

Before the "W-hour"

As early as May 1944, Soviet aircraft drop leaflets on Warsaw exhorting the population to armed action. Therefore, fears of an uprising being triggered by Moscow are not unfounded. In the regions liberated by the Red Army, the Communists use the strategy of fait accompli. In the evening of July 22, Moscow Radio announces the founding of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN). On July 27, the radio broadcasts information about the previous day's agreement between Stalin and the PKWN. According to its terms, the PKWN obtains permission to establish an administration west of the so-called "Curzon Line". It cuts off one-third of prewar Polish territories: the fertile Galicia with the capital city of Lwów, as well as the Polesie and Wilno regions. At the same time, the PKWN signs an agreement giving the Soviets jurisdiction over crimes committed "in the war zone." The Soviets' stance is deceitful. On July 29 and 30, Moscow Radio and the „Kościuszko" radio station broadcast an appeal to Varsovians: "Fight against the Germans."

Meanwhile, since July 22 the Germans have been frantically evacuating their administration, some of their police forces and support staff. Waves of refugees from the east pass through the city. On July 27, the Germans bring the panic under control. Police and SS troops come back to Warsaw. Administrative offices begin to work. At the end of July, the 1st Byelorussian Front commanded by Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski reaches the outskirts of Warsaw and Zygmunt Berling's 1st Polish Army nears Puławy. The development of the situation on the front and in the capital causes a change of the previous decision to exclude Warsaw from Operation "Tempest". The Home Army Staff considers attacking the Germans and liberating the city before the Soviets march in. On July 25, during the Home Army High Command briefing the decision is made to undertake the fight in the capital. On July 26, the Polish Government authorizes its Delegate to announce the Rising at the moment of his choice. During the session, the National Unity Council High Commission agrees that twelve hours are necessary to start up the civil administration.

In Warsaw, the Germans prepare to defend the city. On July 27, Ludwig Fischer, Governor of the Warsaw District, issues a decree proclaiming that a hundred thousand people are needed to participate in fortification works. On the same day about 7 p.m., Col. Antoni Chruściel „Monter", without consultation with the Home Army High Command, orders mobilization. It proceeds quickly and efficiently. On July 28, the inhabitants of the capital boycott Fischer's order. The Germans do not undertake any repressive measures. Under such circumstances, Gen. „Bór" cancels the order of Col. „Monter", which causes confusion among Home Army ranks. There is disagreement among the high commanders of the Home Army regarding the sense of engaging in an armed struggle in the city.

During the following days, the Home Army Staff receives numerous messages about military movements on the right bank of the Vistula. Due to the progress of events, on July 31 Gen. „Bór" issues a command to start armed action in Warsaw. "W-hour" is fixed for August 1, at 5 p.m. At 8:00 p.m. the coded command is ready to deliver to female liaisons. Because of the curfew, they receive it on the next day at 7 in the morning. There is not enough time to get out the weapons and reach the gathering points. In Żoliborz, the City Center and Wola the fighting begins before the "W-hour".



Operation „Burza” (“Tempest”)

In October 1943, Commander-in-Chief Gen. Kazimierz Sosnkowski sends a directive to the country, in which he commands domestic authorities to precede the Red Army's entry into Poland with intensified sabotage and diversionary actions, and recommends remaining undercover. However, the leaders of the Polish Underground State consider it essential to emphasize the presence of legal authorities, subject to the London government, on Polish territory. Thus, in November 1943, the Government Delegate issues a proclamation to the inhabitants of the eastern lands and commands the secret government to act as hosts of the area towards the Red Army. At the same time, the AK command gives the order to initiate the military operation „Burza” (“Tempest”) behind the lines of retreating German troops.

On January 4, 1944, the Red Army crosses the Polish border in the Sarny area. Soviet military units are accompanied by secret police formations, which were prepared well in advance to find and liquidate the Polish underground movement.

