The Secret Army

The Memoirs of General Bór-Komorowski

TADEUSZ BÓR-KOMOROWSKI

Preface by Bronisław Komorowski
PRESIDENT OF THE THIRD POLISH REPUBLIC

Foreword by Norman Davies

The Secret Army

First official photo as Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces taken in London in 1945 after General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski arrived from Germany in May 1945. The badge on his uniform lapel is the Polish Eagle, the national symbol. The Eagle with the crown was on the Polish national flag. The communist government of Poland did away with the crown and just had a bare headed eagle. Since the return of democracy to Poland the eagle with the crown has returned.

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by

Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski

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Introduction by Norman Davies

FRONTLINE BOOKS

To the memory of the Home Army Soldiers
who gave their lives for the liberty of Poland

The Secret Army: The Memoirs of General Bór-Komorowski

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PREFACE

By Bronisław Komorowski

Dear readers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

IT IS WITH THE GREATEST of pleasure that I recommend to you *The Secret Army*, a book by General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski. Written soon after the end of the Second World War, this work, combining the qualities of a documentary study with those of a memoir, has since become something of a legend, as far as its author and, above all, as far as the Polish Underground State itself is concerned.

General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, Commander in Chief of the Polish Home Army, the leader of the Rising in Warsaw in the summer of 1944 and the General Inspector (Commander-in- Chief) of all the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, was well equipped to present to the world the story of our country's struggle for freedom. From the very beginning of the war, he was personally involved in laying down the groundwork for the secret military structures and in top-level resistance movement activities in Nazi-occupied Poland, while also maintaining contacts with the Government-in-Exile in London and the Allied Headquarters. His unique knowledge gave him a full insight and allowed him to accurately assess the importance and scale of that extraordinary entity, the Polish Underground State. At the same time, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, who served as Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile for two years after the war, was fully aware of the great need to familiarise the readers in Western Europe and America with the truth about the heroic and tragic destinies of Poland and the Poles in 1939–1945.

This was precisely the object *The Secret Army* was meant to serve. It has been translated into many languages and has had dozens of editions across the world. In our country, however, it could not be legally published under communist rule. It was only in the 1980s that the book was printed by independent publishers and distributed in clandestine circulation, which was intensely suppressed by the communist regime. It became available to the general public only after the fall of communism in 1989.

Until his very death in 1966, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski

kept making corrections and additions to his work. He was doing so in the belief that it was his mission to do justice to and to spread the word about his soldiers who unfailingly fought Hitler's regime only to be subjected to repression after the war at the hands of the Soviets and the subordinated regime of communist Poland.

In spite of the fall of the Iron Curtain and the 66 years that separate us from the end of the war, the history of the Polish Underground and the contribution made by the Poles to the Allied war effort are not yet known well enough to the public in the West. It should be underscored that this is an unprecedented history among the conquered nations of Europe.

In the Polish territories seized in September 1939, the German occupying forces imposed the most repressive legislation on the continent, which governed all areas of public life. Universities were closed, and it was forbidden to educate children and young people beyond the vocational level. Representatives of political, academic and cultural elites were persecuted, incarcerated in concentration camps and murdered. Polish citizens of Jewish descent were deprived of any legal protection whatsoever. The independence movement was viciously oppressed and any act of insubordination was met with ruthless terror. Collective liability was likewise a frequent practice. In no other country was the rendering of assistance to Jews immediately punishable by death. Genocide and totalitarian enslavement were meant to transform the Poles into a nation of a dozen million physical workers.

And yet under such extreme conditions, the Poles were able to build a genuine underground state, complete with its own army and police, judiciary, educational system and even the patronage of scholars and artists. The Polish Council to Aid Jews constituted an important part of the Underground. Its co-operators, including members of the Catholic clergy, managed to save thousands of their Jewish compatriots, and in particular children, from extermination, risking their own lives. The most unique structure of all in the Polish Underground State was the secret army, made up of several hundred thousand volunteers. That army waged partisan warfare as well as staging acts of sabotage and was preparing for a massive uprising at the time of expected German defeat. Its most heroic battle was the Warsaw Rising, which began on 1 August 1944, being one of the largest urban battles of the Second World War. In no other country would the anti-Nazi resistance movement reach such a grand scale nor would it be so fiercely fought by the occupying forces.

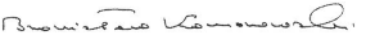
The Secret Army presents all these facts from the perspective of a

direct witness and an active participant of the events. The narrative by General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski gives one an insight into the overall situation in Nazi-occupied Poland and into the shaping of the underground structures, as well as presenting the profiles of individual resistance heroes: Polish patriots, people of great knowledge, nobility and honour but also real-life, flesh and blood persons, not free from emotions or doubts, simply the people as the Author used to know them.

But the history of Underground Poland is something more than just a story from the remote times of the Second World War. To my generation, the generation of the great Solidarity movement, the heroes of the anti-Nazi resistance movement, and especially the young scouts, represented the role models that we sought to follow while waging, under entirely different conditions, our own peaceful struggle to liberate Poland from communist dictatorship.

I shall remember until the end of my life how moved and proud I felt while reading *The Secret Army* in those hard communist times. This special book was genuine testimony, untainted by censorship, to the heroic struggle for freedom waged by my parents' generation. I had known the truth about those years from what I was told by my father, a Home Army soldier in the Vilnius region. Now I could learn that truth thanks to the testimony of the legendary Home Army Commander in Chief. It sounded like the last will and testament of Independent Poland, Fighting Poland, placing a great obligation on my generation.

I am convinced that today too, in a united Europe of free nations, the message of Underground Poland conveyed in *The Secret Army* is still topical. It reminds us that the liberties which we enjoy today we owe to the efforts of our ancestors and predecessors, who even at the most difficult times did not hesitate to stand up in defence of sovereignty, democracy, justice and dignity of every human being. We should cultivate these values, which have become the foundation underlying order and peace in our continent, and to instil commitment to them in the coming generations.



Bronisław Komorowski
President of the Third Polish Republic
Warsaw

FOREWORD

By Adam Komorowski

MY FATHER, Tadeusz Komorowski, was appointed commander of the Cavalry Training Centre in Grudziądz (Centrum Wyszkolenia Kawalerii) in 1938. At that time his thoughts had begun to turn towards retirement from the army. He had been a soldier for a quarter of a century and had a distinguished career behind him. It made sense to step down and run the family estate of Świrz, which his wife Renia had inherited from her parents in 1930. That was not what happened. Instead, this is his story.

Tadeusz was born on 1 June 1895 at Chorobrów, part of the Glinna estate near Brzeżany in Galicia, Austro–Hungary's Polish province until 1918. His father, Mieczysław, had also been born there and at the time of his son's birth expected to inherit it from its owner, his childless aunt, Baroness Zofia Czechowicz. The Komorowskis were an old aristocratic family who received the title of count in the fifteenth century from the King of Hungary, and originally owned the large property of Żywiec in the hills of southern Poland. Our branch of the family was known as 'the Primates', after Archbishop Adam Ignacy Komorowski (1699–1759), and descended from his brother. My father, modest and egalitarian, never used his title, only his military rank. He was the youngest of three children, with a sister Jadwiga (Jadzia) and brother Władysław. His grandfather, Marcin Zaleski, had been an insurgent in the Polish Uprising of 1863, was subsequently sentenced to ten years in Siberia, and had his estate confiscated by the Russians. As a young child my father frequently visited Sołomna, the property in Russian Poland belonging to Marcin's wife, Jadwiga. There his Uncle Bogdan gave him his first gun and taught him the sport that would remain his passion until his dying day. This idyllic country life came to an abrupt end in 1905 on the death of Aunt Zofia, when Mieczysław Komorowski discovered that Glinna, including Chorobrów, had been left instead to his sister Maria and her husband, General Tadeusz Rozwadowski, as well as the latter's two brothers, apparently as a result of their father's influence. As it happened, Rozwadowski was my father's godfather, and it was he who encouraged him to join the army. Anyway, my grandfather had to leave the estate he had managed for years, and moved with his family into an apartment at 7, Palaska Street in Lwów, rented from Laura Małachowska.

After completing his eighth year of high school in Lwów in 1913, my father entered the Franz Josef Militär-Akademie in Vienna. He graduated as a cavalry cadet in March 1915 together with his future brother-in-law, Count Władysław Piniński. The latter joined the Austrian 1st Lancers whilst Tadeusz became a 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd Mounted Rifles and served on the Russian and Italian fronts. Not inclined to talk about the Second World War in family circles, my father did enjoy relating stories from the First World War. My favourite was of the time he was facing an Italian unit that had taken cover behind some rocks. Suddenly, an officer brandishing a pistol jumped out from behind, and charged forward yelling, 'All'attacco'. From behind him came tumultuous applause and cries of 'Bravo! Bravissimo!' But not a single soldier followed.

