Dominika Czarnecka

MONUMENTS IN GRATITUDE TO THE RED ARMY IN COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

L'Harmattan

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In memory of my father,
Wiesław Krzywański

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INTRODUCTION

The Readers are hereby presented with an English-language edition of the monograph on the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army located in Poland. It sets in order and broadens the current state of knowledge regarding the history of such monuments, their role, the effectiveness of communist propaganda, and the origins of still-continuing disagreements regarding the Soviet monuments. Thus, the monograph constitutes an important element of research on the history of the People's Republic of Poland[1] and the remembrance of this era in the history of the Polish state. In addition, since such "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army were constructed not only in Poland, but in all the countries on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, their changing fortunes are an important part of the history of Central-Eastern Europe in general. As a result, the analysis of the history of those structures reveals information relevant to the broader reflection on the mechanisms of communist propaganda, on the ways in which the new rule was cemented and the urban iconosphere transformed, on the policy of remembrance and on the political and socio-cultural landscape of this part of Europe. Considering the above, I hope that the English-language edition of this monograph will provide an impulse for comparative research being undertaken in other countries of Central-Eastern Europe for which similar analyses have not yet been produced.

A comprehensive description of the history of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army in Poland does not exhaust the research goals set out in this monograph. It must, however, be noted that the current publication presents only one of many possible research perspectives and methods of describing this phenomenon; here, the approach is to articulate the official, nation-oriented narratives constructed on the basis of source materials and media reports.[2]

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[1] The term "People's Republic of Poland" refers to the Polish state in the period 1944–1989.

[2] I have conducted research at former Soviet military bases throughout Central-Eastern Europe since 2015. This research is to a certain extent a continuation of my investigations concerning Soviet memorial sites, because the so-called "difficult heritage" is involved in both cases. At the current moment I make use of ethnographic methods and conduct fieldwork, concentrating on the grass-roots perspective and unofficial narratives. Research results indicate that the phenomenon of post-Soviet heritage in this part of Europe is complex and many-faceted; see e.g. D. Czarnecka, "Making Sense of the Past: (Re) constructing the Local Memorial Landscape in the Post-Soviet Base in Poland", *Journal of Ethnology*

Making use of the extensive source basis, attention is focused on the long and complicated genesis of the contention regarding the Soviet commemoration sites, which were erected in Poland after the Second World War, in locations outside permanent cemeteries, as symbols of communist power. A detailed analysis of the actions undertaken by the Soviet military and the Polish communist authorities in reference to the countrywide policy of constructing monuments dedicated to the Red Army, and their actual functions, makes it possible to better understand the aversion with which a part of the Polish society approached these initiatives. Thus, the aim of this study was not only to typify the monuments to the Red Army with the greatest precision possible, but also to point to, and describe, those of their elements and functions which enable us to improve our understanding of social reactions to them, both before and after the year 1989.[3] After 1989, monuments to the Red Army became not only an essential element of historical policy, but also a topic of public debate connected with the assessment of the operation of the Soviet forces in Poland, the Polish-Soviet relations in the period 1939–1989, and the communist rule in the People's Republic of Poland. The need to present this study became evident in the face of the occasionally heated debates which markedly intensified when, in the course of just a few months (already after the publication of its first edition in 2015[4]), a new phase in the process of transforming the Polish landscape of commemoration and of modifying symbolism in public space had begun. The political and legislative changes in Poland were accompanied by much commented-upon disagreements regarding the Soviet monuments. The supposition stated in the conclusion of the first edition of this book, namely, that "monuments in gratitude" still were, and long would be, one of the more challenging points of the Polish public debate, promptly came true.

The chapter sequence and contents seen in the first Polish-language edition of this book have been retained in the current edition. The introduction and

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and Folkloristics 2015, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 21–40, http://www.jef.ee/index.php/journal/article/view/204; eadem, "The 'Degraded' Landscape of a Post-Soviet Military Base in Poland: Outside Vs. Inside View", *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* 2017, vol. 70, p. 121–148, https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol70/czarnecka.pdf; E. H. Seljamaa, D. Czarnecka, D. Demski, "'Small Places, Large Issues': Between Military Space and Post-Military Place", *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* 2017, vol. 70, pp. 7–18, http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol70/introduction.pdf.

3 4th June 1989 is considered to be the symbolic caesura marking the fall of the communist regime in Poland, even though the first fully democratic parliamentary elections were held on 27th October 1991 and it is they that completed the construction of a democratic parliamentary system. Yet the year 1989 is considered the end of the People's Republic of Poland. Afterwards, the communist political and economic system was being gradually dismantled. On 29th December 1989 the constitution was amended; the amendment introduced the new political regime and restored the state's former name: *Rzeczpospolita Polska* (literally: the Polish Commonwealth); A. L. Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski 1944–1991,* Cracow 2011, p. 653.

4 D. Czarnecka, *"Pomniki wdzięczności" Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej i w III Rzeczypospolitej,* Warsaw 2015.

the appendix were altered; the latter, presenting the list of Soviet monuments located outside permanent cemeteries, was brought up to date.[5]

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Throughout the entire period of the People's Republic of Poland the communist propaganda created and disseminated the only publicly admissible image of the Red Army:[6] that of a "brotherly" and "liberatory" army. Any criticism concerning the Soviet military forces or their commander-in-chief was officially unacceptable.[7] Stalin cited the Red Army's huge losses as a justification for all the later decisions of the Soviet authorities concerning Poland. To the communists, the military victories of the USSR during the Second World War were an important component in asserting the legitimacy of their power. In reality, the Red Army did not "liberate" the Polish nation: as aptly put by Mirosław Golon, "Poland was the greatest 'spoil of war' seized by the USSR in the Second World War and was treated accordingly".[8] The Red Army helped the Soviet Union to take hold of more than a half of the pre-war Poland and to enslave the remaining part; thus, it proved impossible to reconstitute a sovereign Polish state, and the newly introduced political system was modelled on the Stalin's one and based on terror. The fact that in the years 1945–1993 the Northern Group of Forces of the Soviet – and later Russian – Army was stationed in the territory of a nominally "sovereign" state is one if the indications of how totally Poland had been subjugated by the Kremlin.

USSR's brutally exploitative policy towards Poland, as well as the behaviour of the Soviet soldiers which threatened both the personal and the economic safety of the civilian population – this was especially true in the first post-war years – caused a large part of the Polish society to perceive the USSR and its army as a new occupation force.[9] Yet despite the enmity towards the Soviet "liberators" being conspicuous in the entire country – which is amply

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[5] The appendix was updated following the catalogue of Red Army monuments to be removed on the basis of the 2016 Act on the de-communisation of public space. The catalogue was compiled by the Office for the Commemoration of Struggle and Martyrdom at the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation and was made available to the author in February 2019 by the Head of the Commemoration Department at the Institute of National Remembrance.

[6] In March 1946 the Red Army changed its name to the Soviet Army, but the old name continued to be occasionally used in the following years.

[7] The critique of Josef Stalin after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 was something of an exception.

[8] M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim w latach 1945–1947,* Toruń 2001, p. 10. Unless stated otherwise, all direct citations from Polish-language sources have been translated solely for the purpose of the present work.

[9] M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys,* Cracow 2012, pp. 149–195.

confirmed by numerous source documents that for years had been classified[10] – the communist authorities subordinate to the USSR strove to create an exclusively hagiographic image of the Polish-Soviet relations. The Red Army was presented as an "unsullied army" and while many aspects of the presence of the Soviet forces in Poland went against the official propaganda, any attempt to highlight them was severely punished.[11] It was forbidden to speak publicly about the dramatic incidents that the civilian population suffered at the hands of Soviet soldiers. Over decades, attempts were made to erase from the Polish people's memory all the facts that went against the impeccable image of Red Army soldiers – "simple men who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the nations of Central-Eastern Europe". One of the reasons why this strategy was ineffectual was that too many Poles remembered their meeting with the "liberators"; within their family circles, they would relate memories that did not conform to the vision of history disseminated by the communists.[12] Yet the communist propaganda highlighted exclusively the "liberating" role of the Soviet forces in Poland, doing it through all the available media and at various occasions.

This study attempts to synthetically present the fortunes of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army in post-war Poland. Despite the official declarations regarding their commemorative function and the alleged widespread support for their erection as a mark of Polish society's gratitude for the liberation, those monuments became an important tool of the communist propaganda in the People's Republic of Poland. Of course, monuments are by definition carriers of some ideology; they are meant to fulfil a propagandistic function. However, the fact that "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army were inseparably liked to the political system that enslaved nations and killed millions[13] inevitably influenced their highly negative assessment.

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[10] Much information regarding the attitudes of the Polish society towards Red Army soldiers in the first post-war years can be found in the monthly situational reports generated by municipal authorities or branches of the Bureau for Information and Propaganda, now held in state archives. Considering the political situation of the era, such reports (which, let it be added, were negative in tone) were often restrained in the extreme; still, they kept coming from the urban and rural areas of the entire country.

[11] On 23rd Sept. 1944 the communist authorities introduced the Criminal Code of the Polish Army, whose articles permitted to punish persons acting to the detriment of the Polish or allied armed forces, the latter being, of course, the Red Army; J. Wróbel, "Represje sowieckie wobec mieszkańców Polski centralnej w latach 1945–1947" [in:] D. Rogut, A. Adamczyk (eds.), *Represje sowieckie wobec narodów Europy 1944–1956,* Zelów 2005, p. 101.

[12] B. Szacka, "II wojna światowa w pamięci rodzinnej" [in:] P. T. Kwiatkowski, L. M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego,* Gdańsk–Warsaw 2010, pp. 81–132.