On March 27, the Home Army Infantry Division, together with Soviet troops, captures Turzysk and battles in the area of Kowel and Włodzimierz Wołyński. During talks, Maj. Jan Kiwerski „Oliwa”, the leader of the division, agrees to operative subordination to Soviet command, but clearly declares full subjection to the London government. The Government Delegate and Council of National Unity approve. Unfortunately, not long after that agreement Russians begin to disarm Home Army formations and force the enlistment of Polish soldiers into Berling's army. Maj. Tadeusz Sztumberk-Rychter „Żegota”, who took over command of the division after the death of Maj. Kiwerski (April 18, 1944), manages to break through the frontline with some of his troops to the area of Lublin.

From July 6 to 13, 1944, units of the Wilno and Nowogródek Home Army Districts, consisting of about 15 thousand soldiers, proceed with Operation „Ostra Brama”, bringing freedom to Wilno. The Red Army also participates in the battle for Wilno. On July 17, the commander of the Wilno district, Col. Aleksander Krzyżanowski „Wilk”, is arrested. District Government Delegate at Home Zygmunt Fedorowicz „Albin” suffers the same fate.

Fighting in the Home Army Lwów District begins in March. Between July 22 and 27, 1944, Poles fight for Lwów in cooperation with the Soviet army. When the battle ends, the district commander, Col. Władysław Filipkowski „Janka” is forced to disband and disarm his troops, and later – despite negotiations on creating an infantry division – is put under arrest on the night of August 2.

Similar events also take place to the west of the River Bug. On July 27, 1944, the District Government Delegate at Home in Białystok, Józef Przybyszewski „Grzymała”, reveals his identity. On August 7, he is arrested and deported to Russia. Earlier, in Białystok the Russians appoint the City Council of Workers' Delegates and clearly are about to incorporate the area of Białystok into the Soviet Union. The District Government Delegate at Home in Lublin, Władysław Cholewa „Łukasz Paśnik”, faces a similar fate. He begins open activity on July 25, and on July 31 he is forced by Soviet authorities to cease it. He is arrested on August 3, 1944. The next day, the Soviets arrest Col. Kazimierz Tumidajski „Edward”, commander of the Home Army in the Lublin District. Deported deep into Russia, he is murdered on July 4, 1947 in Skopin.

Memory and history

In the post-war Poland run by the Communists, Warsaw insurgents, along with other AK soldiers, are accused of collaboration with the Germans and are called fascists. According to official propaganda, it was first and foremost the People's Army that fought against the Germans, while the "London underground stood with their arms at their sides." Propaganda attacks from the first years after the war change in Stalinist times into attempts to erase the Rising from social memory. It is forbidden to pay homage to the Rising. Anniversaries are not to be celebrated nor statues erected. It is not allowed to include military ranks or insurgent unit names in obituaries of those who pass away.

The mere fact of having taken part in the Rising may become a reason for arrest by the Security Office. Such was the fate of many soldiers from the „Zośka” battalion or the „Radosław” group with its commander Col. Jan Mazurkiewicz, who was sentenced to many years of prison. Insurgents are frequently put in the same cells as German war criminals.

After 1956, Communist authorities change their attitude towards the AK soldiers. Their conspirational activity is no longer an excuse for direct persecution. However, the press, history textbooks, novels and films are still full of lies and concealments concerning the Rising. It remains prohibited to erect statues of the Rising or commemorate its commanders. The first plaques commemorating insurgent units and their commanders are placed in churches. A spontaneous form of paying homage is born – every year on August 1 crowds of Varsovians meet at the Powązki Cemetery to visit the quarters used by insurgent groups. In their propaganda, the authorities of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) will continue to distinguish until 1989 between heroic, ordinary soldiers and their cynical, irresponsible and clumsy commanders, who ignited the Rising only to defend the interests of the "London Government" and the "proprietary classes."

An entry in the "Encyclopedia of the Second World War" published in 1975 is a perfect illustration of such way of thinking. It says: "The AK was an organization with a structure inappropriate for the needs of the ongoing fight against the German occupant, but instead intended to ensure that the Government-in-Exile could take over power in the country through a popular uprising /.../ Its command /.../ gathered a significant part of the patriotic forces and especially youngsters unaware of this organization's political aims. The AK command slowed down the armed struggle in accordance with the Allies' policy of 'the two enemies' (Germany and the USSR) /.../. During the occupation, they conducted a policy of protection of the interests of the bourgeoisie and landowners."