When Poland regained her independence in 1918, my father commenced his career in the newly formed Polish Army. In 1920 the Soviet Union invaded Poland and a war with Bolshevik Russia ensued. On the 31 August 1920 the last major battle in history to be fought entirely between opposing cavalry armies took place at Komarów – later cavalry charges occurred, but never major battles. The Poles were heavily outnumbered by the Bolshevik forces of the 6th Cavalry Division of Siemion Budionny's Horse Army, or Konarmiya. As a young cavalry captain my father led the 12th Lancers into battle. His commanding officer, General Rómmel, noted in his memoirs: 'Of the 12th Regiment, the commander and eight uhlans were wounded. Despite this, Captain Komorowski didn't want to leave the field and led his men into battle for the rest of the day. I had to forcibly despatch him to the field hospital in the evening.' The Poles were victorious both in that battle and the war in general, driving the Soviet forces out of Poland, which delayed their incursion into Europe for a quarter of a century.

In 1923 my father advanced to the rank of major and the following year was a member of the Polish equestrian team at the Paris Olympics. Riding Anemone he finished in 28th place. My grandfather, Mieczysław, died in Lwów in January 1926, leaving my father with a mother to support. Later that year he was appointed deputy commander of the 9th Lancers, and shortly after assumed full command. The regiment was initially based in Czortków before moving to Trembowla, and it was in the latter half of the 1920s that he met my mother.

My mother's family were of French origin and had settled in Austria a few generations earlier. Her parents were General Count Robert (Robby) Lamezan Salins and Countess Irena Pinińska (*née*

Countess Wolańska). She had two stepbrothers, Władysław (Władzio) and Mieczysław (Miko), who were her mother's children by her first marriage. Both boys were very fond of their stepfather, Robby. Inspired by his wife, Robby became a patriotic Pole after independence and, despite never speaking the language perfectly, joined the Polish Army with the rank of general. My mother, Irena Pelagia, was born in Kraków in 1904, a blow to my grandfather who had been hoping for a boy. He adored his daughter, but ensured she learnt to ride from the precocious age of five, and encouraged self-sufficiency and independence. From 1908, the family was based in Paris and Brussels, where Robby held the post of Austrian military attaché.

My parents met at hunting parties, balls and other social events. They started courting, though matters proceeded too slowly for my mother's liking. My father was always correct in his behaviour, and she longed for him to declare his love. To this end she indulged in subterfuge by inviting one of my father's fellow officers to go riding with them on a date they had made. After they returned to the stables my father erupted in recrimination, chastising my mother for her behaviour that he did not consider ladylike. 'It was a bit naughty on my part', my mother later confessed, 'but it convinced me that he loved me.'

The late 1920s and early 1930s saw many changes in my parents' lives. During their courtship my father's brother died in Stryj in March 1928, my mother lost her mother in February 1929, and my father advanced to the rank of lieutenant colonel that same year. A well-known and successful equestrian, he harboured an ambition to win the 'Military' competition in Warsaw. During the event his horse tripped whilst jumping and fell badly, crushing him, breaking some ribs and damaging a kidney. He remained in hospital for many weeks without recovering, so my mother went to her father to ask if they could marry, as she wanted to nurse my father back to health. Her father suggested going to a famous specialist in Vienna, and if the prognosis was positive they could get married straight away. The doctor assured them that lying in hospital would not help, and prescribed a salt-free diet and rest in a hot dry climate. My parents married there and then on 19 March 1930 in Vienna at the Polish church, known as the Gardekirche, on Renwegg Strasse 5a. My mother's cousin, Feliks Rodakowski, acted as best man, and his wife, Olga, was matron of honour. From there they left for their honeymoon in Egypt where my mother painted and my father rested. Back in Poland my father assumed command of the 9th

Lancers in Trembowla, but in November that year my mother's father died and she inherited Świrz.

My father commanded his beloved 9th Lancers for a decade, being promoted to the rank of full colonel in 1933. He took a brief leave of absence to train the Polish equestrian team for the Berlin Olympics in 1936 and, as non-riding captain, led them to a silver medal in the team event, after successfully contesting the unfair penalty points awarded by the German judges. Afterwards, on 7 August, he was invited to a reception where he was presented to Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. Photos taken on that occasion were used during the war by the Gestapo to try and identify my father. At the time he described Hitler as a fairly bland character, except for his eyes, which he commented had a truly piercing quality. My mother accompanied my father to Berlin, but felt very depressed by the high state of militarisation she witnessed. It had the forebodings of a nation preparing for war.

In the autumn of 1938 my father bade farewell to his regiment and my parents moved to Grudziądz in northwest Poland. In August 1939 my mother returned to Świrz in the southeast to deal with some estate matters and was there when Germany invaded. My father remained in Grudziądz. Initially Świrz was offered and prepared as a field hospital, but as the Germans approached my mother decided to seek refuge even further east, with her sister-in-law, Maria (Maniusia) Pinińska, at the estate of Suszczyn. Józef Kłosowski, who had been my grandfather's chauffeur at Świrz, insisted on accompanying my mother. She grabbed a few mementoes and photographs and set off with him in her car. As she passed the barracks at Tarnopol, she saw the Soviet flag flying over the army garrison and burst into tears. She initially wanted to drive Józef back to his family and go in search of her husband, but eventually gave him the bag with items she had grabbed in Świrz, and asked him to look after them. At Suszczyn, Kłosowski helped her push her car into the lake as she did not want the Russians to have it. There she remained with Maniusia for a day or two, behind a guard set up by local Ukrainian peasants around the walls of the park to protect them, until a Soviet commissar appeared and ejected them from the house, leaving the two women with nothing.

My mother never saw her father's old chauffeur again. However, in 2003 my cousin, Peter Piniński, established contact with Kłosowski's elderly son, Stanisław. His family had kept the few pieces of silver that had been overlooked during the looting of Świrz in 1939, and despite their own post-war poverty, never sold any of

them, but waited for the day when they could be given back, expecting nothing in return.

My mother eventually traced my father to Kraków, having left Suszczyn with Maniusia for Lwów, whence they escaped from the area of Soviet occupation to the German zone. In Kraków my parents lived apart and with false identities, both working in the Resistance. My father joined the ZWZ underground organisation at the start of 1940 and in February took on the leadership of the Kraków-Silesia area and was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. On one occasion my mother played a significant part in rescuing him and hiding him in the apartment of her old family friend, Countess Karolina (Karla) Lanckorońska, after the Gestapo had arrested several significant members of the Resistance. Karla was later imprisoned in Ravensbrück concentration camp, and even became my godmother whilst there. She not only survived, but lived to the age of 104. After the war she told me that my father had said he couldn't stay in her flat as it would comprise her reputation as a single woman. To this Karla replied that her reputation was irrelevant compared to his life. In mid-1941 my father was moved to Warsaw, by which time the ZWZ had been renamed the Armia Krajowa (AK, or Home Army). My parents' lives during the long years of German occupation are the subject matter of this book.

I was born in December 1942 in Warsaw. My mother was seven months pregnant with my brother living on Marshal Foch Street when the Uprising started. We managed to survive and were evacuated to the Pruszków transit camp. After being processed there we went to stay with my mother's friends, the Marczewski family, at their estate of Pilaszków, about 20 kilometres west of Warsaw. We had spent a holiday there earlier that year. However she decided to move out shortly before giving birth to my younger brother, Jerzy (George), on the 9 September 1944 because of the large number of refugees who were sheltering there. So my brother entered life in the primitive circumstances of a cottage in the village of Truskaw in the Kampinos Forest. My mother acquired a nanny, Aniela Santorek, after I was born and she helped with George's delivery. He was born with Down's Syndrome and in a generally poor state of health, therefore my mother decided to move to Kraków in the hope of getting better medical attention for him. He lived to the age of 49 and became the beloved uncle of my four sons, dying on my birthday in 1993. Upon reaching Kraków my mother stayed at Lubicz Street with her cousin, Anna Komornicka (*née* Countess Wolańska) and two baby sons, Krzysztof and Stefan.