[13] S. Courtois, N. Werth, J. L. Panné, A. Paczkowski, K. Bartosek, J. L. Margolin et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression,* Cambridge 1999; W. Bernacki, H. Głębocki, M. Korkuć, F. Musiał, J. Szarek, Z. Zblewski, *Komunizm w Polsce. Zdrada, zbrodnia, zakłamanie, zniewolenie,* Cracow 2005; H. Pająk, S. Żochowski, *Rządy zbirów 1940–1990,* Lublin 1996; *W objęciach Wielkiego Brata. Sowieci w Polsce 1944–1993,* ed. K. Rokicki, S. Stępień, Warsaw 2009.

In Poland, such monuments began to be raised on a mass scale in 1945 (the first were erected in 1944). They were placed not only at the graves of Soviet soldiers, but also in the most prestigious locations; there was one in practically every Polish city that was a seat of the regional authority (voivodeship or county). Many of them had been constructed by the Red Army soldiers themselves or by order of the commanders of local Soviet garrisons; later, the initiative passed on to the Polish communists. It is worth noting that the 476 structures investigated in this study (see Appendix) were built parallel to monuments erected at permanent cemeteries. The latter were also used for propaganda; however, due to their slightly different specificity and the sheer quantity of such sites (the cemeteries contain a few hundred obelisks) they remain outside the scope of this study.

The Soviet and Polish communist authorities intended those 476 monuments placed in the most prestigious locations to serve many functions of a political and ideological nature. It was not without reason that the idea to commence a countrywide monument-building action came from the USSR authorities. Such endeavours constituted a tremendous financial, technological and organisational effort, especially in the first years of post-war restoration; and this is when most of those structures were raised. They were completed at the detriment of more urgent social needs, which were rescheduled until a later time. Contrary to the assurances issued by the communist propagandists, the local population offered scant support to, and participation in, these enterprises, sometimes evincing outright hostility. The citizens' financial contributions were often enforced by means of administrative decisions; falsified information was placed on memorial plaques, ascribing the initiative to the local community. In most cases, the financing of the construction proved problematic; the obelisks in honour of Soviet soldiers could not be completed without state funding. In addition, the authorities curtailed any initiatives aimed at honouring, even in a modest way, those to whom in the opinion of most Poles such symbols were truly due, for instance soldiers of the Home Army. This aroused considerable bitterness and made the citizens even more critical of the monument-building initiatives aimed at honouring the Soviet army.

The "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army served to create and disseminate the communist vision of the past and of the Polish experience of the period 1944–1945 and the following years. Their forms, locations, inscriptions thereon, all constituted attempts to create facts that, in reality, had never occurred; they took part in the process of manipulating history. Hundreds of monuments dedicated to the Red Army were a vital ideological complement to the interpretation of events which after the war had been imposed on the Polish society by the media and the education system. These monuments allowed the communist government to constantly influence the Polish society in the context of both the past and the present.

A public debate regarding the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army began as soon as this became politically possible, that is, in the second half of 1989. It centred on structures located outside cemeteries; those raised on cemetery grounds were contested much more rarely.[14] The defacing or otherwise damaging monuments to Soviet soldiers continued in the Third Republic of Poland as a *sui generis* traditional anti-communist action.

It must be noted that all the structures researched herein had been raised while the communist system was in place, the last ones in the 1980s. Despite its fall and the massive wave of iconoclasm that swept the former countries of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, most of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army survived, if sometimes slightly altered, in the space of the Third Republic of Poland. Yet after 1989 there was an essential change in the authorities' and the citizens' attitude towards them. In the period of the People's Republic of Poland they had been under administrative protection and the communist authorities used every occasion to manifest the official respect towards them. They were also often specially guarded by functionaries of various services; they were, in practice, untouchable. In 1989 that status began to be questioned, officially, for the first time.

In Poland, the process of transforming the landscape of memory has been continuing for well nigh three decades. Yet this landscape still reflects an ideological incoherence – the so-called unfinished transition.[15] Actions concerning Soviet memorial sites undertaken after 1989 illustrate the subsequent phases of its transformation.

In 2015, in the introduction to the Polish-language edition of this book, I wrote that "the issue of the 'monuments in gratitude' will have its continuation";[16] but I did not foresee that a new stage of debate concerning the Soviet memorial sites would begin a mere few months after the publication of that monograph.

In the parliamentary elections held in the autumn of 2015 the majority of seats was won by the national-conservative Law and Justice party (PiS). The candidate supported by that party won Poland's presidency. Being one of the two largest parties in the Polish parliament, the PiS had for years attempted to introduce legal regulations concerning the de-communisation of public space, but none of those attempts had been successful. In 2015, thanks to their parliamentary victory, the situation changed; it became possible for the party

[14] Each new structure "in honour of the Red Army" was, of course, discussed by communist propaganda, mainly in the press, but exclusively in favourable terms, with no opposing voices being raised at all. New monuments were discussed also unofficially, in private circles, in which case almost exclusively in critical terms. Open public debate on these monuments became possible only after the disintegration of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and the abolition of censorship.

[15] E. Ochman, "Spaces of Nationhood and Contested Soviet War Monuments in Poland: The Warsaw Monument to the Brotherhood in Arms" [in:] B. Bevernage, N. Wouters (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of State Sponsored History After 1945,* London 2018, p. 480.

[16] D. Czarnecka, *"Pomniki wdzięczności"*…, p. 13.

to force certain legal solutions through the Parliament. The Act on the de-communisation of public space was voted on 1st April 2016[17] and published on 1st June 2016; it came into force three months after its publication. Section 2 of this Act was in its entirety devoted to the "ideologically inappropriate" monuments. By force of the new regulations the voivode, as the field representative of the governmental administration, acquired the right to demand the removal of a monument from the owners or perpetual users of the property on which it was located. Initially, all the costs of the monument's removal were supposed to be borne by the owners or perpetual users of the property on which it was located – in practice, the local government. The decision to remove the monument was to be confirmed by the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (IPN – KŚZpNP), the institution which in 2016 incorporated the competencies of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (ROPWiM).[18] In 2017, the Act prohibiting the promotion of communism or other totalitarian regimes was amended twice. Based on the amendment of 22nd June 2017,[19] the regulation was introduced that the costs of the monuments' removal borne by the owners or perpetual users of the property on which it was located would be reimbursed by the State Treasury from the state budget, on condition that the official body removing the monument had not participated in its erection. Deadlines for the completion of duties imposed by the Act changed with the subsequent amendments. Ultimately, based on the amendment of 14th December 2017,[20] monuments commemorating or promoting communism or other totalitarian regimes were to be removed by the owners or perpetual users of the property on which such monuments were located on the day of the Act's coming into force, not later than 31st March 2018.

New legal solutions introduced after 2015 directly impacted the further fortunes of Soviet memorial sites in Poland. A year after the final deadline for the removal of the "ideologically inappropriate" monuments as stated in the Act had passed, many of them still exist in the public space. As per March

[17] Act on the prohibition on promoting communism or other totalitarian regimes through the names of organisational units, county auxiliary units, edifices, structures and public service facilities, or monuments, dated 1st April 2016, Journal of Laws 2016, item 744.

[18] Act on the amendment of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation and selected other acts, dated 29th April 2016, Journal of Laws 2016, item 749.

[19] Act on the amendment of the Act on the prohibition on promoting communism or other totalitarian regimes through the names of edifices, structures and public service facilities, dated 22nd June 2017, Journal of Laws 2017, item 1389.

[20] Act on the amendment of the Act on the prohibition on promoting communism or other totalitarian regimes through the names of organisational units, county auxiliary units, edifices, structures and public service facilities, or monuments, and to the Act on the amendment of the Act on the prohibition on promoting communism or other totalitarian regimes through the names of edifices, structures and public service facilities, dated 14th December 2017, Journal of Laws 2017, item 2495.

2019, in many cases administrative procedures are in progress. No official action concerning the given "monument in gratitude" to the Red Army can be undertaken until such procedure is resolved.[21]

The Office for the Commemoration of Struggle and Martyrdom at the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation compiled a provisional catalogue of monuments dedicated to the Red Army regarding which opinions in the light of the Act prohibiting the promotion of communism had been issued by the Institute until February 2019. This catalogue lists the total of 111 monuments,[22] with 97 monuments to the Red Army remaining on the list when memorial plaques and memorials to the Soviet POWs or partisan fighters are excluded.

This book presents a broad range of issues connected with the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army located outside permanent cemeteries, arranged by issue and in the chronological order. It contains the introduction, five chapters divided into subchapters, the conclusion and the appendix.

The first chapter delineates various aspects of the presence of the Soviet/Russian military troops in the territory of Poland from the Polish-Bolshevik war in 1919–1920 until the final withdrawal of the Northern Group of Forces of the Russian Army from Poland in 1993. This chapter does not strictly concern the topic of research, but presents the necessary background to it and thus enables its comprehensive understanding. The described issues include various aspects of the activity of the military formation known as the Red Army,[23] that is, the subject to which the communists dedicated hundreds of monuments throughout Poland. This chapter is largely based on scholarly works by other authors which were published after the year 1989 (i.e. after the abolition of censorship) and which described the role and the actions of the Soviet military forces in Poland as, gradually, archival materials revealed a very different picture than the ideal one created in the era of the People's Republic. The focus is on those aspects of the conduct of the USSR military which for years the communist government had obscured, obfuscated or deliberately falsified, and which abundantly justify the negative attitude of

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[21] Information acquired during a conversation with the Head of the Commemoration Department, Office for the Commemoration of Struggle and Martyrdom at the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, held on 21st February 2019 at the seat of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw.

[22] A provisional catalogue of monuments dedicated to the Red Army regarding which opinions in the light of the Act prohibiting the promotion of communism had been issued by the Institute of National Remembrance. This catalogue was conveyed to the author by the Head of the Commemoration Department, Office for the Commemoration of Struggle and Martyrdom at the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation on 4th March 2019.

