirs, and articles on Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats in the first months of its operation.<sup>5</sup> Most statements published in other scientific journals

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3 Among broader studies on the history of the Alliance of Democrats, the following are also worth considering: J.R. Nowak, *Buntownicy i aseku-ranci. Białe plamy z historii SD 1939–1989*, Warsaw 1991; W. Żebrowski, *Z dziejów Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Polsce*, Bydgoszcz 1989; idem, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w latach 1937–1995*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 5–8; idem, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w latach 1937–1995*, Olsztyn 1997, pp. 5–9.

4 *Materiały do historii Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w latach 1937–1939*, edited and prefaced by L. Chajn, Part 1 and 2, Warsaw 1964.

5 K. Antosik, *Mysł ekonomiczna Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w latach 1937–1939*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1973, iss. 7, pp. 56–83; F. Mincer, *Tradycje historyczne w działalności Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego (1937–1939)*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1987, iss. 3 (54), pp. 56–69; D. Reczek, *Liberalizm a myśl polityczna Klubów Demokratycznych i SD w latach 1937–1939. Podstawowe zagadnienia badawcze*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1989, No. 2 (61), pp. 81–94; M. Jaszczukowa, *Pierwsze lata w SD*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1983, iss. 3 (38), pp. 75–82;

and broader studies focused on single questions, merely signalling the existence of other problems, or briefly presented the period 1937–1939 at the background of the party's history.

This study, therefore, aims to fill in the gap in the research on the history of the Alliance of Democrats before September 1939, at least to a certain degree. It covers the first phase of its

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J. Grzędziński, *Przyczynki do historii ruchu demokratycznego w latach 1937–1939*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” [Part I], 1979, iss. 2 (21), pp. 75–84, Part II, 1979, iss. 3 (22), pp. 65–76, Part III, 1979, iss. 4 (23), pp. 77–86; Part IV, 1980, iss. 1 (24), pp. 100–109; I. Marzec-Styrna, *Działalność Klubu i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Krakowie (1937–1945)*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1978, iss. 2 (17), pp. 44–48; J. Rutkowski, *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne 1937–1945. Łódź – Warszawa*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1985, iss. 4 (47), pp. 88–93; W. Świdowski, K. Klamecka-Jabłkowska, *Powstanie Klubu Demokratycznego w Warszawie. Walne zebranie*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1977, iss. 3 (14), pp. 51–66; iidem, *Klub Demokratyczny w Warszawie. Po Ważnym Zebraniu*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1978, iss. 1 (16), pp. 32–40; idem, *Klub Demokratyczny w Warszawie. Podstawowe człony organizacyjne*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1978, iss. 3 (18), pp. 58–69; iidem, *Klub Demokratyczny w Warszawie. Sekcja Młodych*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1978, iss. 4 (19), pp. 50–76; S. Sikorski, *Spółeczno-polityczne oblicze Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w latach 1937–1939*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1981, iss. 2 (29), pp. 65–80; M. Jaszczukowa, *Sekcja Młodych Klubu Demokratycznego w Warszawie*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1984, iss. 4 (43), pp. 83–99; K. Nowak, *Śląsko-Dąbrowski Klub Demokratyczny*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1981, iss. 3 (30), pp. 92–95; T. Gliwic, *Przyczynki do historii Śląsko-Dąbrowskiego Klubu Demokratycznego*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1979, iss. 1 (20), s. 70–75; W. Zejer, *Początki Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Katowicach (1938–1939)*, “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego” 1978, iss. 3 (18), pp. 70–73.

establishment, related to the emergence of Democratic Clubs in many Polish cities: Democratic Club in Warsaw (16 October 1937), Kraków (28 November 1937), Katowice (5 February 1938), Łódź (7 February 1938), Lviv (10 February 1938), Bielsko-Biała (March 1938), Vilnius (May 1938), Sosnowiec (June 1938), as well as Poznań, Radom, Kalisz, Lublin, Rzeszów, and Piotrków Trybunalski. Their principal task was to work out a cooperation platform for diversified groups forming part thereof, and to lay the foundations for the future political party.<sup>6</sup>

This publication consists in five studies that together investigate the problems indicated by the title, preceded with an introduction.<sup>7</sup> Conclusions and generalized opinions have been provided in the final part of this work which also contains the bibliography,

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6 The adopted timeframe is marked by the date of the establishment of the Warsaw Democratic Club (October 1937), and the month ending the first, pre-war operating period of the Alliance of Democrats (August 1939).

