

sygn 181

Underground Resistance In Poland

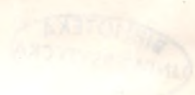
Arch. Emigracji
Biblioteka
Główna
UMK Toruń

1380462

By

W. R. MALINOWSKI

(Reprinted from *International Postwar Problems*, Volume 1, Number 2, March, 1944)



Printed in the U. S. A.



Distributed by POLISH LABOR GROUP, 55 West 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., which has filed a registration statement and a copy of this printed matter with the Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., as an agent of the Committee of the Polish Socialist Party Abroad, the Representation of the Polish Trade Union Council Abroad, both of London, England, and the Central Leadership of the Underground Movement of the Working Masses of Poland, somewhere in Poland. This registration statement is available for public inspection. The fact of registration does not indicate approval of the U. S. Government of the contents hereof.



AE 1380462

Underground Resistance in Poland

THE INTERNAL life of Poland in the years preceding 1939 is relatively little known abroad. Such facts as the circumstance that Poland was the first country to offer armed resistance to the expansionist drive of the Third Reich, the emergence of the first underground mass movement, despite Gestapo control and terror, and the complete absence of Quislings and of collaborationist tendencies in Poland (a condition unique among the occupied countries of Europe) have often been regarded as a sort of "miracle," not to be explained by rational analysis of the situation.

And yet, to a person familiar with Polish life, there is nothing miraculous here. The following survey will attempt to present a picture of the Polish underground movement of resistance, its origins, development and status on the eve of the Red Army's march into Poland in January of this year.¹

Such an analysis of the Polish resistance movement will be essential to the understanding of the future course of events in Poland. A rational explanation of the Polish "miracle" might also prove a helpful contribution toward the understanding of developments in many other countries which will soon be faced with similar perspectives.

I. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

For several years Poland had been ruled by a reactionary military clique through Marshal Pilsudski's unofficial but very real dictatorship. After his death in 1935, and under the influence of Fascist and Nazi developments in other European countries, the ruling clique tended increasingly to favor totalitarian solutions. These, however, were never fully realized. Despite repressions and official trickery, political life in Poland was never completely driven underground. Some measure of democracy survived in local government, and the municipal elections of 1938-39 showed that democratic elements were decidedly in the majority throughout Poland. Where the dictatorial methods of the rulers averted

¹ It is outside the scope of the present survey to deal with the dangers resulting from the Soviet refusal to maintain diplomatic relations with the Polish Government and its plans to establish a puppet regime in Poland.

occasional attempts at their overthrow, they were unable to prevent the development of political life or to suppress the political education of the people.

During the years preceding the war (especially since Pilsudski's death), the deep rift between government and people became ever more apparent. The army officers and the police apparatus were the mainstays of the government, which also enjoyed the support of Fascist-minded youth groups, chiefly among the university students. The large body of civil servants, which had originally supported the regime, disintegrated as a political entity during the latter prewar years, and many of its elements joined the opposition. But the prevailing trend in the country was the steady evolution of the masses toward democracy and progress, often colored with economic and social radicalism.

After the experience of 1920, Poland, a neighbor of Soviet Russia, had no fear of Communist influence. The Communist movement existed, fluctuating in relative strength, but always on the fringe of Polish political life. In 1937, the Comintern had dissolved the Communist Party of Poland. The official reason given for this action was that the Party was infected with *agents-provocateurs*, but in reality it was an admission of the Party's failure to obtain a foothold in Polish political life.

There were two main political tendencies in prewar Poland. One was nationalism; the Polish nationalist movement originated in the nineteenth century and evolved in a reactionary direction during the twentieth century. After the emergence of Fascism and Nazism, it tended ever more consciously to adopt them as models. The other tendency was democratic. It had two main spheres of influence—the peasants and the workers; accordingly, it developed into two separate movements, the labor movement and the peasant movement, the latter becoming more and more progressive during the last prewar years.