[23] The Red Army was the largest imperial army in 20th-century Europe. To the Polish population, it was a many million-strong occupation force which in the autumn of 1944 introduced the "people's rule" in the country; W. Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski 1945–1980,* Warsaw 2003, p. 11; B. Potyrała, R. Fudali, *Od zwycięstwa do upadku. Siły zbrojne Związku Radzieckiego 1945–1991,* Warsaw 2009.

the majority of Polish society to Red Army soldiers. Issues discussed in the first chapter, in which the USSR constituted the key element, make it possible to at least partially understand why so many Poles were of the opinion that the Red Army had not deserved any "monuments in gratitude" regardless of the fact that it had vanquished the German Nazi occupiers, and why after 1989 so many citizens strove to remove those monuments from their central, prestigious locations. After 1989, those obelisks began to be dismantled, relocated to cemeteries, or their appearance was being altered, all of these endeavours constituting an essential element of the public debate regarding the true conduct of the Soviet military in Poland. Since both the opponents and the supporters of the idea of leaving those monuments in their original locations quite selectively resorted to various arguments, also those referring to the Soviet soldiers' conduct, the main aspects of their presence in Poland needed to be recalled and explained, all the more since those arguments continued to resurface in the debates conducted by the party circles and in the local-government milieus throughout Poland.

The second chapter focuses on the fortunes of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army in the period of the People's Republic of Poland (1944–1989). It contains an analysis, based on numerous examples, of who actually initiated their construction and what meaning the selected locations had in communist propaganda. The geographical distribution of these monuments in post-war Poland is demonstrated on the example of 476 structures, and the intensity of the monument-building action in the following decades is discussed, with a tentative assessment of the number of obelisks raised between the mid-1940s and the late 1980s. Considerable space is devoted to the issues of financing monument-building enterprises and to the real functions which, contrary to the assurances given by the communist propaganda, the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army were meant to fulfil in the post-war Poland. The appearance of the monuments, the contents of inscriptions placed thereon, and the issues of the applied names and terms are also examined in this chapter. The chapter closes with the presentation of the types, customary course and significance of celebrations organised by the communist authorities at the monuments to the Red Army.

The third chapter discusses the problem of physical attacks against these structures perpetrated in the period of the People's Republic of Poland as a method of protest used by some citizens, since the legal protests were impossible; this was opposition to the communist propaganda and the gradual subjugation of Poland by the Soviet Union was manifested. Attacks against monuments, their intensity, the personalities and motivations of their perpetrators, punishments meted out for such offences at various points in the history of the People's Republic, and the attitude of the communist authorities

to them are described on examples. Well-planned actions are distinguished from spontaneous reactions of a crowd.

The next chapter describes in detail the fortunes of selected "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army raised in eight Polish cities: from the launch of the action to erect the monument and all the resultant perturbations, through its history in the subsequent decades of the People's Republic until its ultimate removal or the issuance of relevant legislation in the Third Republic. The initiators of the action, its financing, problems concerning the erection of monuments, the course of the unveiling ceremony, arguments raised in the democratic Poland for and against their removal from central locations, the decisions taken by local authorities and their justifications, as well as the official position assumed by the Russian Federation in concrete cases are described in detail. Thus, the fourth chapter constitutes a valuable complement to the second one, as it reveals the scenario according to which most of the monument-building actions were carried out (at least in theory); it also additionally confirms its theses. In addition, it contains much information used and analysed in the closing chapter, since it reviews, on concrete examples, the official bodies involved and the arguments, opinions and decisions that appeared in the debate on monuments after 1989.

The final chapter pertains to the fortunes of those monuments in the Third Republic (1989–2012). It describes the actions undertaken with regard to the structures under analysis in the given periods of time after the fall of the communist system in Poland, the scope and the character of those actions. Arguments given by the opponents and the supporters of the idea of leaving those monuments in their central original locations are summarised and analysed; the position of the Soviet/Russian side with regard to the actions undertaken by Polish authorities, as well as the legal norms in force in Poland at that time are presented. In conclusion to the chapter, monuments that replaced the removed "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army in independent Poland are described.

An appendix containing the list of 476 monuments commemorating the Red Army built outside permanent cemeteries in the period of the People's Republic of Poland constitutes a crucial accompaniment to the chapters. Although the list therein is by no means closed (research uncovered sites not mentioned in any official publications or registers, and there certainly may have been more), it complements the main section of the study and makes it possible to gain an idea of the range, character, as well as the chronological and geographical distribution of the monument-building initiative carried out in Poland. Briefly described histories of memorial sites confirm the initial theses and demonstrate how the situation of these sites is shaping thirty years after the fall of communism.

The fundamental chronological frame for this study are the years 1944–2012. The opening date reflects the proclamation, in the middle of 1944, of the Polish state in Lublin, which began the existence of the Polish state under the communist rule.[24] The first, still few, "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army were built in the same year. The closing date, put at the year 2012, is arbitrary, selected because of the fact that by the end of 2012 the archival inquiries and media research for this study had been completed. The geographical scope is very broad, as it encompasses the entire territory of Poland in its post-war borders, following the administrative division in force since the beginning of 1999, i.e. the 16 voivodeships (in the period 1975–1998 there had been 49 of them).[25] Monuments researched herein had been erected, albeit in varying numbers, in all sixteen of those voivodeships.

It transpires from specialist literature on the subject that throughout most of the post-war decades the topic of "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army in Poland was raised almost exclusively in publications of an informative, and often concurrently propagandist, nature. Those were mostly, although not only, publications by the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites.[26] The image of reality presented therein was often distorted, as those texts either neglected to mention some aspects connected with the construction of those monuments or falsified the situation.[27] Reliable scholarly publications on the topic began to appear only after the year 1989, when censorship was abolished and previously classified archival materials were made available to researchers. In this context Mirosław Golon's analytical essay concerning Soviet monuments as objects of communist propaganda in the People's Republic of Poland is especially notable.[28]

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[24] A. L. Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski…*, p. 24; K. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943–1948,* Warsaw 1985, pp. 61–87; T. Żenczykowski, *Polska Lubelska 1944,* Warsaw 1990.

[25] Act on the two-level administrative division of the State and on the amendment of the Act on national councils, dated 28 May 1975, Journal of Laws 1975, no. 16, item 91; Act on the introduction of the basic three-level territorial division of the state, dated 24 July 1998, Journal of Laws 1998, no. 96, item 603.

[26] The fundamental publication was the first edition of *Przewodnik po upamiętnionych miejscach walk i męczeństwa – lata wojny 1939–1945,* Warsaw 1964 ("monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army were a fraction of sites presented therein). Its second, expanded edition appeared in 1966, the third in 1980. The fourth edition, edited by Czesław Czubryt-Borkowski et al. and published in 1988, was the largest, and so far the last. Apart from that, studies describing sites of national remembrance in particular voivodeships, counties or localities were published in the period of the People's Republic, e.g.: Z. Drwęcki, *Miejsca walk i męczeństwa w województwie bydgoskim 1939–1945,* Bydgoszcz 1969; T. Nowakowski, *Miejsca pamięci narodowej w województwie piotrkowskim,* KW OPWiM in Piotrków Trybunalski, Łódź 1988. Among other publications that mentioned (in propagandistic tone) the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army was J. Przymanowski, *Pamięć, cz. 1,* Warsaw 1987.

[27] Despite their propagandistic slant, publications issued by the Council or other publishers from the People's Republic era (e.g. the Association for the Polish-Russian Friendship) did have an essential informative value, informing as they did on, for instance, the number, location or appearance of the monuments.

[28] M. Golon, "Symbole wdzięczności czy uległości? Pomniki Wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej – przyczynek do dziejów propagandy komunistycznej w Polsce po drugiej wojnie światowej" [in:] Z. Karpus, D.

Articles describing, often in detail, the history of the construction of monuments to the Red Army in given localities are of particular importance to research described herein. It must be noted, however, that considering the overall number of those monuments, these publications are still few and far between.[29]

Since the number of the "monuments in gratitude" raised throughout Poland reached a few hundred, it would have been a tremendous challenge for a scholar to hunt down all the available sources and thoroughly analyse data concerning every structure; hence detailed regional studies constitute a valuable material for all types of analyses and syntheses. Of course, not all monument-building enterprises have been painstakingly documented. Some state archives contain integrated files of materials referring to the "monuments in gratitude", others do not have any relevant sources or the information is scattered across various file sets.

Some data concerning the fortunes of monuments raised in honour of Soviet soldiers can be found in monographs on the history of particular cities[30] and in studies on memorial sites in given regions, voivodeships, districts or localities, which have been published after 1989.[31] The increasingly numerous studies on the history of the Soviet forces in Poland in the years 1944–1993 are an indispensable complement to those works.

Most importantly, as the Polish-language edition of this book was published in 2015, many scholarly publications that appeared after this date not only

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Michaluk, T. Kempa (eds.), *Europa Orientalis. Polska i jej wschodni sąsiedzi. Księga pamiątkowa prof. S. Alexandrowicza,* Toruń 1996, pp. 601–618. A wider-ranging approach to the issue in: Z. Mazur, "Ku czci armii sowieckiej", *Siedlisko,* no. 4, pp. 15–23; D. Czarnecka, "Pomniki wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej w Polsce w latach 1989–1993" [in:] D. Czarnecka, J. Książek (eds.), *Krajobraz kulturowy wolnej Polski. Zbiór studiów,* Toruń 2013, pp. 35–62.

