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ARTYKUŁ

Last Will of the Polish Underground State

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The partition of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939 did not force Poles to capitulate. The interned president of Poland in Romania, Ignacy Mościcki appointed his successor on the basis of the constitution – Władysław Raczkiewicz, who in turn appointed the government with gen. Władysław Sikorski as its leader. Despite the occupation of the Polish land by Germany and the USSR, the continuity of the Polish state was preserved. Its officials, recognised by the free societies of the world, led the fight for independence abroad throughout the entire war, first in France, then after its fall, in Great Britain. Last shots of the soldiers of the Polish Army hadn't gone silent yet in their unfair struggle against two aggressors, when the underground resistance began forming. The commitment full of patriotism and

sacrifice and the organisational abilities of tens of thousands of Poles, from all walks of life, led to the creation of the Polish Underground State.

The Polish Underground State had no similar counterpart in other countries of occupied Europe, where the resistance against the Third Reich had a much smaller percentage of citizens involved. What's more, nowhere else, apart from Yugoslavia, did such huge underground armed forces as in Poland were created. The Underground State in occupied Poland was subordinate to the authorities of the government-in-exile. The Home Army was the equivalent of the armed forces and during the time of war it also performed some judicial functions (it had supervision over the Special Court Martials which were being established since 1942). The complex apparatus of the Government Delegation for Poland played the role of the secret administrative power; the Civil Special Courts were also subordinate to it. Numerous movements created the underground political scene. In 1943, the parties of the government coalition – the Polish Socialist Party; People's Party; Nationalist Party and Labour Party created their representative body – the Home Political Representation.

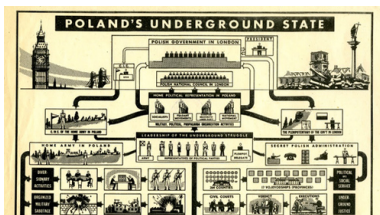
After performing a few more political movements, on January 9th 1944, with the decision of the state delegate for the country it was transformed to the Council of National Unity. The body coordinating the conspiracy resistance of the military and civil structures was the Directorate of Underground Resistance, created on July 15th 1943. It was led by general Tadeusz Komorowski codename "Bór", the Home Army commander following the arrest of gen. Stefan Rowecki "Grot" by the Germans.

The biggest political and military undertaking of the Polish Underground State was the operation "Tempest" [Polish: "Burza"] began in March 1944 in Volhynia, which later spread to almost all of the Polish lands occupied by Germany; while the biggest battle of the Underground State with the Germans was the Warsaw Uprising. Following the fall of the uprising, the Home Army command headed by gen. Leopold Okulicki, the Government Delegation and the Council of National Unity resumed their activities; however, due to the losses suffered during the August struggle their scope of operations was much more limited than before. On January 19th 1945, when most of the Polish lands were already occupied by the Red Army, gen. Okulicki decided to disband the Home Army. In the end of March 1945, the NKVD craftily arrested the leaders of the Polish Underground State, among others, gen. Leopold Okulicki himself; the delegate of Jan Stanisław Jankowski's government and his ministers – Adam Bień from the People's Party; Stanisław Jasiukowicz from the Nationalist Party; Antoni Pajdak from the Polish Socialist Party and the president of the Council of National Unity Kazimierz Pużak, the former prisoner of the Tsar Russia and one of the greatest leaders of the Polish socialists. All of them were taken to Moscow.

In June 1945, while the former prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile, Stanisław Mikołajczyk was leading the negotiations with the Communists in Moscow to create a joint government, fifteen leaders of the Polish Underground State (Antoni Pajdak had a separate trial) who – apart from the Home Army commander – were previously subordinate to Mikołajczyk, stood before the Soviet court. In a trial named "The Trial of the

Sixteen”, the leaders of the Polish Underground State were accused of being members of an illegal organisation, collaborating with the Germans (against which they fought during the entire war) and of diversion, espionage and terrorism against the USSR. The Western allies of Poland failed to protest against the unfair trial of those who gave their most selfless testimony of being faithful to the free world in the toughest days of the occupation.

At that time, based on the Yalta agreements between the USSR, USA and Great Britain from February 1945, the Communist Provisional Government of National Unity was created, co-formed by Mikołajczyk and completely subordinate to the Soviet Union. Thus, the free world backed down on its support for the government of Tomasz Arciszewski, which in turn resulted in the disbanding of the still active in conspiracy Government Delegation for Poland and the Council of National Unity. On July 1st 1945, the last meeting of the General Commission of the Council of National Unity took place in Cracow, attended by: the acting government delegate for Poland Jerzy Braun codename “Rogowski” from the Labour Party; Zygmunt Zaremba “Marcin” from the Polish Socialist Party; Jan Matłachowski “Samborski” from the Nationalist Party; Zygmunt Kapitaniak “Stanisław” from the Democratic Alliance and Józef Krasowski “Konar” from the Farmers’ Freedom Organisation “Raclawice”. It was them, who prepared and published in the last issue of the “Rzeczpospolita Polska” newspaper the Proclamation of the National Council of Unity and allied nations, which included the Last Will of the Fighting Poland – the message of the Polish Underground State, commonly referred to as the Last Will of the Underground Poland.