Because of the economic and social weakness of the Polish middle classes, they could develop no strong democratic movement. Both the Christian-Democratic and the Progressive-Democratic movements of the middle classes were weak and usually aligned themselves with the Nationalist and the peasant-labor democratic movements respectively. The great landowning class, which was still very powerful in the nineteenth century, was much less influential in the twentieth. Such influence as it had in recent years was based not on its economic position,² but primarily on its traditional ties with the intellectual groups and the military, and the

² In 1939 less than 20 per cent of the land area used for agricultural purposes belonged to great landowners.

strong influence of its cultural patterns upon the middle classes. Prominent figures representing the great landowning group and the capitalists were thus able to wield an influence in the government.

In the last years before the outbreak of war, the democratic opposition began to consolidate. The development of the labor movement, and the evolution of the peasants, especially the younger peasants, created conditions in which democratic influence could gain a firmer foothold among the middle classes, particularly among the professionals. The Polish Democratic Party was organized, and the unions of office and professional workers began to collaborate with the unions of manual workers and to look to them for guidance. Within the Catholic movement, democratic tendencies became increasingly vocal. At the same time, the Nationalist Party—the traditional political vehicle of Polish reaction—began to disintegrate, splitting into a conservative and several pro-Fascist groups.

At the outbreak of the war, there was a clear-cut division among the Polish people. The masses of peasants and workers, together with important sections of professional groups and of the intellectuals, were strongly opposed to the administration, and united for the purpose of re-establishing democracy. The government, resting upon its monopoly of administrative power and upon the military and police apparatus, had no mass base, but enjoyed the support of relatively small, but highly vociferous and active, groups of nationalist and Fascist-minded youth. This distribution of political forces must be kept in mind whenever events which occurred after September 1, 1939, are considered.

II. THE SEPTEMBER CAMPAIGN AND ITS AFTERMATH

Under the circumstances described above, the German-Polish War had a twofold significance for the Polish people. On the one hand, it was a national war, another chapter in the history of Polish resistance to the perennial German "*Drang nach Osten*." On the other, it was an ideological war, the Polish people's war against Nazi totalitarianism. Although from the very beginning of the conflict the relative strength of the German and Polish forces was such as to leave the Poles no hope of success in their attempt at armed resistance, everyone in Poland was convinced that it was his duty to do his share whatever the outcome.

This was the common spirit both of the soldiers and of the civilians. The average civilian, however, did not know how great was the disproportion of strength, and the realization of defeat was therefore even more sharp. Only in 1940, after the defeat of France, was the real situation

fully understood. But what remained as an essential lesson of the Polish defeat was the realization by the people of the unpreparedness, the lack of orientation and the cowardice of a large part of the supreme administrative and military apparatus.

In comparison with the average Pole's virtually unlimited courage and devotion to the national cause, the behavior of the top-ranking military and civil government's officials ruined what vestiges of reputation the dictatorship still enjoyed.³ In the first days of the war, the government and the high command of the army left Warsaw; subsequently, they decided to leave the country, at a time when the army and the civilian population were still fighting on many fronts. While the highest military and civil authorities were abandoning the country, another important decision was being taken—that of the Citizens' Committee to defend the capital, which the government and the high command had resolved to yield to the enemy without resistance.

The defense of Warsaw, which had all the characteristics of a people's war, may be regarded as a revolution carried out in the country's most tragic moment. The democratic opposition was responsible for the decision to defend the capital. But the decisive factor was the resolute will of the capital's inhabitants. The workers of Warsaw gave the main impetus to this determination, and the labor leader, Mieczyslaw Niedzialkowski, subsequently shot by the Germans, was one of the most prominent leaders in the struggle. Special workers' battalions were organized; later, civilians of other social classes joined them.

The heroic defense of Warsaw had an immeasurable effect on subsequent developments in Poland. It was the flowering of the democratic evolution of the Polish people, the more significant because it took place at the least favorable moment. The defense of Warsaw and the fundamental attitude and philosophy which it expressed had by their contrast with the government's actions deepened still further the people's contempt for their erstwhile rulers. The crisis had not only shown the former regime at its worst, but it had also hastened and cemented the consolidation of the democratic political forces. It was this development which led to the assumption of the tasks of government by the former opposition parties when the Polish government was reorganized abroad.