[29] E.g.: R. Tomkiewicz, "Kulisy powstania w Olsztynie Pomnika Wdzięczności dla Armii Radzieckiej", *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie* 1998, no. 3, pp. 395–415; M. Golon, "Powstanie pomnika wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej w Toruniu w 1946 roku", *Rocznik Toruński* 2003, vol. 30, pp. 161–180; E. Pietruszka, "Pomnik wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej w Łodzi 1945–1946" [in:] J. Żelazko (ed.), *Rok 1945 w Łodzi. Studia i szkice,* Łódź 2008, pp. 323–353; E. Mikołajczak, "Pomnik Wdzięczności w Inowrocławiu – historia i współczesność" [in:] T. Łaszkiewicz (ed.), *Inowrocław w Polsce Ludowej. Zbiór studiów,* Inowrocław 2009, pp. 75–88; A. Bierca, "Monument Zwycięstwa w Stargardzie", *Stargardia* 2010, vol. 5, pp. 387–401; D. Czarnecka, "Wdzięczność w kamieniu zapisana. Historia powstania bydgoskiego Pomnika Wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej – odsłona I", *Kronika Bydgoska* 2009, vol. 31, Bydgoszcz 2010, pp. 285–297; eadem, "Wdzięczność w kamieniu zapisana. Historia bydgoskiego pomnika Wdzięczności Armii Czerwonej – odsłona II", *Kronika Bydgoska* 2010, vol. 32, Bydgoszcz 2011, pp. 345–363, eadem, "Od pomnika wdzięczności Armii Radzieckiej do pomnika „Żołnierza Polskiego" – historia monumentu na placu Wolności we Włocławku 1946–1994", *Ziemia Kujawska* 2010, vol. 33, pp. 95–113.

[30] J. Drabina, *Historia Chorzowa 1257–2000,* Chorzów 2007; R. Kozłowski, *„Czerwony" Włocławek. Mity a rzeczywistość,* Włocławek 2000; W. Kondusza, *Mała Moskwa. Rzecz o radzieckiej Legnicy,* Legnica 2011.

[31] J. Serafin, *Pomniki Głogowa,* Głogów 2001; L. Laskowski (ed.), *Ziemia koszalińska 1945–2005. Historia i pomniki,* Koszalin 2005; Cz. Kowalak, "Pomniki i tablice pamiątkowe Legnicy po II wojnie światowej", *Szkice Legnickie* 2007, vol. 28, pp. 271–316; H. Bierut, *Miejsca pamięci narodowej. Grudziądz i okolice 1939–1945,* Grudziądz 1994; F. Jałosińska, J. Nawrocki, *Jasielskie pomniki i obeliski,* Jasło 2009.

cited it, but also tackled the analysis of the "difficult heritage" connected with the Soviet memorial sites in Poland, approaching it from many different perspectives and thus developing the topic of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army and demonstrating its complexity.[32]

To study this topic in a comprehensive manner, it was necessary to review materials from nationwide and local press. Many newspapers and periodicals yielded rich and diverse data on monuments on the scale of the entire country. In many cases, articles in daily press alone made it possible to reconstruct the course of the debates and the monument-dismantling operations that occurred in many Polish cities in the early 1990s. Data gleaned from the press were especially valuable where source materials dating from the period in question were lost.

The source basis for this study consisted of numerous archival and iconographic materials held in several Polish archives.[33] Their significance to the development of this test was all the greater considering that at the time when the material for it was being gathered, and the text was being written, publications referring directly to its topic were still scarce.

The book makes use of data from source materials held in the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw. The Ministry of Public Administration file yielded documents that shed light on materials held in state archives. Apart from reports describing the general situation and the civic mood in particular voivodeships (including problems arising from the presence of the Soviet troops), this file contains documents pertaining to the exhumation operations conducted after the war, the establishment and maintenance of Red Army cemeteries, reports about the attacks on "monuments in gratitude" and correspondence connected with the launch of nationwide monument-building action. Materials gathered in the set of documents generated by the Government Delegation at the Northern Group of Forces of the Soviet Army command in Legnica proved especially valuable. This set contains files referring

[32] See e.g.: D. Demski, D. Czarnecka, "A Site Shaped by Discontinuity: the Practices of Place-Making in a Post-Soviet Military Base in Poland", *Suomen Antropologi. Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 2018, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 30–52, https://doi.org/10.30676/jfas.v43i2.69843; E. Ochman, "Spaces of Nationhood…"; A. Kuczyńska-Zonik, "Dissonant Heritage. Soviet Monuments in Central and Eastern Europe" [in:] A. Mrozik, S. Holubec (eds.), *Historical Memory of Central and East European Communism,* New York 2018, pp. 101–121; B. Różycki, "Modyfikowanie symboliki w przestrzeni publicznej na przykładzie działań wobec pomników komunistycznych w Polsce po 1989 r.", *Społeczeństwo. Edukacja. Język* 2016, vol. 4, pp. 29–44.

[33] Original titles/headings/descriptions of files, acts and documents were retained in all the notes, even when they referred to terminology or concepts introduced and disseminated by communist propaganda. In the author's view, this allows to avoid possible misunderstandings and to precisely indicate the sources, facilitating their finding should need arise (this approach was retained in translation, with emphasis on facilitating a source enquiry conducted by an English-language researcher – translator's note). However, it must be noted that the original descriptions of documents are not in keeping with the narrative of this book.

to army burials, including crucial registers concerning the construction of monuments to the Red Army inside cemetery grounds and outside them. Regrettably, those registers were compiled in the late 1940s and early 1950s and are, therefore, fragmentary (some structures were in construction then, others were still to be built; even as early as that it was already stressed that some of the obelisks built immediately after or even still during the war were in very bad condition) and not free from error.

Valuable documents were discovered during the exploration of state archives in Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Koszalin, Poznań, Warsaw and Włocławek. Their importance lay in the fact that they contained detailed data on the launch and course of the action of building "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army in particular localities. Most useful was the documentation generated by administrative bodies on the city, county and voivodeship level, as well as the correspondence, minutes of meetings and reports generated by monument construction committees.

Exploration of institutional archives played an invaluable role in the preparation of this study, the Central Institutional Archive of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (ROPWiM) in Warsaw first and foremost among them; it yielded not only numerous relevant press cuttings, but also documents, including correspondence and reports, connected with the operations of the Council and referring to the Red Army monuments. Some of those materials had been generated in the period of the People's Republic, but most of them pertained to the period after 1989, for instance the Council's correspondence with local government bodies, its answers to the queries from the Russian Federation embassy in Warsaw, written communiqués concerning wilful damage to the monuments and cemeteries of Soviet soldiers in Poland. The provisional catalogue of structures commemorating the Soviet soldiers and guerrilla fighters fallen in the territory on Poland was of great importance to the making of the updated catalogue of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army appended to this book. This catalogue, originally prepared by the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (ROPWiM) in Warsaw, was made available to the author of this book in December 2010 by the Voivodeship Committee for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (KW ROPWiM) in Bydgoszcz. Data contained therein were afterwards verified and the catalogue was expanded and updated.

Important sources were found in institutional archives of other Committees for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites on the voivodeship level; related explorations were conducted in Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Cracow, Lublin, Poznań, Szczecin and Olsztyn (materials from the last city were conveyed by letter). It must be stressed that relevant resources available in particular committees varied in terms of both quality and quantity. A large part of those materials were documents relating to the action of removing

communist symbols, and the dismantling or transfer of the "monuments in gratitude" to other locations in the period of the Third Republic. The most useful set of documents was the correspondence between the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites and the local-government bodies on the city and voivodeship levels, representatives of the Russian Federation, associations and organizations, all of them presenting their stance on the issue of the monuments; inventory records of particular structures proved equally important.

Source materials held in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (IPN – KŚZpNP) were fundamental to the contents of the third chapter. Also useful were documents obtained from the Institute's branches and delegations in Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kielce, Poznań, Radom, Rzeszów, Szczecin and Wrocław, mainly records of regional military courts. Offences to which they pertained usually concerned damage to the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army. Documents from regional Offices of Internal Affairs were an essential complement to them.

Source materials held in institutional archives of municipal offices proved invaluable to the research on, and analysis of, the fortunes of these monuments after the fall of the communist system in Poland. In this case, fundamentally important were the decrees, notes and minutes from the meetings of City Councils, minutes from municipal government meetings, correspondence between sections of municipal offices, and external correspondence. Exploration was conducted in institutional archives of municipal offices in Gdańsk, Gdynia, Katowice, Koszalin, Cracow, Legnica, Lublin, Poznań, Szczecin and Toruń.

Equally noteworthy are the source publications. The J. V. Stalin Special File from 1998, presenting materials from Russian archives, proved especially valuable. It contains a document directly related to the cases of the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army being defiled which occurred in Poland in the 1940s. Other publications that have been used in writing this books referred mainly to the Soviet policy towards Poland, the conduct of Soviet soldiers, and the attitude of the Polish society towards the "liberators".

Finally, it is necessary to refer to the terminology used in this study, first and foremost to the concept of a "monument in gratitude" to the Red Army[34] cited already in the title. In the general perception – and in compliance with most definitions provided by dictionaries – "a monument is a sculptural or

[34] It must be strongly underlined at this point that all the monuments discussed herein honoured the Red Army. However, in many cases the phrase "monument in gratitude to the Soviet Army" was used in official documentation, relevant literature, and colloquial terminology, e.g. in Legnica or Stargard Szczeciński. It was inaccurate in terms of terminology, since officially all those monuments were dedicated exclusively to Red Army soldiers fallen during the Second World War. This, of course, did not change the fact that also the existing military forces of the USSR were honoured in communist propaganda.

sculptural/architectural work whose fundamental mission is to commemorate a person or an event. […] Ultimately, it reveals information on the community, and not only that to which it is dedicated, but also that which has funded it; thus, a monument is a *signum temporis*, attesting to the social, political, state-related, national or generally human values of the era in which it is raised".[35] In this context, the decree of the District Court for the Warsaw Praga-Północ district dated 2nd July 2013 is especially germane to the current research topic.[36]

In the current publication, a "monument in gratitude" to the Red Army is understood as a sculptural or sculptural/architectural work whose construction was launched by the Soviet and/or communist authorities in the period of the People's Republic of Poland, without the acceptance of the majority of Polish society, with the intention of commemorating and honouring the Red Army and the Soviet soldiers killed in the territories of Poland in its post-war boundaries in the period of the Second World War. In view of the very large number of sites, it was decided to exclude from the scope of this study memorials raised on the grounds of permanent cemeteries (even if within this necropolis they were called "monuments in gratitude") and memorials dedicated to other subjects than Red Army soldiers in active service (e.g. Soviet POWs or guerrilla fighters). Also excluded were memorial plaques, busts, symbolic graves, stones or other forms of commemoration which could also be considered monuments, in broad understanding of the term,[37] and which in the People's Republic served similar propagandistic functions.