7 The second, third, and fourth study (reprints) have been based on the author's articles previously published in *Wybrane problemy bezpieczeństwa*, Kraków 2018, vol. 3, pp. 147–167, vol. 4, pp. 66–94, 141–166. Pursuing her research interests, the author has been dealing with the problems of the history and political thought of the Alliance of Democrats for many years. Cf. E. Fogelzang-Adler, *Działalność Klubu i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Krakowie w latach 1937–1939*, "Kra-kowskie Studia Małopolskie" 2000, No. 4, pp. 157–173; eadem, *Oblicze ideowo-programmowe Klubu i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w Łodzi w latach 1937–1939 w świetle prasy*, "Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Historica" 2013, iss. 15, pp. 162–174; eadem, *Ustrój powojennej Polski w publikacjach konspiracyjnych nurtu demokratycznego (1939–1944): edycja źródeł*, Tarnów 2014; eadem, *Działalność programowa Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w latach 1940–1944: deklaracje ideowe, programy, broszury konspiracyjne*, "Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia ad Bibliothecarum Scientiam Pertinentia" 2016, iss. 14, pp. 314–327; eadem, *„Zbrodniczy wódz i jego naród.” Niemcy w publicystyce politycznej Stronnictwa Demokratycznego (1940–1945): edycja źródeł*, Tarnów 2015.

the index of names, and the list of abbreviations (some of them provided in two versions, as applied in the Second Republic of Poland and at present).

The opening text, entitled *Democratic Clubs in Poland (October 1937 – August 1939)*, contains information regarding the establishment of Democratic Clubs and the characteristics of their programme-related activities. Attention is given to the requirements to be met by candidates for Club members, internal organization of the alliance, and the diversity of its endeavours.

The second study refers to the genesis, programme-related activities, as well as the political thought of the Warsaw Democratic Club which was established as a result of preparatory works by the Organizational Committee managed by Prof. Mieczysław Michałowicz and Col. January Grzędziński. As many as 136 out of 186 signatures placed on the membership list of the new Club have been tracked. The composition of the Board of the Democratic Club in Warsaw is provided, focusing on the contents of the adopted programme document, as well as the forms of the Club's activities: organizational meetings and discussion panels, commemorative ceremonies, conferences, as well as cooperation with political parties.

The subsequent study presents major issues related to the establishment and activities of Democratic Clubs in Katowice, Lviv, Vilnius, as well as other cities (Bielsko-Biała, Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, Kalisz, and Poznań). It presents the members of the Boards, and a brief summary of the clubs' activities: general meetings for the members, open discussion panels, activities of working committees and advisory bodies, including those oriented at the establishment of the Alliance of Democrats.

The fourth study focuses on the Youth Sections. It points out that the Sections were integral organizational assets of the Democratic Clubs. Very few related documents have survived, but the preserved ones, together with reports and memoirs of the members,

allow for an analysis of the circumstances of their establishment and programme-related activities, including interesting lectures and readings, declarations published, as well as joint meetings and participation in events organized by the “Wici” Rural Youth Union, Polish Socio-Democratic Youth, Polish Academic People’s Youth, and the Union of Independent Socialist Youth.

The final study contains a synthetic presentation of the phases of the establishment, programme-related activities, as well as the outline of political thought represented by the Alliance of Democrats in the first period of its functioning, which covered several months before the outbreak of World War II (between April and August of 1939). In just those few months of operation, the Alliance of Democrats managed to get organized so as to operate not only in the capital city, but also in the other cities where Democratic Clubs had been active.

The modest source base incorporating scarcely preserved documents, few memoirs of the activists, reports from administrative bodies, press releases from the period 1937–1939, reports from academic symposia, articles published mainly in “Zeszyty Historyczno-Polityczne Stronnictwa Demokratycznego,” as well as a few chapters in publications devoted to broader problems, do not allow for the exhaustive presentation of all the issues related to Democratic Clubs and the pre-war activities of the Alliance of Democrats. They, however, provide the means to advance an outline of these activities, and to answer a number of research questions (e.g. What was the genesis of Democratic Clubs?; In which Polish cities did they develop most?; Who formed the Democratic Clubs?; What was the background of the members?; Which historical traditions were followed by the founders of the Democratic Clubs?; Why was the Alliance of Democrats established in two phases?; What programme documents formed the grounds for the activities of both the Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats?; What were the forms of their activities?; Which

political parties were they open to cooperate with?; What were their major postulates regarding changes to the socio-political and economic system of the Second Republic of Poland?).

It is worth remembering that Democratic Clubs and the Alliance of Democrats were mainly formed of activists deriving from the Polish Legions and the Polish Military Organization, older generation activists, the so-called “radical – independence movement activists,” as well as representatives of working intelligentsia associated with the trade unions. Past members of the former Communist Party of Poland (KPP) did not play a major role in either the Clubs, or in the Alliance of Democrats before the outbreak of the war. Cooperation was maintained with the worker and people’s movement, Polish Socialist Party and the People’s Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*), without opening to collaboration with communists. The tradition of the Clubs, however, granted the right of free expression to all the members, even the most radical ones, during the discussions held.

The Alliance presented an interesting, albeit at times inconsistent, programme of reforms, without articulating the need for systemic transformation, but rather one for democratization, with respect for the April Constitution of 1935, and modernization via legal means. Any form of totalitarianism, including nationalism, racism, fascism, and communism, was rejected in favour of a republican form of the state, parliamentary government system, and socio-political, economic, and cultural democracy.

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