Antoni Marston



Witold Kieżun
„Wypad”

Bekanntma

Wiederholte Warnungen wurden am 10.11.1939 den Diensten stehende Personen in der Stadt Warschau...

Wlad. M...	12.12.17	12.12.17	12.12.17
...

... durch das Ständgericht der Sicherheitspolizei...

...
...

... in den nächsten 3 Wochen im Bezirk der Stadt W...

... durch sofortige Festnahme oder Veranlassung der Festnahme der...

... durch Anweisung...



Wieszchen

... nach dem Krieg...

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... nach dem Krieg...

... nach dem Krieg...

... nach dem Krieg...

... nach dem Krieg...

... nach dem Krieg...

The beginning of the war

On September 1, 1939, in accordance with the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact signed in August 1939, which divided Poland between the aggressors on the line of the rivers Narew, Wisła and San, the Third Reich attacks Poland by land, sea and air. Yet another world war becomes a reality.

On September 3, France and Great Britain, in alliance with Poland, declare war on Germany, but do not get militarily involved. Despite determined resistance, the overwhelming German forces quickly advance, crushing the Polish army on their way. On September 6, the Polish army is ordered to retreat behind the Wisła-San line, and a day later Germans reach Warsaw.

On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union joins Germany, violating former agreements with Poland: "If there is no government in Poland anymore, there is no non-aggression pact either" - Polish Ambassador Wacław Grzybowski is told in Moscow.

After the Soviet aggression, subsequent points of resistance fall: Oksywie (September 19), Warsaw (September 28), Modlin (September 29), Hel (October 2). The last regular troops of the Polish Army under the command of Gen. Franciszek Kleeberg surrender near Kock on October 5, 1939.

The occupation begins. Its cruelty exceeds everything that Poles have experienced over past centuries of Prussian and Russian servitude. On the basis of the pact signed on September 28, the two occupants divide the territory of Poland into two approximately equal parts. On October 12, Germans create the "General Government of the occupied Polish territory" covering an area of 98 thousand km² and divided into four districts: Kraków, Radom, Lublin and Warsaw. The Soviets incorporate the seized territory into the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Republics. Lithuania is granted the Wilno district, and part of the Polish Carpathians is incorporated into Slovakia.

Both occupants introduce the policy of extermination of Polish leaders. From the very first days there are numerous carefully planned deportations, expulsions, various types of persecution, administrative harassments and executions. The requisition of private property becomes common. Food supply disturbances threaten the biological existence of the whole nation. For the smallest offenses one can be punished with death, imprisonment or internment in a concentration camp. The first camp - Stutthof - is established as early as 1939, to be followed by Auschwitz-Birkenau (1940), Majdanek (1941), Płaszów (1944) and others. The existing social and moral order collapses. Polish syllabuses are forbidden and on the German-occupied territory school education is limited to an absolute minimum.

The Soviets try to keep up appearances by allowing Polish as the language of instruction - but in return there is intense communist indoctrination. Denunciations become common.

On the areas occupied by the Germans, Jews are particularly persecuted. The Germans force them to live in ghettos: the first was created in October 1939 in Piotrków Trybunalski, the next in Łódź in 1940, and yet another in October 1940 in Warsaw. Starting in December 1941, the Germans murder Jews in extermination camps in Chełmno, Sobibór, Bełżec, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

On the Polish territory controlled by the Soviet Union, the aggressor tries to ignite antagonisms between the nationalities living there, skillfully provoking conflicts between Ukrainians, Jews, Byelorussians and Poles, who are treated as an ideologically hostile element.

... nach dem Krieg...



The Rising in August

The Warsaw Rising starts on August 1, 1944 at 17:00 hours. Col. Antoni Chruściel „Monter” is in direct command of the Home Army troops of the Warsaw District. In the first days of the fighting, insurgents take control over the City Center, Old Town, Wola, Powiśle (where they capture the power station), parts of Ochota, Mokotów and Żoliborz. However, on August 3 in Praga, the insurgents go back underground. A large Home Army group under the command of Maj. Alfons Kotowski „Okoń” is established in the Kampinoska Forest.