The term "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army accepted herein was popularised by the communist propaganda in the period of the People's Republic of Poland as a blanket name for an entire group of structures whose erection was officially explained as arising from "the Polish nation's gratitude" towards the Soviet army for their "liberation from the German occupation". Although the monument-building initiatives were most often ascribed to local communities, the official position was that those monuments constituted a sign of thankfulness shared by the whole society. The expression entered the official circuit and is still functioning today, both in popular awareness and in scholarly literature. Nonetheless, the term introduced by the communists can hardly be considered true or logically correct since, according to a dictionary definition, gratitude is a "friendly, warm feeling arising in reaction to some

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[35] I. Grzesiuk-Olszewska, *Warszawska rzeźba monumentowa,* Warsaw 2003, p. 5.

[36] The decree stated that "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army did not comply with the definition of a monument, they could not be considered monuments in the light of Art. 261 of the Criminal Code, and were not entitled to legal protection, which was afforded only to structures raised "to commemorate an event, or honour a person, that is deserving of being thus revered"; III K 794/11, Decree of the District Court for Warsaw Praga-Północ, 2nd July 2013, http://legnica.net.pl/news-306 (accessed 10th Sept. 2014).

[37] L. M. Nijakowski, *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym,* Warsaw 2006, p. 68. For more on the typology of monuments, see: ibidem, pp. 66–102.

mark of goodness received from someone; the desire to reciprocate for it".[38] Thus, gratitude is felt "towards" someone and "for" something. In the People's Republic of Poland, however, the "liberators" themselves would often raise a "monument in gratitude" to themselves, while most members of the Polish society were opposed to their construction because of the enormous wrongs inflicted upon them by the Soviet soldiers and the USSR in general. Since the construction of the monuments to the Red Army went against the historical experience and "gratitude" was ascribed to Polish citizens without gauging their true opinion, in this book the relevant terms have been put in inverted commas.

Another term of fundamental importance to reflections such as those contained in this book is "liberation", thus, "making someone free, independent".[39] In 1944, the Red Army did not liberate the Polish nation. Whereas in the period 1944–1945 the Soviet forces did overcome the German occupiers, they also ushered in a new form of terror and enslavement, albeit a different one. The citizens of Poland were not offered a chance to create a sovereign state and acquire civic rights. The Soviet Union annexed more than a half of the pre-war territory of the Republic of Poland and enslaved the rest; the Soviet authorities liquidated underground structures of the Polish state by force, they imprisoned and killed soldiers of the Home Army and civilians alike, they effectively prevented the pre-war Polish government officials from returning to the country, they visited a bloody reckoning on Polish officials of varying ranks and, ultimately, they created Poland as a Stalinist state fully dependent on the Kremlin. Formulas about the "liberating" role of the Red Army, which appeared on the "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army, falsified the reality. Polish people had no reason to feel gratitude towards the Red Army and did not spontaneously raise monuments in is honour. It was the Soviet and native communist authorities that imposed those memory carriers on the Polish society.

Finally, the term "Third Republic" pertains to Polish statehood after the accepted caesura of the year 1989.

The study hereby presented to the Readers may be charged with many shortcomings, among which is the fact that not more of the monuments have been thoroughly investigated and their histories described. This, however, would have required expanding the already considerable text even further. The appendix containing a brief account of each "monument in gratitude" mentioned in the book is an attempt to solve this problem, at least partially. Extensive source material originating from several voivodeships and from central archives made it possible to confirm the initial theses. In the future, a thorough investigation of source materials held in the archives in Russia,

[38] L. Drabik et al. (ed.), *Słownik języka polskiego PWN,* Warsaw 2007, p. 1126.
[39] Ibidem, p. 1230.

especially those referring to the latter half of the 1940s, could certainly yield additional information concerning the monuments in question. It must, however, be stressed that many of the Soviet initiatives concerning monuments to the Red Army were really, in terms of financing, organisation and technical issues, carried out by the Polish communist authorities, which gradually took over all the duties connected with the Soviet commemoration sites in the territory of Poland. For this reason, it is still the Polish archives that hold an overwhelming majority of relevant source materials, not only in reference to the period of the Third Republic, but also to that of the People's Republic of Poland. Their quantity and informative value serve as a justification for writing this book.

A book may be signed with the author's name; yet a book never springs from the work of a single person and this one is no exception. The study now handed to the Reader is a fruit of many people's work.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Mirosław Golon. It is his research work and scholarly passion that inspired me to engage in the topic of Soviet monuments. During the few years of our collaboration I could always count on him to provide advice, help and encouragement. I would also like to thank the reviewers of the Polish-language edition of this book, Prof. Wojciech Olszewski, Prof. Mariusz Wołos and Dr Maciej Korkuć, and the reviewer of its English-language edition, Dr Mischa Gabowitsch; they gave this book its final shape. I am grateful to Julita Mastalerz for her meticulousness and professionalism in translating this book into English and to Klaudyna Michałowicz for editing and proofreading the translated text. Words of gratitude are also due to the authorities of scholarly institutions. Supervisor's grants from the Department of Historical Sciences of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń enabled me to conduct numerous interviews and source enquiries. The Institute of National Remembrance published the first, Polish-language edition of this book. The Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education financed the translation of the book into English and its publication at Éditions L'Harmattan ("National Programme for the Development of Humanities" – "Uniwersalia 2.1" module, project no. 21H 18 0091 86). I am unfortunately unable to mention by name all the employees of state archives, institutional archives, libraries and the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites who assisted me in my research, but I would like them to know that I very much appreciated their kindness and their help, in which they were involved far beyond the scope of their duties.

1
"FRIENDSHIP ON PAPER, OCCUPATION OF STEEL". SOVIET/RUSSIAN FORCES IN POLISH TERRITORY, 1944–1993

For decades, the history of the presence of Soviet troops in Poland was shrouded in mystery. Due to censorship and the specifically defined nature of relations between Poland and the Soviet Union, it was not possible to conduct academic research on any issue directly related to Soviet troops. For several dozen years the state relations between Poland and its eastern neighbour were defined by the former's complete dependence on the latter. This subordination meant that the role of the leading political power in Poland fell to the Polish Workers' Party (Polska Partia Robocznicza; hereinafter: PPR), and later to the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza; hereinafter: PZPR), which tended to the good image of the Soviet state and its armed forces.[1] Consequently, apart from the official press mentions and book publications[2] imbued with communist propaganda, after the end of the Second World War the issue of Soviet troops in Poland was practically absent from Polish historiography. Reliable, systematic research on the subject began in the 1980s, yet could only fully develop after the abolition of censorship and the uncovering of information of which the society had been unaware. There are, however, many issues which still remain unstudied or have not been presented in a thorough manner due to, among others, the inaccessibility (or limited accessibility) to the material stored in Russian archives. Many documents regarding the Northern Group of Forces of the Soviet Army were transported to Russia in the process of withdrawing its troops from Polish territory. The data contained therein is crucial to presenting a complete reconstruction and explanation of many aspects of this complex issue.

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[1] For a thorough analysis of Polish-Soviet relations see: K. Rokicki and S. Stępień (eds.), *W objęciach Wielkiego Brata. Sowieci w Polsce 1944–1993,* Warsaw 2009; A. Skrzypek, *Mechanizmy autonomii. Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1956–1965,* Pułtusk–Warsaw 2005; idem, *Mechanizmy klientelizmu. Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1965–1989,* Pułtusk–Warsaw 2008. On USSR armed forces see: B. Potyrała, R. Fudali, *Od zwycięstwa do upadku. Siły zbrojne Związku Radzieckiego 1945–1991,* Warsaw 2009.

[2] An overview of example publications on the Soviet armed forces written in accordance with the directives of the communist authorities, i.e. presenting an unambiguously favourable portrayal of the Soviet army, may be found in the bibliography compiled by the Central Military Library in Warsaw in 1968: T. Peterson, (ed.), *Armia Radziecka 1918–1968. Materiały do bibliografii,* Warsaw 1968.

Describing the actions of Soviet/Russian armed forces in Polish territory is a *sine qua non* condition for the analysis of the chosen topic, as is the presentation of the attitude the Polish society adopted towards the USSR troops stationed by the Vistula between 1944–1993. It is to the Red Army, its commanders and soldiers that the hundreds of "monuments in gratitude" were dedicated. Detailing the factual functions Soviet armed forces performed in Polish territory, as well as presenting the behaviour of the foreign soldiers provided the answer to the question of whether erecting monuments to the Red Army in Poland truly had any substantive justification.

The subjugation of citizens and the marked inequality in Polish-Soviet relations meant that for many years Poles were forbidden from speaking publicly about, or openly demonstrating, their true attitude towards the Soviet Union and its forces, which were there to defend Russian interests, all under the guise of friendship and fraternity. Repressed for so long, the negative emotions of the people of Poland erupted with a new force in connection with the Solidarity movement (they had also been expressed on a mass scale earlier, in 1956) and reached peak momentum in the late 1980s and early 1990s (which does not change the fact that the first demands for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Polish territory had been voiced soon after their arrival, i.e. early in 1944).

Initiatives aiming at the removal of "monuments in gratitude" to the Red Army from the public space undertaken in independent Poland have become a significant element of the public debate in the context of the true contributions of the Soviet forces. The present work delineates the most important aspects of the USSR/RF army presence in Polish territory, drawing from credible academic publications, in order to emphasise the ignorance, or deliberate manipulation, of the facts that was apparent in the discussion regarding the future of the Red Army monuments which has continued after the year 1989.

The book also presents the territorial scope of the network of Soviet garrisons, as well as the numerical listing of the "monuments in gratitude" in all voivodeships, so as to ascertain whether the construction of these monuments in each region and their number was in any way related to the presence of the Northern Group's garrisons and their size.