In the last days of September and the first days of October, 1939, Warsaw was finally forced to capitulate, and the remaining pockets of armed resistance in various parts of the country had to be given up. But

³ In this connection it must also be pointed out that a dictatorial regime is far less capable of withstanding the consequences of defeat than a democratic one.

the social disintegration and political nihilism which usually follow defeat were avoided. On the contrary, the Polish people began to consolidate their forces underground. Brotherhood and self-sacrifice became the chief characteristics of Polish life during the first period of occupation.

There was hardly a person in Poland toward the end of 1939 who did not know and did not repeat with reverence the words in which Niedzialkowski explained his refusal to sign the act of Warsaw's capitulation: "The workers do not surrender. The workers continue their fight."

III. THE POLISH UNDERGROUND, 1939-1943

As we have said before, the hastening of the process of consolidation of the Polish people under German rule was partly the expression of the attitude of the population toward the invaders and partly the result of the common feeling that the prewar Polish regime had failed in its duties to the nation. The people therefore rallied to those whose social predictions had proved to be true and who had assumed real leadership—the democratic opposition—the labor movement and the peasant Populist Party.

This inner consolidation took place at a time when the daily life of the Polish people was being disrupted and completely disorganized by the September campaign and the subsequent occupation. To understand the situation, it is necessary to bear in mind the German policy toward Poland:

(1) Poland was the first country to resist the Third Reich actively. In the opinion of Nazi leaders, therefore, Poland required especially harsh treatment, to restore German prestige and as a demonstration to others of what might be expected in case of resistance.

(2) Germans consider Poles an "inferior race." Poland thus became the first large territory where the Nazis were able to make practical application of their theory of a "master race" and its attendant attitude toward "inferior creatures."

(3) Poland was defeated, but the Polish people proved to be unconquered, and the Germans applied methods of most brutal terror to crush not only actual resistance, but also the unquenchable spirit of the people. (There have been no Quislings of any kind in Poland.)

The German policy toward the Poles, the extermination of gentiles and the annihilation of Jews, destroyed the prewar social organization of the nation. The Jewish commercial and industrial enterprises and, later, most of those belonging to Polish gentiles were either directly taken over

by the Germans or placed under the control of the so-called German *Treuhaenders*. The Nazi tax policy and the calling in of prewar loans (and, especially, the foreclosures of real estate) provided additional, quasi-legal methods of expropriation. Moreover, as a result of the closing of all universities and most of the schools, scientific institutes, former government offices, papers and magazines, theaters, etc., the Polish intellectuals, professionals, journalists, writers and artists were deprived of any means of earning a living.

The conditions of existence under the occupation and the general impoverishment of the people were thus factors of great importance in stimulating the growth of underground resistance. By the end of 1939 all the elements prerequisite to the organization of a democratic underground movement of resistance were ripe in Poland:

- (1) A spirit of unity in the struggle against the invaders;
- (2) An ever-stronger conviction of the superiority of democratic leadership over that of the hopelessly discredited dictatorial cliques;
- (3) Economic changes which precluded any possibility of a return to secure existence;
- (4) The battle-spirit of the "cell" organizations, in search of ways to continue the struggle.

Moreover, occupation conditions revived the old Polish tradition of underground struggle for freedom, the tradition of conspiratorial work developed in the course of one hundred and twenty-three years, when Poland, divided among the German, Austrian and Russian empires, carried on a ceaseless fight against its oppressors. The old slogans of the Polish democratic revolutionary movements of 1830 and 1863, "For Your Freedom and Ours," and "Freedom, Equality, Independence," have become the slogans of the fighting Polish underground of World War II.⁴

The story of the first period of the existence of the underground movement, which will be told in full only after this war is over, is the story of many thousands of small groups, planning resistance, producing typed, mimeographed and printed clandestine papers, pamphlets and leaflets, and the story of thousands of small guerrilla bands, often consisting of demobilized soldiers. Little as we know of their full extent, it is evident that all of Poland was seething with these activities. On the first anniversary of the German occupation, the Nazi chief of the Warsaw SS detachments described the intensity of Polish resistance as follows

⁴ See the author's article, "Pattern of Underground Resistance in Central-Eastern Europe," in the March, 1944, issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, which discusses the Polish traditions of underground resistance.

in the special internal bulletin of the National Socialist Party, *Die Innere Front*: "We have to fight thousands of armed Polish gangs; more than half of their attacks are politically motivated." (October 27, 1940.)