Many strategically important objects in the captured areas are still in German possession. On August 5, the Germans launch an attack on Wola, defended, among others, by the „Radosław” group under the command of Col. Jan Mazurkiewicz. On August 11, after capturing Wola and Ochota, German troops strike the Old Town. It is defended by the „Radosław” group and troops of Maj. Stanisław Błaszczak „Róg” and Capt. Lucjan Giżyński „Gozdawa”. Col. Karol Ziemski „Wachnowski” is in command. The fighting the Old Town is especially fierce, as the Germans use heavy artillery, air forces and missiles nicknamed “cows” or “wardrobes”. Due to systematic gunfire and bombardment, this historic district is turned into rubble.

In the nights of August 20 and 21, the „Północ” troops from Żoliborz try to come to the rescue of the Old Town defenders. The insurgents’ attack on Gdański Station fails. Sustained defense of the Old Town makes it possible for Col. Edward Pfeiffer „Radwan” to start offensive operations. On August 20, insurgents take control over the PAST building on Zielna St. and on August 23 – the Holy Cross Church and the Police HQ on Krakowskie Przedmieście St. However, subsequent attempts to capture the Warsaw University are unsuccessful. On the night of August 30, Home Army troops try to fight their way to the City Center through the Bankowy Square. They fail in spite of support from Home Army soldiers coming to their rescue from the City Center. In this situation, on September 1 and 2 the Old Town soldiers pass through the sewers to the City Center and Żoliborz.



Insurgent failures

After capturing the Old Town on September 2, the German army storms Powiśle, capturing it on September 6. Insurgents hope for a Soviet attack on Praga. On September 10, the Army of the 1st Byelorussian Front begins the Praga offensive to drive the Germans back over the bridges. The 1st Polish Army units under the command of Gen. Zygmunt Berling fight as part of the 47th Soviet Army. On September 13, Soviet troops enter the suburbs of Praga. The Germans retreat to the left bank of the Vistula River and blow up capital's bridges. On September 14, the Praga offensive ends; there are only a few skirmishes that result in final cleanup of the area. In this situation, the German command concentrates on organizing a front on the left bank of the Vistula River. All German forces in the Warsaw area support Gen. von dem Bach's corps.

The 1st Polish Army troops cross the Vistula River to support the Rising. On the night of September 15, the first group of soldiers from the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 3^d Division crosses the river from Saska Kępa to Solec. Over the next few days, more soldiers land on the left bank of the river, at Czerniaków, North Powiśle and Żoliborz. On September 17, the first group of soldiers from the 6th Infantry Regiment crosses the river at Pelcowizna in the area of Marymont. On September 19, soldiers from the 8th Infantry Regiment of the 3^d Division get to Powiśle and take control over the Kościuszkowskie Shore in the area of the crosstown bridge, and begin the attack. A strong German counterattack causes the landing to fail. On September 21, a German assault stops the landing force of the 6th Infantry Regiment at Kępa Potocka. The Czerniakowski Bridgehead falls on September 23. From the moment the insurgents are cut off from the bank of the Vistula River and the 1st Polish Army is unable to cross the river, the enemy starts tightening the noose around the three remaining centers of insurgent resistance: Żoliborz, City Center and Mokotów.

The insurgents and civilians suffer from famine and the lack of effective help results in growing depression and hopelessness. Insurgents can count only on themselves. Airdrops cannot change the feeling of solitude in the battle. The long distance from Italian bases and lack of Stalin's permission to make Soviet airfields available limit the possibilities of allied help. An expedition of American "flying fortresses" arrives so late (Sept.18) that it has very little influence on the Rising. Soviet airdrops, which do not begin until September 13, are done without parachutes, which damages a huge part of the weapons and ammunition.

The remaining forces fighting in the Polish capital wait in vain for the main Soviet attack. The expected "ally" acts as a bystander. This is very convenient for the German forces in their arrangements for the final battle. The area defended by insurgents becomes smaller day-by-day. One by one, the last centers of insurgent resistance are taken over by the Germans. On the night of September 26, the dramatic evacuation of the Mokotów insurgent troops begins. Mokotów capitulates on September 27. The „Kampinos” group is defeated in the battle of Jaktorów on September 29. Żoliborz capitulates the next day. The situation of insurgent Warsaw is catastrophic. The High Command of the Home Army begins negotiations with the German side regarding Warsaw's capitulation. The capitulation treaty is signed on October 2.