By May 1945 my father had been liberated from the German captivity that followed the capitulation of Warsaw, and had arrived in London to assume his role as Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces. He had been promoted to this position during the Uprising by the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. When this news was relayed to him in the middle of the night on the 30 September 1944 by his adjutant, 'Agaton' (Stanisław Jankowski), he turned to his subordinate and said, 'Bloody hell! Have they all gone mad over there?' However, there was logic behind the appointment of a person who could not fulfil that role, given the extreme limitations of his situation. Firstly, it was done to draw the world's attention to the plight of the Warsaw Uprising itself. Secondly, the government feared the Germans would treat my father as a terrorist, rather than the leader of an underground army, and therefore execute him. Regardless, Hitler issued an order to shoot my father and his General Staff after the negotiated surrender of Warsaw. It was only the intervention of the camp commandant, who obviously did not want to be accused of a war crime and queried the order, which prevented its implementation. After spending seven months in various prisoner of war camps, including Langwasser and Colditz, my father and his General Staff were released after the intercession of a Swiss diplomat in the early days of May 1945. After visiting the camp in Murnau, where many Home Army soldiers were held, he flew to Paris and then on to London.

In Poland at that time, the Soviet NKVD (later the KGB) had started searching for my mother. She moved to a cottage in the countryside outside Kraków and, with her artistic skills, drew charcoal portraits in exchange for food from the local peasants. Knowing that her husband had reached England, my mother decided to try and get out of Poland and join him. Anna Komornicka's husband was the manager of the Kraków Brewery on Lubicz Street, part of the famous Okocim group that belonged to his grandfather's family. Consequently, he had easy access to a lorry and was able to check the situation around the border crossing, enabling my mother to make the necessary plans. She set off in early October with my brother, myself and our nanny. However, she left behind her mother-in-law, Wanda, who was too old to undertake such a difficult and dangerous journey. She remained with friends in the countryside. My mother's sister-in-law, Jadzia, also stayed, fearing her nerves might not stand up to interrogation if subjected to questioning. We never saw her again.

She lived on in Kraków where she died in December 1970. The four of us boarded a train for Pilsen in Czechoslovakia where my mother had a contact with a military attaché. En route we were taken off the train by an NKVD officer for questioning. Unwittingly, I rescued the situation by screaming incessantly until the frustrated officer could take no more, and told my mother to get out and take the screaming brat with her.

Upon arriving in Pilsen, contact was made with London and it was arranged that a volunteer called Johnny Jordan would fly out to a field in the vicinity and retrieve us. He duly arrived, accompanied by a freelance photographer who took photos of us boarding the plane and sent them to the London *Evening Standard*. After a stopover in Dortmund we eventually arrived in Brussels. By this time one of the photos had been published with the headline: 'British pilot flies the family of General Bór to London'. My father's anti-Russian stance was not in line with the policy of Westminster, still appeasing the ally who had helped win the war, and portraying Stalin as the benign 'Uncle Joe'. Not wanting to upset the Soviet authorities, the British government refused permission for us to enter the country and even refused my father permission to leave, so as to visit us in Belgium. With nowhere to go, we remained stuck in Brussels for a couple of months until our plight came to the notice of the authorities in Ireland, whose prime minister, Eamon de Valera, officially invited the family to come to live there. As soon as this was announced the British authorities relented and allowed us in at the end of November 1945. In 1994 the Polish embassy in London traced Johnny Jordan and invited him to tea with the ambassador and myself. Well into his seventies he was still flying aerobatics in a Russian MiG he had bought. A truly eccentric character, he told us that he had been awarded a medal for landing a Spitfire safely after its engine had cut out, 'However it was all my own damn fault, as I was flying upside down at the time.' In 1951 he attempted to fly over Everest in a Stearman bi-plane, but failed to ascend higher than 23,000 feet, and got frostbite.

My mother was very close to her two brothers, Władzio and Miko Piniński. Both died at the very end of the war. Like my father, Władzio fought in 1920 at Komarów, where he and Kornel Krzeczunowicz led the final, victorious charge of the 8th Lancers. He also fought in the 1939 September Campaign and was taken prisoner by the Germans. Fortunately, the camp was commanded by an Austrian cavalry colleague from the First World War who released him, whereupon Władzio reorganised his old regiment, the

8th Lancers, in the Resistance. It was renamed the 'Kraków Division' and from 1942 he was its commanding officer. However, in mid-July 1944 Władzio was arrested by the Gestapo at his flat in the Czartoryski Museum, together with his wife, Maniusia, and several other officers. News of their clandestine meeting had been betrayed to the Nazis and he was sent to the Gross Rosen concentration camp on 29 July. It is probable he died during the Death March of January 1945 to Camp Dora. Maniusia was sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp where Karla Lanckorońska had been imprisoned since January 1943, but she survived and died in London in 1963.

Miko, like his brother and brother-in-law, was a cavalry veteran of both the First World War and that with the Bolsheviks that followed. He was executed on 9 May 1945 by General Tito's communist partisans at Sušak, near Rijeka, Yugoslavia, on charges of possessing a radio transmitter and being a 'nobleman'. He owned the Villa Brunicki on the coast in Abbazia, just to the west of Fiume and Rijeka on the Istrian Peninsula, which was still Italian at the time. He had left Lwów in 1942, after persuading the Nazis to release from prison his Jewish business administrator together with his wife, Simon and Rosa Kaufman. Miko then spent the rest of the war running his villa as a safe house for Home Army couriers to the Vatican. This activity was financed by diamonds supplied to him by his brother in Kraków, some of which he delivered en route to a Home Army agent in Vienna. Prominent amongst the couriers was Maria Krzeczunowicz, Kornel's cousin. She disappeared without trace in 1945, was a childhood friend of my mother and her brothers, and had been my father's secretary earlier in the war. In June 1939 Miko had sent his wife, Janina, and teenage son, Stanisław, from the family's apartment in Paris to spend the summer with Scottish friends of the family in England. When war broke out they remained there. Stan completed his schooling at Eastbourne College before joining the Polish Air Force. Much to his frustration the war ended before he was able to put his training as a fighter pilot to use. On one occasion he received an order to report to the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces in London. His superior officer, astonished, asked what the order was all about. 'Oh, its all right, Sir, you see, General Komorowski is my uncle.' Relations with the hitherto unpleasantly arrogant superior officer warmed instantly. At their meeting my father gave his nephew £50, a very large amount in those days, especially for a young pilot. It was an act of generosity he never forgot, not least because my father had

so little for himself. Stan went on to university at St Andrews where he met his future wife, Jean Graham, and subsequently joined the Pearl Assurance Company where he became Director of Investments. His son Peter moved back to Poland in 1991 and Stan joined him two years after the death of his wife in 1999. He spent his final years with his son and grandson, Aleksander, in Warsaw, and died in August 2009, aged 84.

After 1945 my nanny, Aniela, stayed with us in London for a few years before moving to join her son, who had taken part in the Warsaw Uprising and managed to emigrate to the United States. My grandmother Wanda subsequently managed to get out of Poland in about 1949 and joined us in the semi-detached house my parents bought in Wembley, a quiet London suburb. The money for the deposit was raised by the sale of *The Unconquerables* to Reader's Digest, which was later expanded into this book, *The Secret Army*. My father was refused a military pension by the British authorities on the grounds that he had not fought directly under British command, unlike members of the Polish 2nd Corps who had fought in Italy. To make ends meet, my mother took in lodgers, including Zygmunt Elsner. He was an old friend and ex-officer of the 9th Lancers, with whom she managed to establish contact after he was taken prisoner by the Nazis in 1939. In her role in the Home Army as a communications officer with prisoners-of-war, she tried an old code they had discussed in peacetime, which he recognised, and in that way managed to obtain from him a large amount of information about the camp.

In May 1946 my father went to America as Commander-in Chief of the Polish Armed Forces. He visited New York, Washington, Chicago and Detroit, met General Eisenhower, and was given a hero's welcome by the Mayor of New York, William O'Dwyer, who presented him with the Certificate of Distinguished Service. However Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Union delegate to the United Nations, raised objections to my father being welcomed by the United States, and openly accused him of advocating a Third World War. The Polish community raised a large amount of money, about $30,000, which was presented to my father as a personal gift. He kept a small amount for his expenses and donated the rest to the Home Army Invalids Association, declaring that their need was greater than his.

After returning to England, my father tendered his resignation to the Polish President-in-Exile in September 1946. He told my mother that General Anders found it awkward that the

commander-in-chief was an officer junior in rank to himself, and that he was keenly ambitious for the top position. Anyway, my father reasoned, the Polish Army was about to be demobilised, when the job would become symbolic, and purely one of managing the resettlement process. The next year he was appointed prime minister of the Polish Government-in-Exile and served for two years. He visited America again in 1951, 1954, 1956 and finally, at the invitation of President Lyndon Johnson, visited the White House on the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. During the 1950s he attended international conferences in Brussels and Turin on resistance movements, was a founding member of the Home Army Circle and the Home Army Archives, and remained active in émigré matters right up to his death.