This period of largely chaotic resistance, resulting in increasing German terror and a rapidly growing number of Polish casualties, brought to a head the tendency toward replacing impulsive acts by carefully planned resistance. This process coincided with that of political clarification, which reached its highest development in the period following the collapse of France, in 1940, when it became obvious that the war would be a long one and the sacrifices great. The shock of the French collapse was tremendous, destroying much hope, but showing at the same time that Poland was not the only nation to suffer military defeat at the hands of Germany. The Polish underground emerged victorious from this crucial period.

* * *

The Polish underground has two basic sectors, civilian and military. The civilian sector consists primarily of political underground movements. The military sector unites the secret underground military forces. These sectors are closely related, a fact which testifies to their essentially democratic, popular character.

The underground includes four major political movements:

(1) The labor movement (the underground movement of the working masses of Poland, embracing both the political and the trade-union movements);

(2) The peasant movement (the underground peasant political movement);

(3) The national movement;

(4) The Christian Party.

The last is a moderate, democratic Roman Catholic organization, whose political influence is limited to certain regions.

The first three embrace the essential political and social forces of Poland. The Polish government in London is based upon the conference of representatives of these four movements.

Groups outside this conference, and subsequently outside the Polish government, are described as follows by the leading underground labor paper, *WRN* (No. 121):⁵

"The work of the Polish government in London is connected closely with what is being done here within occupied Poland. It reflects, directly and harmoniously, Poland's and the Polish people's desires.

⁵ *Poland Fights*, January 20, 1944, Special Supplement.

"There are three political groups outside the government, groups that busy themselves with noisy manifestations of their intentions. But their past and the present political position condemns them to remaining outside the main framework of Polish politics.

"One of these groups is the 'Sanacja' (the men of the prewar regime). They boast of Colonel Beck's 'achievements' and their own constitutional ideas.

"Another, the National Revolutionary Camp (ONR), adheres consistently to its own fascist ideas and attempts to stir up violent dissension both at home and abroad.

"These two groups must realize that they must be left out of the picture completely when a democratic People's Poland is being built, in co-operation with the democratic forces of the world.

"The third group is the Communists, who are subservient to the Soviet government. It is their intention to use the occupation of Poland by Soviet troops as a means for seizing power. At present, they are inimical not only to the Polish government, but to the desires and interests of the Polish people as a whole."

The importance of these three groups is relatively small. The "Sanacja" is discredited in the public eye and has no mass following. The Fascist-minded "National Revolutionary Camp" is a small but noisy group of old-style nationalist fanatics who, like the members of the "Sanacja," understand nothing of contemporary reality, and carry on their activities on the fringe of the socially backward national movement. The Communists (the Communist Party was nonexistent in prewar Poland; see above), who had been inactive politically at the time of Poland's partition by Germany and the U.S.S.R., but who suddenly began to emerge into the open when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, have no mass following. Their position derives its strength from the emissaries and military parachutists sent by the Red Army. With the support of the Soviet government, they have organized several groups (using various nationalistic nicknames), the best known of which is the PPR (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*—The Polish Workers' Party).

The real political forces, however, are the powerful labor and peasant movements on the one hand, and the national movement, on the other. These forces, which support the Polish government in London, are at present working together on the basis of a limited agreement, directed primarily toward conducting the most effective fight against the German invaders.

A similar alignment of forces prevails in the Polish underground

army. The military sector of the underground is organized on the principle of unified military command, but includes followers of different political ideals. The workers and peasants, the very backbone of the Polish nation, are its most important component elements, as is vividly shown in the recent underground labor publication, *Lud z Armia—Armia z Ludem* ("The People with the Army—The Army with the People"). However, the underground armed forces are a true people's army, consisting of democratic workers, peasants, white-collar employees and intellectuals.