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The document consisted of several parts. In the introduction, it was stressed that Poland was the first to resist the German totalitarianism which was a threat to all of Europe and the entire world, when it stood against Hitler’s forces on September 1st 1939 in defence of its independence. Following their defeat in an unfair fight against the German aggressor and the USSR, which joined the occupation on September 17th 1939, Poles did not surrender, but continued to oppose the Germans on all fronts of the war – on land, at sea and in air. They also took on the much harder, incredibly sacrificial fight in the occupied country: “The complete destruction of the capital, five million people murdered in camps, several million <<living dead>> ruined physically and

psychologically, millions taken deep into Russia and spread across the world, utter economic havoc – this is Poland’s contribution in the war, exceeding what all other democratic nations combined laid on the altar of the common cause” – was written in the address about the account of Polish resistance against the Germans. Hence, the last leaders of the Polish Underground State expressed their belief, that with such sacrifice Poland earned “an undeniable right for respect and help of the entire civilised world, since it became the symbol of loyalty towards its allies, resilience and fighting democracy”.

The following parts of the document underlined the military goals of Poland and the political program of the Home Army, described in the declaration of the Council of National Unity from March 15th 1944. One of the most important contributions was the anti-Nazi coalition’s role in the war and the fight against the Germans until their defeat; then the rebuilding of the independent and democratic Poland with untouched integrity. The last postulates concerned the sacredness of the eastern border of the Republic of Poland, threatened by the demands of the USSR and the securing of Poland’s freedom in the future by creating a federative union of central and eastern European countries also threatened by the imperial ambitions of Germany and the USSR. In the aspect of internal policies, the document reminded the declarations formulated during the occupation concerning the implementation of system and economic changes after the war, in the spirit of social justice, especially the wide range of civil rights and the agricultural reform.

In the address it was firmly stressed, that the Soviet empire stood in the way of these plans, which were supported by the definite majority of Poles: “In its concept of dividing the world into the areas of influence, Soviet Russia decided to force all the central European countries into its political system. Poland, directly neighbouring the Soviet Union, became the first victim of this policy.” – it was written; however, certain results of this policy were omitted, namely the Katyń massacre, conducted by the officers of the NKVD on Polish POWs. At the same time, it was underlined in this part of the appeal, that the government-in-exile had tried to reach a compromise with the USSR all the time, to no avail. The same case was in the country, where “the state officials and the Home Army tried to come out of the shadows and cooperate with the Red Army, but were arrested and shot instead”.

In the following part of the document, members of the Council of National Unity focused on the political scene at the end of the Second World War, stating that Poland was still under occupation, this time a Soviet one, with an imposed, Communist government. In the proclamation, it was described as a done fact, which the Underground State had to take into account, at the same time stating that the moment the Provisional Government of National Unity was established and approved by Western powers “we lost the possibility of legally fighting in conspiracy based on the widely recognised government-in-exile in London and there comes the problem of open opposition of the democratic parties in Poland for the nations’ goals and their programs”. This belief was given as the reason for the decision to disband the Council of National Unity and the end of the Polish Underground State.

This decision also meant, that the Council denounced its obedience to the constitutional Polish authorities in exile – the president of Poland, Władysław Raczkiewicz and Tomasz Arciszewski’s government. It was; therefore, a silent approval of the decisions of the Yalta conference imposed on Poland; even though, the not-too-distant future showed, that even the agreements which were to guarantee Poles free parliamentary

elections weren't kept. Admittedly, the leaders of the Council of National Unity had their fears concerning the latter, as they expressed their doubts in the document whether it's possible to have free, democratic, political parties and a fair competition in the elections with the Soviet army and NKVD present on Polish lands. Nonetheless, they concluded, that in the new, unfavourable, political situation for Poland there was no possibility of continuing the fight in the previous, conspiracy form, typical for the German occupation.

The disbanding of the command structures of the Polish Underground State did not; however, mean that the authors of the appeal intended for the Polish nation to surrender to the new form of enslavement. They expressed it in the final part of the document by presenting a program of the Polish democracy. In the first point, they stated, that "democracy is the wide freedom of the entire nation to choose its social-political system and the ideologies that come from it". The democratic declaration of the last representatives of the Polish Underground State was ended with the Last Will of the Polish Underground State, where it was demanded for the Soviet Army and the NKVD to leave the Polish lands; all the political persecution to stop; the Communist apparatus of violence to be disbanded; the devastation of the country's economy by the Soviet occupant seized; to unify and free the Polish military from the Soviets; to allow the leading of independent foreign policies; to allow all the political parties to run in free parliamentary elections and to implement democratic, system, social and economic reforms. The will was concluded with an expression of hope, that "it's possible to reach an agreement with Russia based on these rules and finally put an end to the Polish-Russian conflict originating from the Tsar policies, replacing it with mutual respect, trust and friendship of both nations, Europe and the entire democratic world". However, this misplaced belief had no grounds in the past and present policy of the USSR, which resulted in Poland losing its independence and being forced into Communist, totalitarian rules.

The last appeal of the Polish Underground State was a dramatic conclusion of the conspiracy struggle led by the Polish society against the Germans for more than five years of their ruthless occupation. A dramatic conclusion, since the fight, despite having been paid for with the biggest sacrifices and the total destruction of the country and its capital - "the heart of Poland" - in particular, in the end did not bring the desired freedom nor the independent rules wished by the Polish nation, not even the basic human rights. A dramatic one, since tens of thousands of those, who fought against the Germans were imprisoned or persecuted in other ways by the Communist authorities in the post-war Poland. Many of them were murdered e.g. gen. August Emil Fieldorf, who as the head of the Diversion Command of the General Command of the Home Army was in charge of the fight against the Germans. A dramatic one, since the realisation of the postulates included in the Last Will of the Polish Underground State, namely the regaining of Independence and Freedom, turned out to be possible nearly half a century later.

Nonetheless, the beginning of regaining independence by Poland in 1989 was also the triumph of the soldiers of the Underground State, who passed their resilience and persistence in fighting for freedom to the next generations of Poles struggling with the Communist enslavement. While the symbol of the victory of the ideals of the Polish Underground State remains the monument built in an independent Poland in front of the building

of the Polish Parliament.

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