It was during my father's visit to the USA in 1956 that I recall my mother telling me she would have to go out to work. She became employed by a Polish curtain making and upholstery firm where she picked up the rudiments, then set up her own production for which she converted a couple of bedrooms in our house and employed several Polish ladies. It was called 'Arco' and provided the family's income for the rest of my parent's lives. My father looked after the accounts and helped with installation and hanging. On one occasion he was invited to a reception attended by a member of the Royal Family in whose home he was hanging curtains the next day. 'Did she recognise you?' one of our friends asked, 'that would have been embarrassing for you.' 'Oh no, it wouldn't have been embarrassing for me, but it might have been for her. In the event, she didn't recognise me in my overalls.'

Amongst all his various activities, my father even found time to become a civil defence warden in Wembley. He also formed a close relationship with my schoolfriend, Jim Murray, who lived on a farm near Bletchley. So my father bought himself a gun and used to spend weekends there, shooting rabbits. Not having the opportunity to ride in England, his sporting interests turned elsewhere. He took an avid interest in football and with satisfaction watched England beat Germany to win the World Cup in 1966. In September the year before, I had become married to Bridie McGillicuddy, and the following spring she announced she was pregnant. That August we went on a touring holiday in Ireland. It was there the news reached me that my father had collapsed whilst shooting on Jim's farm. He was dead by the time his young friend reached him, having rushed over from the combine harvester he was driving.

My father's funeral on 1 September 1966 aroused a furore in the Polish émigré community, caused by the failure of Harold Wilson's Labour government to send a representative, unlike the Americans and French. Letters were published in *The Times* and questions asked in the House of Commons. In the late 1990s at the Public Records Office in Kew I was able to access the government documents that related to the matter. They made interesting reading. A note to P.A. Rhodes states, 'The Secretary Of State has minuted: "I think this was an appalling lack of taste, sensitivity and history. I sincerely hope that the final paragraph is definitive. Please emphasise to the Ministry of Defence the Secretary of State's interest in this and make absolutely certain that you are consulted in future when similar circumstances arise".' A memorial service was later held at Westminster Cathedral on 20 October, attended by the leading members of the Polish émigré population, including General Anders and Ambassador Raczyński, as well as by former prime minister, Harold MacMillan, ex-foreign secretary Selwyn Lloyd, and the Leader of the House of Lords, Lord Longford.

My mother, who had displayed such vitality and energy all her life, seemed to lose the will to live after my father's death. She survived long enough to see her two grandsons, Mark and Adam, but died in 1968. The two first born were later joined by younger brothers, Andrew and Robert. Despite being told by my father that I must make my life in Britain and take out British nationality, I remained stateless, as he had been.

In 1984 I received an invitation to the White House to accept the Legion of Merit, which President Ronald Reagan awarded the four leaders of the Home Army. I was the only relative able to attend the ceremony in which over a hundred veterans of the Polish Resistance attended a lunch at the White House. Five years later the combination of a Polish Pope and the Solidarity movement led by Lech Wałęsa brought about the fall of communism, firstly in Poland, then throughout central and Eastern Europe. Poland was at last free. I was approached by the country's new democratic authorities with a request for the repatriation of my father's remains. I agreed on condition that my parents be buried together, as they had been at Gunnersbury Cemetery, according to their wishes. I also asked that this take place on the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. Despite initial problems the reburial took place and my father was accorded a state funeral, which was broadcast live on national television. My parents' remains were interred at the Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw, amongst their comrades from the Home Army.

Since Poland regained her independence, the efforts and achievements of the Home Army have been acknowledged in numerous ways. In Warsaw, a monument has been built outside the Houses of Parliament (Sejm) and another opposite the Military Cathedral. In particular, a magnificent Museum of the Warsaw Uprising has been opened in the capital to international acclaim, and a plaque commemorating my father was unveiled there in 2008. Other tributes to my father include President Wałęsa's 1995 award of the Order of the White Eagle and a monument in Grudziądz, where a local high school voted to be named after him, whilst Głowno made him an honorary citizen. In Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Bydgoszcz and elsewhere, streets bear the once-forbidden name of General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski. For myself, I am no longer stateless.

Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, the legendary 'Courier From Warsaw' and former head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe in Munich, was one of several people to make a speech at my parents' interment in 1994 at the Powązki Cemetery. He recalled how he met my father after the war in London and asked him why, knowing she was expecting a baby, he had not warned his wife to leave Warsaw before the Uprising began. My father replied, 'How many pregnant women do you think there were in Warsaw at the time? I couldn't warn them all. So I could not use my position to make an exception for my wife.' I subsequently met President Wałęsa at one of the receptions for the fiftieth anniversary of the Uprising. He mused, 'I wonder what the general would have to say if he could see us now?' I replied that he would probably be as amazed as I am. 'Well let me tell you,' he continued, 'without the Warsaw Uprising there would have been no Solidarity.'

My father wrote this book at the start of the 1950s. At the end of it he writes: 'The darkest and most terrible moments in the Underground now seem beautiful and happy compared with the present day, because we had faith in victory and a happy end.' He may not have lived to witness that end, but the sacrifices of his generation that experienced the Uprising, forged a determination that led the nation through Stalinism and decades of totalitarianism, to a free and democratic Poland, to membership of NATO and the European Union. Their sacrifice, though vast, was not in vain. As I finish writing these notes, news has just come in that Bronisław Komorowski, a man I first met ten years ago at a family reunion, has been elected President of Poland. Truly the wheel has come full circle!

Adam Komorowski
Wembley, London

INTRODUCTION

By Norman Davies

Over 65 years have elapsed since 1 August 1944, the date that saw the start of the Warsaw Rising. Generally Western historians have written little about this event, whilst the Polish communist authorities did everything within their power to erase its memory. Right up until 1989 it was impossible to obtain permission to raise a monument commemorating the Rising. As a result of these politics, the public perception of the events in 1944 was considerably distorted. Many people mistakenly identified the Warsaw Rising with the Jewish rising that took place in the ghetto in 1943. Others judged it to be a reckless and criminal action started solely in the interests of those who undertook it.

For these reasons, the reputation of General Bór-Komorowski who, during the Rising, commanded the underground Home Army, suffered. This explains why his name is missing from the ranks of distinguished Allied generals, whose achievements were legendary. In fact, it is nigh on impossible to find any mention of the general in most British and American publications dealing with this period of the war. This new edition of the general's memoirs is a timely measure to redress this state of affairs.

Throughout the Cold War, the general's book could not be published in his native country. However, most Polish readers will be familiar with the thread of this work. They will be gripped by the details of events related in a simple, soldierly manner. On the other hand, most British and American readers will be taken aback by the unequivocal heroism of the Polish Underground, the ambivalent attitude of the Western Allies as well as the appalling betrayal by the Soviet Union.

All readers should remember three things. Firstly, from a purely military point of view, the Warsaw Rising was an amazing success. It set an excellent example in the effective use of partisan forces in urban combat in the face of forces unable to effectively utilise their superiority in terms of numbers and arms. General Bór's account relates that he expected his soldiers to be able to withstand the superior professional German Army for a maximum of six days, and yet they finally surrendered after sixty-three. During those long days and weeks, women and men under his command demonstrated an unusual expertise in combat and strength of heart.

Secondly, one of the convincing arguments in favour of the Rising was to protect the civilian population from the results of the regular frontal engagement of the German and Soviet armies. In reality, no such battle took place and the German command were able as a result to implement a brutal policy starting with widespread massacres on a wide scale, followed by systematic bombardment. The size and intensity of these actions may be brought home to the reader by the fact that every day for nine weeks the population of Warsaw suffered the same number of fatalities that the citizens of New York suffered from the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001.

Thirdly, it should not be forgotten that the Polish Home Army formed an integral part of the great coalition of allies fighting against Nazi Germany. It was under the authority of the Polish Government-in-Exile based in London, which believed in the same Western ideals of freedom and justice. Poland was linked to Great Britain by a formal treaty of alliance as well as by joint military operations. The United States supported the Home Army financially as well as logistically. The courageous airlifts flown by the RAF and USAAF to Warsaw formed an important part of this support.

It is not possible to look on the Warsaw Rising as an exclusively Polish tragedy. It was rather an event that demonstrated the shortcomings of the Western powers, and, in the eyes of some, the catalyst for the Cold War. Irrespective of the weight given to various facts which led to this catastrophe, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it was caused by the systematic breakdown of the Great Coalition.