The entire Polish underground brought forth the underground State, consisting of the Delegate of the Polish government and his secret offices and departments. Although this clandestine body has functioned in Poland since 1939, its existence was not revealed abroad until about a year ago. In a more recent statement, the Polish Prime Minister declared that the government Delegate in Poland has the rank of Vice-Premier in the Polish Cabinet; the Polish underground political representation functions as a substitute Parliament (recently called the Council of National Unity).

IV. FORMS AND INTENSITY OF RESISTANCE

It is widely recognized that the organization of Polish underground resistance is among the best in Europe. To understand the work of the movement, it is important to keep in mind the twofold character of underground strategy: on the one hand, the daily struggle to raise the people's morale and to undermine the enemy by means of the slowdown, guerrilla warfare and sabotage; on the other, active preparation for the popular uprising that will come when it can best contribute to the enemy's final defeat. Neither of these great sectors of underground activity can be neglected in favor of the other.

The primary basis of both the daily struggle and the preparation for an uprising is the general attitude of the nation as a whole. Practically the entire nation shares in underground work, either actively or in the form of loose co-operation. The popular expression of this attitude is the common reference to Poles as "We" and to Germans as "They," without further explanation. This general atmosphere is the first prerequisite to successful resistance. The Germans feel the breath of hate everywhere and always. The recent warnings issued by the German authorities to Germans evacuated from bombed areas in the Reich to western Poland are incontestable proof of the persistence of Polish hatred for the enemy.

Popular morale is maintained by the underground through many means, including instructions to Poles, both men and women, to limit their contacts with Germans to a minimum, and to boycott wherever possible German institutions and officials. Necessary aid and services are provided by underground schools, mutual aid organizations, etc. German movies and theaters are under organized boycott, but private musicales and social parties, as well as small clandestine meetings to discuss Polish literature and other problems are organized to take their place. The boycott of German institutions takes many forms. There is, for instance, an unspoken agreement between Polish streetcar conductors and passengers in Warsaw to forget about the fares, in order that the money be prevented from passing into German hands. There is also a widespread boycott of the Polish-language daily papers published by the Germans. Underground papers, of which more than a hundred are regularly published throughout Poland, have a wide reading public, which also helps in their distribution and circulation.⁶

Passive resistance has been developed in a variety of forms, from so-called "Schweikism"⁷ to the "slowdown." The systematic slowdown applied by workers in factories is often terminated by mass executions, for the Germans regard it as active sabotage. According to underground reports, Polish workers also resort to active resistance. Thus the three-day walkout of workers in the war factories of the Radom district (Central Poland), brought about a new wave of mass reprisals in January, 1943.⁸

The most effective forms of passive resistance have been those undertaken by the Polish underground in two important fields:

(1) The work of saving skilled and unskilled industrial and agricultural workers from conscription for slave labor in Germany. German labor lists are often mysteriously burned at the German *Arbeitsamts* and at the offices of local authorities; men rounded up for slave labor are often rescued and supplied with false documents or hidden by the Polish

⁶ From the very beginning, underground papers called upon their readers to help with their distribution. In November, 1939, *The Manifesto of Freedom*, one of the oldest labor publications, carried the following instruction: "After reading, pass it on to a friend! Keep it out of the reach of spies and provocateurs."

⁷ An activity to foil and mock the invader. It is named after the Czech hero of a book by Jaroslav Hasek, *The Good Soldier Schweik*, widely known in prewar Poland. It is an ingenious method of passive resistance through alleged misunderstanding, in which the people involved frustrate German orders by claiming ignorance of the language, pretending to be simpletons, and so forth.

⁸ "Mass Murder in Radom," *Poland Fights*, February 20, 1943; an eyewitness report on the massacre in which Grzeczmarowski, labor leader and prewar Mayor of the city, was killed; see also "Strike," *Poland Fights*, May 20, 1943; a report on the strike in Radom.

underground; convoys of workers are frequently attacked and the victims of roundups help to escape.⁹

(2) The second major aspect of the work of passive resistance is concerned with preventing Polish agricultural products from falling into German hands. There is large-scale evasion and sabotage of food-quota regulations which seek to extract a large portion of agricultural produce from the Polish peasant. Crops are often burned, agricultural products are hidden and later sold in the cities on the black market. This form of struggle continues despite the special punitive measures undertaken by the Germans and the establishment of concentration camps for peasants who fail to deliver their quotas.¹⁰