“The Lublin Poland”

In the second half of July 1944, the Red Army seizes Polish land between the Vistula River and the San, Bug and Narew Rivers. Home Army detachments that, in connection with Operation „Burza” (“Tempest”), acting alone or in cooperation with the Soviets, had liberated dozens of towns in the Lublin area alone, are disarmed and interned after coming out of hiding. The civil administration that takes power in the liberated area is treated similarly.

On July 21, Moscow Radio announces the establishment of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) in Chełm. Edward Osóbka-Morawski, an unknown member of the Polish Socialist Party, is put at its head. The manifesto of the PKWN, supposedly issued in Chełm, is read aloud.

In fact, the PKWN is established in Moscow by Polish communists on Stalin’s order. Chełm is seized by the Red Army on July 22, but the first members of the PKWN do not reach the city until July 28. The PKWN is fully controlled from the beginning by Soviet authorities, under the direction of Gen. Nikolai Bulganin. The British and American governments do not accept the Committee. On the other hand, they begin putting even more pressure on Stanisław Mikołajczyk, premier of the Polish Government-in-Exile. They expect his consent to the so-called Curzon Line, running along the Bug River, as the eastern border of Poland.

After taking over the administration in the area of the so-called Lublin Poland, the communists immediately begin to create means of oppression that are supposed to liquidate the underground resistance. They are supported by the forces of the NKVD and the Soviet military counterespionage “SMERSH” (“Death to Spies”) units. They terrorize the Home Army soldiers. The communist security authorities are now located in the Lublin Castle - one of the largest German places of execution in occupied Poland. By April of 1945, over 100 officers and soldiers of the Lublin District are murdered there for their affiliation with the Home Army. Posters printed by the communists reading “Home Army - the filthy reactionary dwarf” appear on house walls. The persecution of Polish landowners and aristocracy begins. In the seized area, the PKWN carries out plunder in the name of “land reform” and enforces compulsory conscription to the military.

On December 31, 1944, the PKWN is converted into the Interim Government, although it only represents Polish communists and a few other small political groups cooperating with them.



Capitulation

On September 29, Gen. „Bór” wires to London: “Our struggle is dying out.” There is no longer any hope of help for the fighting Warsaw. The civilian population and wounded soldiers find themselves in a tragic position. Famine is rampant in the city. In the last days of September, the Home Army Commander sends peace envoys to initiate parleys for surrender of the city. On October 2, the agreement on suspension of warfare operations in Warsaw is signed in Ożarów. According to the treaty, insurgents are to lay down their arms and leave the city in tight formations together with their commanders. The civilian population is to leave the city as well. The Germans deport the AK soldiers to numerous POW camps inside the Reich. On their way to camps soldiers are persecuted and once they arrive they are not given any water for a long time. Civilians pass through a temporary camp in Pruszków, where Germans conduct selection. Some of the men and women are deported to forced labor in Germany, while others are sent to Radom, Częstochowa, and Kraków. A few Varsovians, with a handful of Jews among them, hide in the ruins until the arrival of the Red Army on January 17, 1945. These are the so-called “Robinsons”.

More than 18 thousand insurgents and 180 thousand civilians die in the Rising. There are many representatives of the Polish elite among the fallen and the murdered. The Germans break provisions of the capitulation treaty and carry out the long-planned action of destroying Warsaw. Only 64 out of 987 historical buildings remain untouched. Most of Warsaw’s monuments, schools, churches and libraries - including the National, Public and University Libraries - undergo massive destruction. Archives and works of art are turned into ashes. “Warsaw has been destroyed, the past and the soul of Poland has been incinerated [..]. After its loss we are nationally, culturally and spiritually impoverished” - writes Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz.

The defeat of the Rising is also the defeat of Polish aspirations for independence, decisively ruled out by the leaders of the USA, the Soviet Union and Great Britain at the conference in Yalta. Destroying Warsaw, potentially the biggest center of resistance against the new occupation, makes it easier to impose the communist system of power and to sovietize Polish society.