Norman Davies

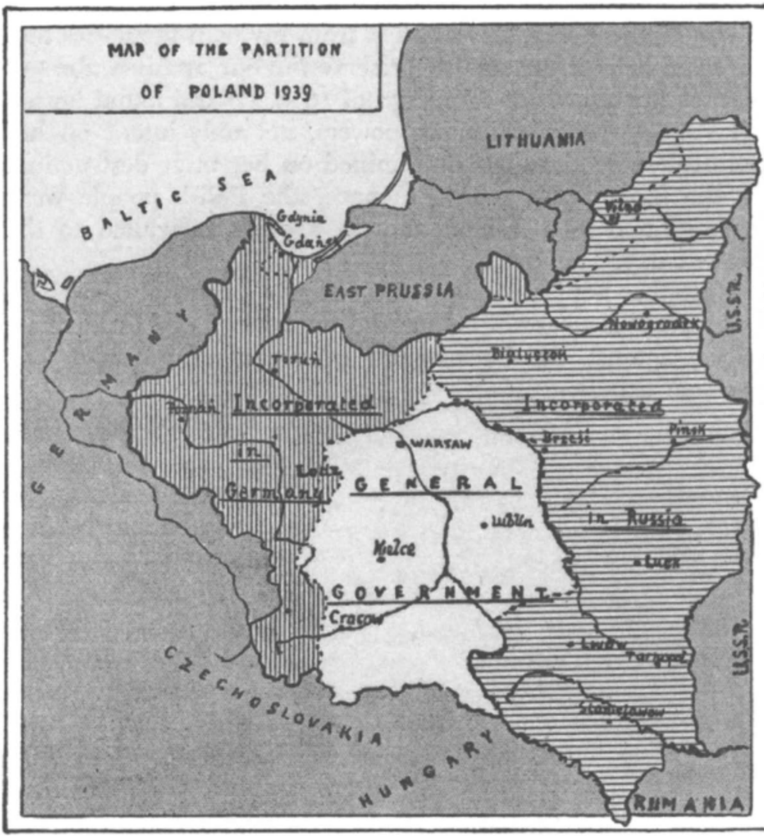
PREFACE

THIS BOOK IS THE STORY of the Polish Underground Movement as it developed from 1939 to the end of 1944. As I was one of its organisers and later, from 1943 onwards, Commander of the Home Army, I recount it from my own memories and with the help of documents preserved in our archives abroad.

After the disastrous campaign of 1939, Poland found herself overrun by two totalitarian powers, not only intent on her political subjection, but determined on her utter destruction. In the face of this mortal menace, the Polish people went underground in a fashion and on a scale unrivalled to the present day.

How this happened, how the struggle began and swelled, what were its means of action and its scope, I explain in these pages, against the background of events of which I had personal experience.

T. BOR-KOMOROWSKI.


MAP OF THE PARTITION
OF POLAND 1939
BALTIC SEA
LITHUANIA
EAST PRUSSIA
GERMANY
Gdynia
Gdańsk
Toruń
Poznań
Incorporated
in
Germany
Łodz
WARSAW
GENERAL
GOVERNMENT
Lublin
Kielce
Cracow
Wilno
Nowogródek
Białystok
Incorporated
in Russia
Brześć
Pinsk
Łuck
Lwów
Tarnopol
Stanisławów
U.S.S.R.
U.S.S.R.
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
RUMANIA

1:[illegible]

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF THE UNDERGROUND, CRACOW

As a colonel in the Polish Army at the outbreak of war on September 1st, 1939, I had been involved in continuous fighting, during which the German armoured columns had driven deep into Poland from west, north and south. It was then that the news reached us that the Russians had crossed the Polish frontier in the east. Some people were still in doubt whether they were coming as friends or foes. In any case, it was clear to us that we could not withstand the German onslaught much longer, and we therefore planned to break through the enemy's lines and reach the Hungarian border.

In the morning on September 19th, a strange incident occurred on the Wieprz River. From the mass of civilian refugees on the road one man suddenly came forward and insisted on speaking to me.

"I am an official from the President's office," he said, "and I have a large sum of public money with me which I want to hand over to someone, preferably a military authority. Would you agree to take it and give me a receipt?"

"I don't see why I should take money belonging to the Treasury. What is it you really want?"

"I've lost touch with my head of department. I am only an ordinary refugee now. This agreement between the Russians and the Germans seems to leave us no hope, and yet I am certain the struggle will go on. That is why I want to give this money to an officer."

"What agreement between the Russians and the Germans?" I asked impatiently.

"Do you mean to say you have not heard? The Russians have invaded the country in support of Hitler. They must be in Lwów by now. This is a new partition of Poland."

The last few weeks had tired me out. I had not had a moment's sleep for several nights past, and this news drove me into a frenzy.

"Who told you all this? This is just defeatist gossip, which you should not repeat!"

In silence, he opened his dispatch-case and pulled out a typewritten slip of paper, which he handed to me without comment. It was the text of a joint communiqué issued over the Soviet and German wireless:

"In order to avoid all kinds of unfounded rumours concerning the respective aims of the Soviet and German armies operating in Poland, the Government of the U.S.S.R. and the German Government declare that these operations have no aim contrary to the interests of Germany or the U.S.S.R. or to the spirit and letter of the Russian-German Pact of Non-aggression. On the contrary, the aim of their armies is to restore peace and order destroyed by the collapse of the Polish State."

I was stunned. Was all this a tremendous lie, and was this man simply one of the German fifth columnists? The country was riddled with spies at that moment. But no, his papers convinced me of his identity. Thoughts were racing through my head. Suddenly I remembered that our troops had no money with which to buy food, so I took the bundle. It contained 36,000 zlotys.

We did not reach the Hungarian frontier, although we broke through the German lines again and again, while the Luftwaffe attacked ceaselessly. When we realised that we were encircled, we decided to disband our units, and tried to escape captivity singly or in small groups. That night I was riding through a dense forest with about fifteen of my officers and men when we fell into a German ambush. We scattered, and after an hour only a few of us were still at liberty. We then decided to abandon our horses, and began to make our way on foot towards Cracow, from where we hoped to make another attempt to cross the frontier into Hungary. We could, of course, only march at night; by day we had to keep hidden in the undergrowth or woods. Peasants gave us food and supplied us with civilian clothes. Little did I suspect then that the money I was carrying on me was to be the first funds of the future Underground Army.

After many narrow escapes, my companion and I—there were only two of us left then—reached Cracow late one evening.

It was already dark. At the station I learned that we had

roughly an hour before curfew, when all Poles had to be indoors. We were tired out, and it was with an effort that we dragged ourselves out of the station to search for a place in which to spend the night. We chanced on a little hotel quite near. When we inquired for the rooms, the porter at once asked to see our papers. We showed him the passes we had got at Bochnia, authorising us to travel to Cracow, which were all we had; but the porter did not think it was enough. All hotels in Cracow were under Gestapo supervision, and sometimes they were searched more than once in twenty-four hours. Should a hotel guest be discovered without identity papers, naturally he, the hall porter, would be arrested along with the suspect.

We had no choice. I gave the hall porter a searching look; his face seemed honest. "You know what will happen if we are stopped by a patrol?" I asked him. He nodded understandingly and, after a moment's hesitation, led us up the stairs and into an attic, where at last we were able to have a decent wash and shave—the first since our wanderings began. There was no question of clean linen, as we had nothing beyond what we stood up in.

In the morning, well rested after a good sleep, we discussed our next move. So far we had carefully avoided all towns, and our experiences in the country had told us nothing of the conditions which we now had to face in the streets of Cracow. I decided to go and have a look round and try to find a lodging with friends.

Looking over Cracow now, I saw the swastika flying from the Wawel, for centuries the residence of Polish kings. The walls of the houses were covered with German notices and orders. A couple of phrases seemed to recur in all of them insistently; one was "strictly forbidden" and the other "penalty of death." There was one poster which appeared every few paces. Above the words, "England, this is your work," was the picture of a wounded Polish soldier lying in rags against a background of Warsaw in ruins; the soldier's fist was raised against the picture of the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain.

Propaganda and the Gestapo had followed hard on the heels of the German front-line troops, taking immediate control of the whole territory. A newspaper, printed in Polish by the Germans, was already appearing in Cracow. German

military police patrolled all over the town, mostly in threes or fours, moving slowly with an apparently bored expression on their faces. In reality, they kept a keen watch in all directions. They continually stopped passers-by, searching any parcels they might be carrying and checking documents. In accordance with new orders, every Jewish shop had a David's star painted on the front, together with the inscription: "*Nicht Arisch*" (non-Aryan). Jews were forbidden to show themselves in the centre of the town and, when walking past a German, were required to step aside and bow.

Walking through the streets, I met an old friend of mine.

"Where have you been hiding?" was his first question.

"In a hotel," I smiled back.

"A hotel? Without papers? Well . . . of course, it's certain arrest. You'd better come to my flat at once. As a matter of fact, I've got Germans there too—Wehrmacht officers." He smiled wryly. "Still, I think even so you'd be safer there than in a hotel."