Active forms of resistance are also constantly expanding, particularly since the German attack upon Soviet Russia, when Poland became a reservoir of resources for the Eastern Front and a transit route from West to East. Here, again, the sabotage activities of Polish railway workers proved very important and effective.¹¹

As a precaution against Polish attacks, German railwaymen have been ordered to carry arms when crossing Poland. They consider their service in occupied Poland equivalent to duty at the front.¹²

Another form of active struggle is the execution of German officers and officials guilty of special brutality. These executions are not acts of individual terror, but follow secret trials and sentences by underground courts.¹³

⁹ "Workers Fight Nazi Slave Drive," *Poland Fights*, October 20, 1943; underground report on the fight waged by workers against the Nazi forced-labor drive; see also "They Shall Never Be Slaves," *Poland Fights*, November 5, 1943; reprint from the underground labor paper, *WRN*, attacking Nazi efforts at total mobilization of Polish workers; see also "New Slave Drive Fought by Underground Labor," *Poland Fights*, January 20, 1944; article from underground labor paper devoted to problems of armed resistance and military training, dealing with various methods of combating the Nazi drive for Polish slave labor.

¹⁰ "Everything Must Be Done on the Run," *Poland Fights*, September 21, 1942; report on Tremblinka, punitive camp for "recalcitrant peasants"; see also "Ten Commandments for Fighting Peasants," *Poland Fights*, August 20, 1943; reprinted from the leading underground peasant paper, *Przez Walke do Zwyciestwa (Struggle for Victory)*.

¹¹ "Polish Railwaymen Destroy German Communications," *Poland Fights*, November 7, 1942. See also, "The Silent War," *Poland Fights*, March 20, 1943; reprints from the Nazi *Litzmanstaedter Zeitung* and the Nazi-controlled French paper *Paris Soir*; reports on Polish railway workers.

¹² "Traffic Disturbance," *Poland Fights*, December 20, 1943; reprint of a petition of German railroad employees to Governor Frank, requesting that they be placed on equal footing with the soldiers, and pointing out that 285 German railwaymen perished in July, 1943, "in the performance of duty."

¹³ "Underground Administration of Justice," *Poland Fights*, December 20, 1943; article on the underground administration of justice in Poland, based on underground reports and papers.

The planting of bombs in German offices and attacks upon prisons to free political prisoners are some of the other activities of the Polish underground.

The intensity and scope of this ceaseless struggle cannot be fully revealed until after the war. Much of the information, however, is now available. Thus the following statistical account lists proven and documented actions carried out from January to April, 1943, by Polish underground forces (usually by Polish workers):

<i>Type of Incident</i>	<i>No. of Cases</i>
Germans Killed	1175
Army officers, civilian officials, and Gestapo agents ...	124
Other Germans (soldiers and civilians)	1051
Villages Destroyed (inhabited by recent German settlers, destruction usually accomplished by fire)	10
Attacks on Prisons to Free Prisoners	10
Railway Sabotage:	
Traffic Tie-ups	124
Derailments	32
Rail Destruction	19
Other Tie-ups	73
Rolling Stock Damaged or Destroyed:	
Engines	558
Cars and Trucks	2241
of which: tank cars carrying gasoline or alcohol ..	64
Telecommunication Sabotage	56

In its active struggle, the Polish underground from time to time resorts to methods of "carrying the war to enemy territory." This is done to evade the ruthlessly applied principle of collective responsibility. Thus, recently, time bombs have exploded at the Schlesischer Bahnhof in Berlin and in Breslau.¹⁴ The fighting battalions of the underground forces have made quick forays into East Prussia and into Slovakia near the Polish frontiers.¹⁵ Here we have examples of the typical guerrilla warfare which is constantly carried on. That it forces the Nazis to keep many German divisions in Poland amply proves that Poland, though defeated, is unconquered. The following order of the commander in chief of the Polish underground forces graphically describes one of the regular battles recently fought "somewhere in Poland": "At 1:45 P.M. on May

¹⁴ "The Polish Underground Army," *Polish Fortnightly Review* (London), January 15, 1944.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

25, 1943, a detachment of underground forces carried out an attack on a train carrying political prisoners from the Lublin prison to Oswiecim concentration camp. In a bloody struggle forty-nine prisoners were released. Four of the escorting Germans were killed."