Although the selected timeframe for Chapter 1 of the present publication spans from the year 1944 (the Red Army crossed the eastern border of the Second Polish Republic in the January of that year) to 1993 (the finalisation of the process of withdrawing Russian armed forces from Poland), the historical description begins with the Polish-Soviet war of 1919–1921. It was the first mass-scale contact between Poles and the Bolshevik movement and between their respective military forces. It was then that the first stereotypes of the Red Army soldiers and the "Bolsheviks" emerged. This unfavourable image of the Soviet state and its soldiers was later reinforced in the aftermath of the

USSR's invasion of Poland initiated on 17th September 1939 and the first Soviet occupation, which lasted until June 1941.

Chapter 1 also describes the actions attributed (in terms of both the initiative and the perpetration) not to the Soviet soldiers, but to NKVD operatives, such as, for instance, deportations of Poles to the USSR. These acts are included here deliberately, for two reasons. Firstly, although the deportations were mainly the work of NKVD units, Red Army soldiers were not uninvolved in such operations, providing active support. Thus, even if the troops were not fully informed, they cannot be absolved from their complicity in causing the death and suffering of millions of people. Secondly, after 1989 these events and their consequences became an essential element of the debate around the "monuments in gratitude". They were one of the more important reasons why the inhabitants of many cities, e.g. in Silesia, demanded the removal of the monuments to Soviet soldiers.

It should be noted that in the present publication many issues and aspects related to the Soviet presence in Poland are mentioned very briefly, and only analysed to the degree necessary for the presentation of the principal topic of the work.

THE RED ARMY IN THE POLISH TERRITORY BEFORE 1944

In November 1918, after 123 years of subjugation and insurrectional strife, Poland regained independence and thus reappeared on the map of Europe. Soon after the renascent state had to face the overwhelming Russian forces invading from the east. From the moment they seized power, the Bolsheviks wished for the entire Europe to be engulfed in a communist revolution, the arrival of which they planned to hasten by various means, including military action. War was an inherent element of the political programme of the Bolsheviks, who wanted to instigate it first in Russia, then in Europe and the rest of the world.[3] The Polish state stood in their way to Western Europe. The war between Poland and the Soviet state began in January 1919. Source material indicates that a full-scale military campaign against Poland had been planned since January 1920 and had the Polish troops not advanced in April of that year, the Red Army would have certainly begun their offensive.[4]

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[3] R. Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime,* New York 1995, p. 4. Lenin claimed that "by destroying the Polish army we are destroying the Versailles Treaty on which nowadays an entire system of international relations is based […] Had Poland become Soviet […] the Versailles Treaty […] and with it the whole international system arising from the victories over Germany, would have been destroyed"; quoted after: ibidem, p. 182.

[4] Ibidem, p. 178.

Bolshevik propaganda disseminated in the West led to Poland's isolation at the time; the country could only count on some limited aid from France. However, the outcome of the Russo-Polish War determined the future of Europe and the fate of millions of people. The victory of Polish forces in the Battle of Warsaw and the Neman Operation made it possible to demarcate the eastern border of the Second Polish Republic and prolong the period of peace in Europe for at least a dozen years. An analysis of the attitude displayed by the Polish society towards the Red Army in later periods should not disregard the war of 1919–1920, as it became deeply engrained in collective memory and influenced the political awareness of the nation. Its aftermath also shaped the stereotypes concerning Bolshevik Russia and Red Army soldiers.[5]

The Soviet leaders of later years never forgot the blow their army had suffered in that war. According to Janusz Szczepański, Stalin's decision to murder Polish officers in Katyń and other places of execution in 1940–1941 was "a retribution for the defeat of the Red Army in the 1920 campaign".[6] A similar opinion was also voiced by Andrzej Jaracz in the context of Poles from the eastern borderlands being deported to the USSR during the first Soviet occupation: "The deportation of these people and their families was, in a way, an act of vengeance enacted by the USSR authorities for the lost war of 1920".[7]

On 28th April 1920 the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ratified the offensive plan of war against Poland. The Red Army commenced the military operation dubbed "The Vistula Shield". On 2nd July 1920 the commander of the Western Front Mikhail Tukhachevsky issued the famous order openly stating the aim of the Bolsheviks and the Red Army[8]: to move "over 'the corpse of the white Poland'

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5 A. De Lazari (ed.), *Katalog wzajemnych uprzedzeń Polaków i Rosjan,* Warsaw 2006.

6 J. Szczepański, *Społeczeństwo Polski w walce z najazdem bolszewickim 1920 roku,* Warsaw–Pułtusk 2000, p. 497.

7 A. Jaracz, "10 lutego 1940 roku – pierwsza deportacja ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich w głąb ZSRR", *Rocznik Koszaliński,* 1992, no. 22, p. 49.

8 The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was officially created in February 1918, but the process of its formation was very long. This was mainly due to the Bolsheviks' dislike of regular units and the fact that, given the social makeup of Russia at that time, an army formed on a voluntary basis would inevitably consist mostly of peasants, whom Bolsheviks regarded as enemies. Thus, until the autumn of 1918 this military formation existed primarily on paper, until the decision was taken to conscript peasants and tsarist officers, who were to command it. Leon Trotsky introduced the principle of controlling the army with terror and strict discipline. Desertion, defection and scaremongering were punishable by death. A commander could be executed for issuing an "unwarranted" order to retreat. Per Trotsky's decision, the rule of collective responsibility extended also to the families of soldiers. The Red Army was a highly politicised body, even though it did not leave any room for a free exchange of ideas within its constraints. Since its very beginnings, front soldiers were exposed to insistent propaganda. They had no official uniforms until 1919. In the first phase of the Red Army's existence, the scale of desertion and attempts at eluding conscription was enormous, which indicates that, contrary to the claims made by propagandists, many of its soldiers had not been "made politically conscious" or were not devoted to the idea of a proletarian revolution; R. Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik…,* pp. 14, 28, 59–65. Until

to the West and 'universal conflagration'".[9] Józef Unszlicht (Iosif Unshlikht), a commissar of the Western Front, opined that "seizing Warsaw is not the ultimate objective, but only the starting point for the actual, grand goal of a European, universal revolution".[10] The entire Europe was in danger. In the final days of July 1920 Bolshevik troops marched into central Poland, taking Białystok on the 28th July. On 10th August Tukhachevsky ordered to advance on Warsaw.

Soviet authorities spared no effort and no expense for propaganda, both among the Polish people and among their own soldiers. To encourage citizens to unite and resist the enemy, the Polish government countered the work of the well-established Bolshevik propaganda machine with their own agitation, disseminated through leaflets, public addresses, posters, songs and poems. The criticised items were mainly the authorities and the political system of the Soviet Union, as well as its policy towards the states and nations of the former Russian empire. The image of a "Bolshevik" these materials sought to present also referred to soldiers of the Red Army, who were the first to arrive in the new land bearing the slogans of "'red' liberation for peasants and workers from the oppression of the lords". Polish propaganda portrayed Bolsheviks as cruel, blood-drenched savages, murderers of innocents,[11] destroyers of churches and killers of the faithful, Catholics in particular. As with every instance of agitation, the image of the enemy was grossly exaggerated, with some elements made up only for dramatic effect. For instance, appeals to the peasantry warned that after the Red Army enters, all women aged 16 to 32 would be "nationalised", meaning that they could be raped with impunity, as is done with slaves.[12] It is, however, true that along the combat trail of the Red Army rapes did occur very frequently.

The Russo-Polish War left its mark on almost every family in Poland. It is estimated that it claimed the lives of more than 100,000 Polish officers and soldiers;[13] faced with an invasion and the threat of losing independence

1946, the official name of the Soviet armed forces was the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, yet the abbreviation Red Army was in common use.

9 J. Szczepański, *Społeczeństwo Polski w walce…*, p. 170.

10 Ibidem, p. 170.

11 One of the pamphlets circulated among the peasantry read: "We may either take up arms and chase the enemy away or watch foreign savages flood into our country and take control. […] Our present enemy is a plague whose bloody lawlessness brought ruin to their own lands, and who now, like a pack of starving wolves, turn to prey on our Homeland. […] They say they only wage war on the lords. They lie. Entire villages full of peasants are killed to the last man. They murder everyone, rich and poor alike, so long as it is a Catholic. They say they bring freedom. They lie. Their freedom is worse than servitude […]"; ibidem, p. 186.

12 Ibidem, p. 227.

13 As regards losses on the Soviet side, one needs to take into account not only those killed in combat, but also Bolshevik soldiers who died in Polish POW camps. After the cessation of hostilities (18th Oct. 1920) an estimated number of 90,000 Bolshevik prisoners of war were interned in Polish territory. An additional 25,000 prisoners volunteered to enlist in the newly formed anti-Bolshevik military units.

again, the Polish nation mobilised an astounding amount of resources and manpower. Major contributions were made by the Catholic church and priests, who performed their pastoral duties often risking their lives (some of them even led military charges). The clergy spread propaganda in the countryside, making peasants aware that "the Bolsheviks are not the Russians of old". The input of the landed gentry and the burgher bourgeois into defending their homeland was also substantial. University students, schoolchildren and scouts were also actively particiating in the war effort. In the countryside, the news of Polish defeats on the front were initially met with indifference. However, the attitude of the peasants began to change and the rural areas became more involved after the Seym (Parliament) passed the bill introducing land reform on 15th July 1920 and the coalition Government of National Defence (Rząd Obrony Narodowej, RON) led by Wincenty Witos was formed. Workers, in turn, were divided, although their support for the Red Army remained feeble, despite all the slogans of communist propaganda and claims made by General Tukhachevsky.