We agreed that I should go to his flat that evening and spend the night there.

But my luck was out. Most of the flat, as my friend had warned me, was occupied by Germans. However, he squeezed me in for the night. It was in the morning that things began to go wrong.

By chance it happened that an old photograph of mine stood on the writing desk in the sitting-room. As I left the flat next morning, I passed the German batman in the garden and I noticed that he stared at me rather hard. While I was out, he approached the maid:

"Who's the officer in uniform in that picture on the writing desk?"

The maid shrugged her shoulders. "How should I know?" she replied. "I've never set eyes on him."

"I suppose it isn't that man who was in the flat this morning?" persisted the batman.

But the maid kept her wits about her and saved the situation by maintaining that this man had been the carpenter who had just put in new window panes; the others having been broken during the air raids.

All this happened while I was out. Had I met the batman again, the encounter might well have ended in disaster both for my friend and myself. When I returned from town, he

met me at a neighbouring street corner and explained what had happened. Obviously, the next night had to be spent elsewhere.

My lack of papers complicated things a good deal. Both indoors and out, I could be arrested at any moment. And it was not my risk alone; it was shared by whoever afforded me refuge and hospitality. There was, of course, no possible chance of smuggling myself across the frontier without documents, and my plan to leave seemed doomed to failure. The whole of Sub-Carpathia was seething with Gestapo agents. A newcomer arriving there had to be in possession of some sort of papers unless he wanted to get arrested at the first street corner.

A woman doctor, a friend of mine, came to my rescue. She arranged with the senior doctor of the Bonifratow Hospital that I should be admitted there as a chronic lumbago case. I had to share a room with a member of the Cracow Town Council who had broken his leg in an accident. He had a steady stream of visitors, and it was from them that I was able to form a picture of the situation in town and country.

One day the Councillor's son brought news of a proclamation which had been posted up. It was worded in typical German style:

"*Inhabitants of the General Government!*

"Victorious German arms have, once and for all, put an end to the Polish State. Behind you lies an episode in history which you should forget forthwith; it belongs to the past and will never return.

"Inhabitants of the General Government!

"The Fuehrer has decided to form a General Government of part of the territory of the Polish State and to place me at its head. The General Government can become the refuge of the Polish people if they will submit loyally and completely to the orders of the German authorities and accomplish the tasks set them in the German war effort. Every attempt to oppose the new German order will be ruthlessly suppressed."

The proclamation was signed by the newly appointed Governor-General, Hans Frank. It was accompanied by a notice of the compulsory call-up for work. Men and women were called upon to register.

The same afternoon, the Councillor's son again brought us news, but this time the joyful news that we had a new Government and a new Army. He showed me the carbon copy of a radio communiqué issued a few days earlier. It announced the formation of the Polish Government in Paris under the Premiership of General Sikorski. President Raczkiewicz had succeeded President Moscicki. The first step taken by General Sikorski's Government was the formation of Polish fighting units in France. My relief was enormous. So my premonitions had been correct! The battle which we had lost in Poland would be taken up again in France, and service in the uniform of a Polish officer would now be continued. The efforts to get through to Cracow and avoid capture had not been in vain! I now had a definite aim: to reach France as quickly as possible.

Now I had to get some documents. I soon learned that this was not so easy, since they would have to be faked. At this juncture, help again arrived quite unexpectedly and freed me from my enforced stay in hospital.

Two of my Army comrades, Colonels Rudnicki and Godlewski, came to see me. They had arrived from Warsaw with the same end in view—to cross the frontier into Hungary—and they proposed that I should join them. My lack of documents was a hindrance, but a few days later an old friend, Maria Krzeczunowicz, brought me, with justifiable pride, a Polish identity card complete with the correct stamp and signature of the authorities. A good deal of mystery was attached to its origin, but I was not over-curious. She filled it in for me with an assumed name, Tadeusz Korczak. It was the first of numerous pseudonyms which I was to use in the years ahead.

I left hospital that same day and moved into a room which "Maria" had found me. There we held a meeting—Maria, the other two and myself—to decide on the next step in our plan. Before leaving, Rudnicki was anxious to go into Soviet-occupied Poland to find out what had happened to his family left behind in Lwów. He also promised to see my wife. We agreed to await his return, for we needed rest and strength to cross the mountains to Hungary and there was plenty to do.

Meanwhile, events were developing in Cracow. One day the German authorities invited all professors, lecturers and assistants to a lecture to be held in the Aula Magna of this oldest Polish University, founded in 1364. "The Attitude of

the National Socialist Movement towards Science and Learning" was the title of the lecture. Nearly all the professors came. When the hall was crowded, the chief of the Cracow Gestapo marched up to the chair and declared that, as this University had always shown anti-German tendencies, everybody in the hall was under arrest. At the same moment the Collegium Novum, the building where the assembly took place, was surrounded by S.S. men, who immediately marched into the Aula Magna and began to belabour the professors savagely with their rifle butts. One hundred and sixty-seven professors, lecturers and assistants, a few students, and other persons who by chance happened to be present, were sent to the Cracow Prison. From there the professors went to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg. Fourteen, some of them scholars of international fame, died of ill-treatment. Others survived, only to die immediately after returning home, while others remained alive, but never recovered their previous health.

But then we still knew nothing of what was yet to come. We were thunderstruck. A whole university arrested and deported was a thing we had never heard of before! However, this was only the beginning of our experiences with the *Kulturträger*. Two days later a big block of flats belonging to the University, where many of the professors lived, was invaded late in the evening. The families of the deported had to leave their homes at once. They had twenty minutes to pack their belongings. During this time the electric light was switched off for the whole block, so that the families could not find the things they wanted to take with them. When they were gone, the light came on and German families moved in the same evening. Later on whole districts were treated in this way.

All this happened while I was waiting for Rudnicki's return. Then one evening in Maria's flat I met Mr. Surzycki, a member of the National Party, who had already been very active in helping other groups to get away to France.

"So you want to go to France, do you?" he began. "Why? So that you can go on fighting the Germans, of course. I can tell you one thing: nobody wants to sit down under the new order. On the contrary, they *all* want to fight against it. It's only a few weeks since we suffered the greatest defeat in our history. We lost our Army and our State, and the country was divided between two invaders. In a situation like this, you

might argue that the best course would be to adapt oneself as best one could and see what the future would bring forth. But the whole population, the entire nation, has decided on one policy: *to continue the fight*! This is the right decision. All our hopes for the future depend on inter-Allied obligations, because our fight with the Germans is the only way we can fulfil our own obligations to the Allies. Therefore we must fight.

"One can hardly envisage the possibility of everyone going to France, though. We must fight in *this* country, as well as in France. That is why we have started a military organisation here—headed by Colonel Epler. By very bad luck, the Gestapo have got on his trail and, as his family is here in Cracow, he has to leave at once. I shall have to help him to France with all the means at my disposal. As for you, I propose you should remain here and take over his work."

Surzycki explained that he thought I should do it because I had never meddled in politics and had not belonged to the régime in power before the war (which he looked upon as one of the factors responsible for our defeat).

Here I must explain that at the time of this conversation the responsibility for our military defeat was put almost entirely on the previous Government, and it was for this reason that political antagonism was then so strong. After the collapse of France, which gave the second proof of Germany's strength, it became clear that the reasons for our defeat went far deeper than had appeared at the beginning, and political differences almost disappeared in the common effort.

When Colonel Rudnicki turned up from the Soviet-occupied zone, he had much to tell us of conditions there. They were very different from ours. Soviet methods of police procedure were more refined and efficient than those of the Germans. A general fear of the N.K.V.D. reigned among the people of eastern Poland and there was a mutual distrust of which the greatest use was made. Political meetings, gatherings and elections organised by the Soviet authorities showed "unanimity." This was forced upon the people not so much by blood and terror as by the spy system, which was organised to perfection. It permeated into all social spheres through the medium of specially trained agents. The result was a psychological tension in the atmosphere which became almost unbearable.

Rudnicki had not seen my wife. This was an immense

disappointment to me. He had heard only that she had left for a little town on the San River. From this I realised that she was trying to cross the river and the border of the occupation zones to reach me.

I repeated the gist of Surzycki's words to Rudnicki and discussed the matter with him. Regular officers were pouring into France in such numbers that those who remained behind would undoubtedly be needed far more in Poland than abroad. We heard from Rudnicki that in Soviet-occupied Poland and in all ranks of society a great many secret organisations were springing into existence; the need to organise and centralise them for the whole of the Republic was becoming obvious.