From time to time struggles are undertaken as a reminder to the country and to the world that the Polish will to fight and to sacrifice is as strong as ever. The execution of high officials of the Nazi Party and Nazi police often has elements of this nature. The bomb which exploded in the European Café in Warsaw, killing two Nazi officers,¹⁶ was certainly planted with this end in view. But the most important of such acts was the tragic and hopeless struggle in the Warsaw Ghetto in April, 1943, which followed the refusal of the remaining 40,000 Jews to be deported for execution to German death camps. Organized with the active help of Polish underground labor, this struggle took the form of regular battles, in which the Nazis fought the resisting ghetto groups with tanks, flame throwers, machine guns and artillery. The Jews, living corpses, as they were called in the underground, fought for several weeks one of the most heroic battles in this war.¹⁷

The Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto inflamed the fighting spirit of Jews elsewhere. Some time later the Bialystok Ghetto organized active resistance in the hours preceding the German execution of the annihilation plan. Groups of Jews who had escaped from other ghettos organized a guerrilla detachment to continue the fight.¹⁸

All these facts have been recorded in the orders and reports of the underground commander in chief in Poland, as well as in the reports and papers of the underground political movements. Frequently, information is obtained from intercepted German documents and orders, and also from news reports and articles in the German press (often in the form of obituaries lamenting the "sudden death in performance of duty" of one or more Nazi officials). These are often confirmed by eyewitness reports. But ceaseless Nazi persecutions are the most convincing proof of continued resistance.

¹⁶ "Underground Administration of Justice," *Poland Fights*, December 20, 1943, which quotes the underground paper, *Rzeczpospolita Polska (The Polish Republic)* of April 15, 1943.

¹⁷ See underground report on the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto (Special Supplement to *Poland Fights*, No. 47), and the Underground Appeal of Polish labor to the Fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto, issued "somewhere in Poland" in April, 1943 (an English translation of which may be found in *Poland Fights*, November 20, 1943).

¹⁸ See "Three Other Jewish Communities of Poland Waged Armed Resistance," *Ghetto Speaks*, October 1, 1943 (published by the American Representation of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland).

The Polish government recently published the following figures regarding Polish victims of the Nazi occupation who lost their lives up to July 1, 1943:

Gentiles	1,325,000
Jews	1,800,000

These figures are evidence that needs no comment.

* * *

In addition to the daily struggle, the most important element of underground work is the preparation for a general uprising in close co-ordination with Allied military operations, to take place when liberation is in sight.

The underground labor monthly, *Wolnosc (Freedom)*, of June, 1942, describes the tasks and aims of the people's uprising as follows:

"We fully accept the government in exile as representative of independent Poland. . . . From the first moments of the reconstruction of Poland, a new social regime must be created. It shall be the task of the people's democratic movement, which will drive the invader from the territory of the Polish Republic, not only to invest with actual territory and power the present symbols of the Polish State—the government in exile, its President and its army—but also to build the foundations of a new social and political order." This, it adds, "is particularly important because Poland is situated between Germany and Soviet Russia. . . ."

The labor paper concludes: "The workers, peasants and intellectuals cannot withdraw from their fundamental position that the uprising against the invader must be a true people's revolution and that the masses of the working men and women must play the most active and decisive role both in the military uprising and in the political struggle."

It is clear that this complex mechanism of change cannot be developed if there is no co-ordination in the military sphere with the approaching Allied armies, or if the latter intend to interfere with the internal affairs of an Allied country in the process of liberation.

The Polish underground conducts the preparations for the uprising with the same care and efficiency with which it has fought since 1939. This struggle for freedom should not be hindered by the diplomatic maneuvers of postwar plans of any single power. The Polish people, gallant fighters and stanch allies, have fully earned the right to the final life-and-death battle for liberation—the prelude to a new, free and independent Poland.

Biblioteka Główna UMK



300020873220