The body that did call for cooperation with Red Army units and the deposition of "the bourgeois-landowner government" in Poland was the Communist Workers' Party of Poland (Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski; hereinafter: KPRP). Its members advocated for the formation of "a Polish Red Army". "The leaders of the KPRP expected that Warsaw would be taken by the Bolsheviks and that they would seize power and be given the opportunity to Sovietise the system under the bayonets of Red Army soldiers", writes the historian Zbigniew Karpus.[14] The KPRP did not extend its activities on any significant scale, due as much to preventive arrests ordered by Polish authorities as to the small number of its members and sympathisers.[15] Unfortunately, much of what the Polish communists did not manage to accomplish in 1920 became reality in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The Red Army soldiers participating in the Russo-Polish War killed both civilians and prisoners of war.[16] There are documented instances of their using

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Polish historians analysing the surviving source materials have assessed that between February 1919 and October 1921, i.e. during the entire period of their internment in Poland, no more than 18,000 POWs lost their lives. The estimates of Russian historians differ in this respect, amounting to 40–60,000. It should be remembered that Russian authorities that asked the Polish side of the conflict for information regarding the Bolsheviks who died in Polish camps did not offer any comment on the fate of ca. 15–16,000 Polish prisoners of war who never came back from Russia; Z. Karpus, "Sytuacja sowieckich jeńców wojennych w Polsce w latach 1919–1921" [in:] W. Sienkiewicz (ed.), *Wojna o wszystko. Opowieść o wojnie polsko-bolszewickiej 1919–1920,* Warsaw 2010, pp. 367–391; C. Gmyz, "Historia według Gorbaczowa", *Życie Warszawy,* 22 Nov. 1994, pp. 1–2.

[14] Z. Karpus, "Sytuacja sowieckich jeńców…", p. 386.

[15] M. Klimecki, "Polrewkom i Galrewkom. Sowietyzacja Polski latem 1920 roku" [in:] W. Sienkiewicz (ed.), *Wojna o wszystko…*, p. 395.

[16] In the 1990s the Russians started to accuse the Polish authorities of inhuman treatment of soldiers imprisoned during the Russo-Polish War of 1919–1920. The rhetoric of the new Russian government

elaborate means of torture.[17] The Bolsheviks were quick to establish their own structures of power in the conquered lands of the north-eastern reaches of the Second Polish Republic; as Janusz Szczepański writes, "The directives of the Soviet authorities were aimed at a ruthless, brutal confrontation with the entire Polish population in the east of the Republic that would conclude with its total extermination".[18] Persecution of Catholic priests began. The landed gentry of the eastern borderlands that did not manage to flee westwards met a bloody end. The majority of their estate administrators were arrested. The coffers of eastern towns were emptied, their inhabitants robbed of all their possessions. To make matters worse, the locals were forced to lodge and feed Russian soldiers. Some of the people arrested by the Red Army were sentenced to death and shot. All weapons were to be handed in under pain of death. The Bolsheviks immediately proceeded to remove Polish national symbols and crosses from public spaces, as well as to change the names of streets and squares. Local people were conscripted to perform various services for the army and to participate in propaganda rallies. Children aged 4 to 15 were taken into "state custody". Goods were systematically requisitioned, Polish peasants forcibly conscripted into the Red Army. A battalion would surround a village, round up all men and force them to enlist. Resisters were killed immediately. Red Army soldiers vandalised, robbed and desecrated churches and synagogues; they mocked religious rites. Robbery, rape and destruction of property were common in central Poland. Works of art were stolen, libraries looted, historical structures burnt. Red Army troops committed atrocities in many places, including Płock, where they killed several dozen sick and wounded Polish soldiers and raped and murdered several dozen women.[19] *Kurier Płocki* informed in 1920: "Christian and Jewish women were raped on

saw this as a justification for the Katyń massacre. No mention was made, however, of the fact that also Bolsheviks captured Polish soldiers. Their fate still remains a mystery. The issue of Bolshevik POWs was discussed again in the early 1990s by, among others, Yuri Ivanov, member of the bureau of the Polish-Russian Association, and continued in 1995 by General Anatoly Krayushkin, head of the Board of Archival Resources of Russia's Federal Security Service. Michał Żórawski, who then held the function of the Polish ambassador in Moscow, stated that such actions were to "relativise the Katyń massacre and equate it with typical crimes, common in wartime". The ambassador emphasised that Russians could operate in Poland with no limitations for at least 40 years and were free to investigate the matter of Bolshevik prisoners in 1920, yet it was only brought up after the USSR was forced to accept the responsibility for the mass murder in Katyń. Since then the issue was mentioned for propaganda purposes; M. Żórawski, *Moskwa 1990–1996. Wspomnienia pierwszego konsula III RP w Moskwie,* Warsaw 2007; Z. Raczyński, "Rosjanie żądają śledztwa", *Głos Szczeciński,* 22 Apr. 1994; A. Achmatowicz, "Co się stało z jeńcami", *Życie Ekstra – dodatek do Życia Warszawy,* 27 Jul. 1994, pp. 1, 3; J. Darczewska and M. Stasiewicz, "Jurij Iwanow oskarża RP", *Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich. Przegląd Prasowy,* 1994, no. 40, pp. 1–5; *Czas Krakowski,* 25 22 May 1995; J. Narbutt, "Moim nieskromnym zdaniem bezczelność", *Ład,* 1994, no. 50; M. Tarczyński, "Konsul mistyfikator", *Express Wieczorny,* 17 Nov. 1994; *Tygodnik Solidarność,* 1994, no. 49.

[17] T. Słocińska, "Oficerów rąbano szablami…", *Gazeta Pomorska,* 1 Jun. 1995.

[18] J. Szczepański, *Społeczeństwo Polski w walce…,* p. 347.

[19] Ibidem, p. 366.

a daily basis. The Bolsheviks thought it an honour for the locals, kept saying they were creating a new, liberated race".[20] In the Lipno county, many young women that had not managed to hide were raped, then given red-cross badges to wear on their sleeves, dubbed "sisters of mercy" and ordered to look after the wounded Red Army soldiers.[21]

Wishing to win over the local countryfolk, the troops marching on Warsaw limited their looting and robbery. It should, however, be emphasised that until the very end the Red Army propaganda tried to cultivate the belief that Polish peasants were awaiting "liberation" and were ready to join the revolutionary cause. Soldiers were thus mobilised to their final military effort. As early as on 15th August 1920 Soviet autorities began to spread in Polish towns the false information that they had taken the capital. The Polish victory in the great Battle of Warsaw ultimately turned the war; Lord Edgar Vincent D'Abernon called this confrontation the "eighteenth decisive battle in the history of the world".[22] Seeking vengeance for their defeat, the retreating Red Army organised mass requisitions and used the scorched earth tactics.

The Polish society in general did not accept Bolshevik rule as divergent from Polish tradition and religion. The many forms of Bolshevik propaganda swayed only few. Lenin later complained that "the Poles saw the Red Army as enemies, not as brothers and liberators".[23] Ultimately, it was the military victories in the Battle of Warsaw and the Neman Operation coupled with successes on the southern front that led to a peace agreement. The Treaty of Riga,[24] signed on 18th March 1921 by the government of the Second Polish Republic and Bolshevik Russia, stopped and delayed Soviet plans of conquering Europe for more than a decade. The war had left vast areas of Poland, both rural and industrialised, in economic ruin. Crime was on the rise; the state had to look after ca. 350,000 refugees.[25] On the other hand, the events had consolidated the society of the renascent Polish state.

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[20] *Kurier Płocki* 1920, no. 209, quoted after: ibidem, p. 348.

[21] J. Szczepański, *Społeczeństwo Polski w walce…*, p. 372.

[22] Ibidem, p. 361.

[23] R. Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik…*, p. 192.

[24] The peace treaty was signed in the House of the Blackheads in Riga. Until 1941 the building had only suffered minor fire damage, yet Russians had not forgotten what had transpired in those walls. When the Red Army captured Riga, Soviet sappers blew it up, making the House disappear from the face of the earth. Soviet authorities had the entire square paved over and named it after the Bolsheviks of Lenin's guard. It was not until the 1990s when Latvian authorities decided to have the edifice reconstructed; *Nowe Państwo* 1998, no. 20, p. 13.

[25] J. Szczepański, *Społeczeństwo Polski w walce…*, p. 405.

THE RED ARMY IN THE POLISH TERRITORY BETWEEN 1939 AND 1941

The geo-political situation of Poland as a country stretching between Germany and Russia, which in the 1930s were home to two of the most bloody totalitarian regimes, meant that Poland had little time to enjoy its hard-won freedom. The conquest of the country was among the top strategic military goals of both Hitler and Stalin. These aspirations were ultimately stated and sealed in the secret protocol to the treaty of non-aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact), which *de facto* signalled the consent of both those states to the occupation and the fourth partition of Poland. Acting in concert with Germany, the Red Army invaded Poland on 17th September 1939, with no prior declaration of war, thus violating no fewer than six international agreements.[26] The strike from the east came as a complete surprise to the military and administrative authorities of Poland.[27] Stalin's principal aim was to destroy the Polish armed forces in coordination with Germany, implementing the secret protocol of their agreement. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of the operation, propaganda spewed deceptive slogans of "cooperation with the insurgent workers and peasants of Belarus (Ukraine) and Poland in breaking from the yoke of landowners and capitalists, and stopping Germans from conquering western Belarus (Ukraine)".[28] These lofty words were to conceal the imperialist

[26] By entering Poland on 17th Sept. 1939, Russians broke the provisions of the Riga Treaty signed 18th Mar. 1921, the Kellogg–Briand pact from 27th Aug. 1928 and the additional protocol thereto, the non-aggression pact signed on 25th Jul. 1932, the Convention for the Definition of Aggression, signed on 3rd Jul. 1933, and the pact of non-aggression signed in Moscow on 5th May 1934, extented to 31st Dec. 1945; R. Roguski, "Armia Czerwona na Podlasiu we wrześniu i październiku 1939 roku (Działania Frontu Białoruskiego)" [in:] K. Pindel (ed.), *Podlasie w działaniach wojennych we wrześniu 1939 roku,* Siedlce 2003, pp. 231–232.