We therefore had another meeting with Surzycki. He wanted us to set up a military organisation for his party. I was opposed to this and said so. As a Regular Army officer, I recognised only one authority—my Commander-in-Chief, General Sikorski, in Paris. It was quite impossible to place myself under the orders of any political party. I maintained that there should be only one military organisation, common to all and independent of political opinion.

Finally, everybody agreed to my point of view and our decision was made. Convinced that we should be of more use in Poland, we had determined to stay. Thus it was that I began the work of organising military units in south-west Poland. It was then December, 1939. Events had forced us to realise that we could not be simply passive sufferers, that German terror had to be opposed by every means at our disposal.

On December 27th one of my men was returning to Warsaw after having visited his family in the suburbs. At the station he was held back by the whispered warning: "Don't travel."

At the next station, Wawer, the Germans were taking everyone off the trains. Something serious was happening there. He learnt that mass executions were taking place near the Wawer depot in retaliation for the murder of a German in a nearby inn. It was not till several hours later that he gathered it was safe to take a train. As he passed Wawer, he could see clearly from the train a wall splashed with blood. A heap of corpses still lay there, most of the victims obviously having been taken from their homes in night attire. Naturally, the public shooting was the only subject of conversation on the train. It was in this way that he heard the whole story.

Two German policemen had walked into the inn, where they found two criminals wanted by the police. To avoid arrest, the criminals opened fire, killing one policeman and wounding the second. Soon after, a German patrol arrived at the inn. Their first act was to hang the innocent innkeeper over his own door. The dragging forth and execution of people lasted all night. One hundred and seventy people perished in this way. There was one characteristic incident. Among those put to death there was a man named Goering. Because of his name, the Germans had three times given him fifteen minutes to declare himself a German and thus save his life. He stood with his face to the wall, his hands above his head, and refused each time. His reply to them was simple and direct:

"I was born a Pole and I shall die a Pole, regardless of how I die."

He was finally shot along with the others, and his name can still be seen on one of the crosses in Wawer Cemetery.

The shooting of Poles in smaller groups had by then become a habit of the invaders. In the citadel of Cracow alone daily executions of ten or twenty peasants picked up in the neighbourhood was a common occurrence. The reaction of Poland as a whole was unanimous and passionate: the nation resolved to take up the fight and show the world that the enemy could kill our bodies, but never the immortal spirit of freedom, which had been bred in us over a thousand years.

I don't think it has often happened in history that the leaders of a people could be so very certain of fulfilling the will of a whole nation. This time, a country completely overrun by two invaders and torn in half had decided to fight. No dictator, no leader, no party and no class, had inspired this decision. The nation had made it spontaneously and unanimously.

Once I knew I was to stay and work out a plan for the organisation of the Underground Army in south-west Poland, practical methods to execute this plan had to be decided upon. None of us had any experience in these matters. Every day officers, civilians—once even a monk from a remote monastery—turned up, reporting to me the numbers and other details of their local organisations. Often they had sworn in a few hundred people, mostly youths determined to fight to the last. They were all coming for instructions and orders.

Rudnicki and I worked out the main principle of our conspiracy. We instructed our people to form groups of five. Each member of a group was allowed to know only his four fellow members, each one of them in his turn creating a new group of five. In this way the pyramid, with me at the top, was constantly growing. The use of real names was forbidden and pseudonyms introduced. The whole area was subdivided into sectors, corresponding to the pre-war administrative divisions. Each sector was to have its own local commander.

Most of our men, except for a few older commanders, were untrained, as most of the Polish Regular Army, mobilised in 1939, had been taken prisoner by the Germans or Russians. We had to train them immediately in the use of such arms—Polish and German—as were at our disposal. This was the beginning of the eventual secret military schools.

I formed a small staff of officers in Cracow, and with their aid I fixed a series of meeting places, each of which was known by some such name as "Monastery," "Dining-Room" and so on. In this way no addresses were put on paper when meetings were arranged. Code words were always used. The Gestapo had a far-flung net of spies and agents in Poland and had at their disposal the most up-to-date police apparatus. No Pole ever knew when his name would figure on the list of suspects, or when he would be shadowed. We had to keep our activities a complete secret, especially with regard to meeting places. Usually, people whose flats were contact points knew nothing about their callers except their pseudonyms and the password. This was the nucleus of the liaison net.

We had to create a separate intelligence system and carry out counter-espionage so that we might warn our own people, and so on.

Enormous deliveries of materials pouring ceaselessly from Russia to Germany provided us with a good chance to weaken the German war-potential. We created a special organisation for sabotage, which we had to equip with explosives and arms as well as a special intelligence system. In this way constant acts of sabotage were perpetrated on the long communication lines and in the new factories which the Germans were putting up in Poland. At the same time began the systematic destruction of railways, rolling stock and stores of war material.

Poland was at that time completely cut off from any source of information other than Hitler's propaganda. Anyone found

to have a radio set was put to death; the entire pre-war Polish Press had been liquidated. The Germans published newspapers printed in Polish. It became vital to put up secret wireless stations where Allied and neutral news could be heard. The various news items had to be taken down and then printed in secret bulletins, first by mimeographs, later by secret printing presses. Finally, they had to be distributed throughout Poland. In this way we created our own Underground Press, which provided an adequate commentary on events in order to oppose the enemy's lies and keep up the morale of the nation. Later on we were also to print instructions and manuals for secret training courses and schools.

In the first year the stream of officers and reservists toward the Hungarian frontier grew to mass proportions, in spite of the tremendous difficulties and risks. Often the Carpathian Mountains had to be crossed in weather of 54 or more degrees below freezing-point (– 30° C.), through deep snow and snow-storms. German police with dogs guarded the frontier and the whole area forty miles deep. Those who tried to reach Hungary and those who helped them were often tracked down and killed.

In the beginning names and addresses of guides, as well as their pass-words, were handed from one person to another with little or no restriction. The result was that as many as twenty people would attempt to get across at a time, with the inevitable result of a mass arrest. Frequently the Germans would arrange an ambush in the house of a guide they had caught, thus succeeding in arresting numerous unsuspecting people who turned up to ask for the guide. Sometimes such an ambush would be kept up for weeks.

All those men were compelled to use the one narrow route through Slovakia. In an attempt to reduce the number of arrests, we set up transfer posts which could only be reached by those directed to them through our organisation. Even then, things were anything but easy, as the men had to be led by experienced and well tried guides across the mountains by little-known paths.

Every Pole had to make his own individual decision about the way he chose to continue the fight. No one exercised any authority over him. He could go to France or join the Underground. I did, however, introduce priority for airmen and sailors and those wanted by the Gestapo to leave the country.

One of our first needs was to get arms. Many had been buried in secret hiding-places after the campaign. I had them dug up, cleaned, protected against rust and reburied.

In all our work we always had to reckon with the danger that any secret of ours might at any moment be revealed under torture. The men who embarked on the road of conspiracy—above all, the officers—constantly searched for by the Gestapo, which threatened with the death penalty anyone who hid them, had to be provided with aliases and false personal documents as well as indispensable working papers. A certain number of secret institutions, therefore, had to come into existence to produce such documents. Often these did not prove effective in case of arrest, so we had to improve our system of forgery. People whom we could trust absolutely had to procure for us genuine documents of men and women who had disappeared during the war.

As our organisation was constantly growing and developing, new tasks and problems emerged and had to be dealt with daily. Our ever-broadening experience had to battle with new situations, and thus it was life itself which shaped our movement. It took a long time—from 1939 to 1944—and the road was irksome and dangerous, but it led to the fully organised "Secret State" with about 380,000 men in the fighting units.

For my own part, I avoided all contact with relations and pre-war friends from the beginning. I let it become known that I had got safely abroad.

In an effort to change my appearance, I shaved off my moustache, and when I went into the street I put on glasses with heavy rims. At first I used plain lenses, because there was nothing wrong with my sight. But later I heard that the Germans were stopping people who wore glasses, inspecting the lenses and, if these were of plain glass, arresting them, so I began to use convex lenses. The result of these precautions was satisfactory. Acquaintances more often than not failed to recognise me in the street.

As a further security measure, I asked a medical friend to provide me with a dose of efficient poison. Next day he gave me a small glass capsule. It was very fragile. The mere act of swallowing fractured the glass, which then pierced the skin of the throat, thus bringing cyanide and blood into direct contact. The immediate effect was apparently rather like that of splitting the skull with a battle-axe. I concealed this

capsule in its small casing in the lining of my jacket and felt ready for anything. It had a most comforting moral effect on me.

Another important thing was to avoid everything which could attract attention. The hardships of everyday life made this easy, as we were all getting thinner and thinner and our clothes grew shabbier all the time. The address of my lodging was guarded with the utmost secrecy and only a very few specially selected people knew of it. I always left the house in the morning when the streets were filled with people going to work, and I did that every day, whether I had anything to do that morning or not. The people in my flat were to think that I had a normal full-time job. Avoidance of the centre of the city and public restaurants became an absolute necessity.

But all these primitive security measures would never have been sufficient. You had to keep your eyes open continuously, and watch what was going on around you. You could at any moment be taken in a mass street-raid, run into a police patrol or enter a watched house.

When our work had been developed on a large scale, I decided to send a courier to the Polish authorities abroad. I chose one of the younger officers, Lieutenant Ledochówski. I gave him a written report on the situation and told him: "You will see General Sikorski's representative in Hungary. You will tell him that it was my intention to report to General Sikorski in Paris. I am doing this now from Cracow, placing myself and the men who have accepted my leadership at his disposal, in the conviction that the fight should continue on our home territory. You will ask him, in my name, for further orders. You will direct his attention to the fact that military organisations are springing up all over the country and that their efforts should be co-ordinated."

He was back in a few weeks, after an exhausting secret journey. He had had to get over the mountains, which were then covered with snow-drifts; they were not easy to negotiate in normal times. In that same year Ledochówski crossed the frontier several times as a courier to and from Hungary.

Soon after, we decided, with Rudnicki, to contact the organisation being built up in Warsaw by General Tokarzewski and to accept his orders, as we learned that he had subordinated himself to the Commander-in-Chief. We were all taking such careful precautions by now, however, that it was extremely

difficult to get into touch with another organisation without contact addresses and passwords. I succeeded, however, in contacting Colonel "Rog," who had been sent from Warsaw by General Tokarzewski to start a section of their organisation in Cracow. We agreed that there should be only one military organisation, so Rudnicki and I left for Warsaw.

The journey between Cracow and Warsaw was very difficult in those days. The Germans were putting into practice their plans for forced labour by a general call-up. All men without so-called legal documents were held, after country-wide check-ups. Searches were especially frequent and concentrated on the railways. Documents once again became of primary importance.

I was furnished with a certificate stating that I was an agent dealing in the purchase of wood for coffins. It was useful to a certain extent, as it covered my movements around Cracow; but the alleged work was not the sort to exempt me from deportation for forced labour in the Reich. Still less would it justify a journey from Cracow to Warsaw: it would have been difficult to explain why coffin wood was more procurable in the capital than elsewhere.

Colonel Rudnicki and I then decided that a certain measure of risk was unavoidable, and we chose to take it. Our German was good, and accordingly we bought two tickets for Warsaw at the booking office reserved for Germans. Our tickets were for sleeping cars, also strictly reserved for Germans. Obviously, no Pole would ever dare infringe this law. In consequence, we travelled in comfort and peace and were well looked after by the German waiters and attendants.

This was my first visit to Warsaw since the September siege. The city still bore marked traces of the fighting and presented a sad sight. About a fifth of the capital had been destroyed. Squares and courtyards were filled with graves of people killed during the bombing and fighting.

There was no electricity, no gas, no fuel. After dusk, the city was plunged into complete darkness. Piles of uncleared rubble lay everywhere. Trams were replaced by horse-drawn carts which for a fee took people from one side of the city to the other.

Rudnicki and I made our way to the art dealer who had been recommended to us by Colonel Rog. There were two girl assistants in the shop. I approached one of them; she was

a fair girl whose appearance corresponded with Rog's description.

"I have come about drawing——" I began.

"Do you want a water colour or a pastel?"

"No. I have come about drawing lessons."

After this exchange of passwords, she led us to a room behind the shop, where a liaison girl turned up to fetch us. She took us to our lodging for the night, which was in a flat facing the destroyed Parliament Building. Like everywhere else in Warsaw that winter, it was unheated, and we sat in overcoats and gloves. The owner of the flat, although a member of the Underground and in all probability sworn in, asked us no questions. She did, however, try to warm us with hot supper, for which we were heartily grateful.

Next morning, the same liaison girl came and took me to a private flat. I had again to wait, all the time without the least idea whom I was actually waiting to see. At last the door opened to admit an old friend, Colonel Rowecki. It turned out that he was General Tokarzewski's Chief of Staff.

He had much to tell me. It appeared that he was already in receipt of orders from France. He explained that General Tokarzewski had been ordered by General Sikorski to go to the Soviet-occupied zone, and was busy preparing for his departure to Lwów and his work as Underground commander in the Soviet zone. He would take Rudnicki with him as Chief of Staff.

The German-occupied zone was to be taken over by Rowecki. Both territories, according to General Sikorski's orders, were to come under the command of General Sosnkowski, who was in Paris working on the organisation of the Underground Army in Poland. This army was then known as "Zwiazek Walki Zbrojnej" (Union of Armed Warfare). It was destined to continue our fight at home and to be an integral part of the Polish armed forces. It was then, also, that the wording of the oath we all had to take was brought from France:

"Before God the Almighty, before the Holy Virgin Mary, Queen of the Crown of Poland, I put my hand on this Holy Cross, the symbol of martyrdom and salvation, and I swear that I will defend the honour of Poland with all my might, that I will fight with arms in hand to liberate her from slavery, notwithstanding the sacrifice of my own life, that I will be

absolutely obedient to my superiors, that I will keep the secret whatever the cost may be."

The member of the Underground Army who was swearing in the new soldier had to answer:

"I receive thee among the soldiers of Freedom. Victory will be thy reward. Treason will be punished by death."

I was very happy to have this wording for the national oath. The many small organisations had sworn in their people with various words. Now we had one oath for all and a new bond uniting us—a very important one in a country as religious as Poland.

I told Rowecki that I was ready to serve under his orders. When he had thanked me, he expressed concern over the present situation.

"There are too many different military organisations in Warsaw," he said. "This desire to organise resistance is spontaneous and general. People from various political, professional or social groups are now forming separate centres. Sometimes they link up together. But they have all gone underground and formed para-military groups. It is an excellent symptom, but the splitting of effort is a potential danger. Just imagine a general uprising by numerous different groups, each acting independently," he concluded rather desperately. He paused and then continued: "My orders are to unite them all under my command. But I have no means of enforcing such a measure. There are no steps I can take towards it. All I have is the authority of the Polish Government abroad, and this is of necessity a moral authority only, and the future alone can show whether it is sufficiently strong to overcome political differences as well as personal ambitions and unite the whole nation."

I replied, in all sincerity, that I had no doubts as to the outcome, and based my optimism on the fact that the attitude of the nation had so far, even without guidance, been homogeneous. No political group had shown the slightest inclination to remain passive towards the new order, let alone to collaborate with the Germans. Clearly, no quislings were forthcoming. The Sikorski Government would therefore be the only authority—unmolested by any rival. True, the Communists might try to organise some rival faction. But their numbers had been small, even before the war, and since the agreement between Germany and Russia they had maintained

complete silence and shown no activity of any sort against the Germans. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the majority of the Communist leaders had, in fact, moved into the Soviet zone of occupation, where they took important posts in the Soviet administration. Their ranks, never strong, were thus further weakened. In these circumstances, I concluded, no division of the nation was discernible, and the military unification of the country was therefore bound to meet with success.

In general, the aims of our Army were to prepare for an armed rising and, more immediately, to support the Allied effort by sabotage and diversionary activity and above all by maintaining an intelligence service. Rowecki offered me command of Warsaw, which he wanted me to take over in a few weeks. Rog was to take the command of the Cracow province. We fixed another meeting a few weeks ahead, and arranged our means of liaison.

On my return to Cracow, new tasks awaited me. A courier came from Hungary bringing an order signed by General Sikorski and General Sosnkowski, entrusting me with the command of the German-occupied southern region of Poland. I went back to Warsaw to see Rowecki, who agreed to obey the orders from France. He then made Colonel Rog Commander for Cracow, and an officer with the *nom-de-guerre* of "Starosta," Commander for Silesia. Both were to act under my orders.

Silesia had been incorporated into the Reich by the Germans and was separated from Cracow by a police frontier, which it was extremely difficult for a Pole to cross legally. Before the war the population of Silesia had included a German minority speaking both languages. The presence of this minority, now strengthened by elements from Germany, enabled the Gestapo to keep a close watch on the Polish population. Any stranger attracted the immediate attention of the authorities. The post of commandant of the province was not an easy one to fill or to operate.

This was why Starosta, himself a Silesian, was chosen. Remarkable for his exceptional courage and self-sacrifice, he entered Silesia armed with the papers of a Gestapo officer. He was obliged to change his headquarters incessantly. The Silesians sheltered him. Roughly once a month he used to come to Cracow and report on his progress, at the same time receiving further orders.

In Cracow my immediate associates were necessarily few,