[27] On 17th Sept. 1939, as the eastern borders of Poland were being crossed by almost half a million Russian soldiers, the Polish ambassador in Moscow Dr Wacław Grzybowski tried in vain to convince the Soviet deputy minister of Internal Affairs Vladimir Potemkin that there were no grounds for the Soviet aggression. The latter remarked that "the Polish government is no more, and so there are no Polish diplomats. From this moment on, the diplomatic titles of Poles are revoked and they can be prosecuted under Soviet law, while the assets of the Polish embassy and the consulates in Minsk and Kyiv constitutes the property of the Soviet state"; quoted after: C. Grzelak, *Agresja sowiecka na Polskę w 1939 roku* [in:] K. Pindel, *Podlasie w działaniach…,* pp. 67–88. More on the Soviet invasion on Poland in: J. Garliński, *Polska w drugiej wojnie światowej,* Warsaw 1994, pp. 38–42. The same source also provides information on the first Soviet occupation of Polish territory: ibidem, pp. 48–53, 66–68.

[28] C. Grzelak, S. Jaczyński, E. Kozłowski (eds.), *Agresja sowiecka na Polskę w świetle dokumentów 17 września 1939. Geneza i skutki agresji,* vol. 1, Warsaw 1994, pp. 20–21. Red Army soldiers and Soviet officials entering Polish territory in 1939 acted similarly to their 1920 predecessors. In contrast to Germans, who stated their goals clearly, the Soviet authorities justified their invasion of Poland with propaganda. Every time the Red Army crossed Polish borders, i.e. in 1920, 1939 and 1944, their actions followed a similar course: attempts at making a good impression on the local populace through rallies, concerts and talks were followed by terror, pathologies and the establishment of administrative structures beholden to the USSR; R. Roguski, "Armia Czerwona na Podlasiu…", p. 240.

actions of the Kremlin. By entering Polish territory, Soviet authorities broke international law and bilateral agreements, since despite the loss of some territories the Polish military was still fighting and the Polish authorities were working towards the goal of defending the country. The government did not declare war against the USSR in September 1939, or at any later point, yet openly communicated that Poland has found itself in a state of war with both Germany and the Soviet Union; both were regarded as enemy states.[29]

The lawless acts of the Red Army began with the fighting for the posts of the Border Protection Corps. Having captured a given post, the Red Army would usually execute all the remaining defenders. There were also documented cases of tying teenage boys to the turrets of advancing Soviet tanks, in order to stop the opposing side from attacking. The inhabitants of Lvov were deliberately deceived. Immediately after the city surrendered to the Red Army, the commander Pavel Kurochkin broke the agreement granting the defending soldiers the right to leave the city unmolested and cross the border. Around 2,000 Polish soldiers were disarmed and taken to POW camps. In the course of the September campaign and the following Soviet occupation (1939–1941), Red Army soldiers committed mass murders on prisoners of war[30] and civilians. The offending soldiers were rarely convicted; they continued to operate with impunity, since the lawless acts were committed within the ambit of the Soviet law, e.g. under the decrees of Red Army war councils.[31]

From the very beginning, Soviet authorities had assumed the elimination, and extermination, of the intelligentsia and the richer sectors of the Polish society. The Red Army would enter first, closely followed by the NKVD; each structure was to play its designated role. Making a huge part of the Polish territory dependent on Soviet influence (the USSR occupied almost 52 percent of Poland) required total subjugation of the society, which meant not only the eradication of all sources of resistance, but also the preventive pacification of the circles that could organise such actions in the future. In this respect, the

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[29] Zygmunt Woźniczka stated: "The experience of the Russo-Polish War, and later of September 1939, solidified the belief held by the Polish elites that the country had two enemies: Germany and the Soviet Union. Many members of the intelligentsia in Poland and abroad thought that after the fight with Germany was over, we would still have to struggle with the other enemy: the Soviet Union"; Z. Woźniczka, "III wojna – oczekiwanie na prawdziwe wyzwolenie" [in:] idem (ed.), *Zakończenie wojny na Górnym Śląsku,* Katowice 2006, pp. 137–168.

[30] Soviet authorities have never disclosed the exact number of Poles taken prisoner and deported to the USSR in September 1939. The numbers provided have always been labelled "political data". For examples of the atrocities committed by the Red Army on Polish soldiers in the September campaign and the POWs near Łuniniec, in Niemirówek, near Szack and Kostopol, see: B. Urbankowski, *Czerwona msza, czyli uśmiech Stalina,* vol. 1, Warsaw 1998, pp. 35–39.

[31] Many instances of crimes and acts of repression against Poles in the early days of the Second World War were described in: C. Grzelak, "Represje i przestępstwa sowieckie w trakcie działań wojennych na terytorium Polski od 17 września 1939 roku" [in:] W. Materski, T. Szarota (eds.), Polska 1939–1945. *Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami,* Warsaw 2009, pp. 206–214.

cooperation between German and Soviet occupants had been guaranteed in the secret protocol to the pact of friendship and border delineation signed on 28th September 1939.[32]

The four operations of mass deportation and the Katyń massacre were actions designed to implement those goals in the first few years of the Second World War. The mass murder at Katyń took place in the spring of 1940 (following a decision by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party's Central Committee dated 5th March 1940). The victims were Polish POWs from the camps in Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobyelsk, and those incarcerated in the west of Ukraine and Belarus. 21,857 POWs were executed at Katyń,[33] making it one of the most tragic massacres of the first Soviet occupation. It then became a closely guarded secret, manipulated by propaganda.[34] Its discovery was communicated to the world on 13th April 1943 by the Germans, who blamed the NKVD. Stalin used the situation as a pretext to order all diplomatic relations with the rightful government of the Polish Republic, then operating in exile in London, to be broken on the night between 25th and 26th April 1943 (relations had earlier been restored under the Sikorski–Mayski agreement signed on 30th July 1941), accusing the Polish government of collaborating with Germany to resolve the issue of the Katyń massacre.

After the end of the war, anti-communist circles in Poland regarded the Katyń massacre as a symbol.[35] Despite sustained efforts, some details of the

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[32] The secret supplementary protocol to the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty regarding cooperation in suppressing the Polish resistance movement, 28th Sept. 1939 [in:] C. Pindel, *Agresja sowiecka…*, p. 231.

[33] For numerical data on the victims of the Katyń massacre and information on Polish prisoners of war and soldiers interned by USSR authorities during the so-called first Soviet occupation, see: W. Materski, *Jeńcy wojenni i internowani w latach 1939–1941* [in:] W. Materski and T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…*, pp. 215–226.

[34] W. Materski, "Z początków wojny propagandowej wokół zbrodni katyńskiej. Sowiecka Komisja Specjalna (tzw. Komisja Burdenki)" [in:] D. Rogut, A. Adamczyk (eds.), *Represje sowieckie wobec narodów Europy 1944–1956,* pp. 19–28; J. Żelazko, "Pamięć i propaganda. Sprawa Katyńia po 1945 r." [in:] ibidem, pp. 393–426.

[35] The symbols of Katyń were referred to by the members of post-war conspiracy organisations. A youth formation under the name "Katyń" was active in Łódź and Sieradz between 1948–1950. A "Katyń Squadron" operated between May 1945 and February 1946 in the counties of Kępno, Wieluń, Kluczbork, Oleśno, Syców and Oleśnica; J. Żelazko, "Pamięć i propaganda…", pp. 405–406. The only version of events accepted in the official historiography of the People's Republic of Poland stated that the Polish officers were killed by the Germans, but the communist authorities usually just strove to omit the topic. Nonetheless, the opposition circles knew the truth. Interest in the Katyń massacre was reignited in the late 1970s and early 1980s – naturally, outside the official discourse. Speaking of the perpertrators of this crime or honouring the memory of its victims was forbidden in communist Poland, so the task of cultivating their memory fell to Poles in exile; monuments were founded outside the Polish borders. The erection of the monument in London, lobbied for by Polish émigrés, promted the USSR to voice loud objections. Particular offence was taken at the inscription which openly informed of the Soviet responsibility for the death of 14.5 thousand Polish prisoners of war murdered in Katyń and in other locations within the USSR. The Soviet authorities even tried to force British diplomats to prevent the monument from being constructed. They failed, and the publicity their efforts generated actually helped

NKVD-orchestrated mass murder still remain unclear; nevertheless, the memory of Katyń is still alive in the collective consciousness of the Polish nation.[36]

The ruthlessness of Moscow's policies during the first Soviet occupation manifested itself also in the deportation of Poles from the eastern regions of the Second Polish Republic. It is estimated that between 1940 and 1941 more than 320,000 Polish citizens living in these territories were sent to the interior of the USSR.[37] What is more, between 1939 and 1941 Poles were forcibly resettled to the Soviet Union.

The negative attitude Poles displayed towards the Red Army soldiers and the NKVD also stemmed from the enmity with which Soviets treated priests and the acts of disrespect towards churches, especially those of the Catholic denomination. Many crimes against members of the clergy were committed by the troops retreating eastwards after Germany attacked the USSR on 22nd June 1941.[38]

In mid-June 1943 the USSR government imposed Soviet citizenship on all Polish nationals formerly inhabiting the eastern regions of Poland or deported from these lands after 1939. The first of such acts (pertaining to all inhabitants of the annexed eastern reaches of the Polish Republic who were staying there

spread knowledge about the massacre; J. Żelazko, "Pamięć i propaganda…", pp. 407–408; B. Polak, "Katyński pomnik w Londynie 1945–1976", *Rocznik Koszaliński* 2001, no. 29, pp. 113–118. Monuments to the memory of Polish officers murdered in the USSR were also erected in other countries; A. Siomkajło, *Katyń w pomnikach świata,* Warsaw 2002. In Poland, the memory of the victims could only be honoured in this way after the political transformations of 1989. Before that, Poles paid homage to the murdered soldiers by lighting candles in their windows on 13th April and founding memorial plaques in churches. On 31st Jul. 1981 a momument to the memory of the Katyń victims was unveiled in the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw, but was stolen by "unnamed perpetrators" the very same night. The Soviet authorities did not admit to committing the crime until 13th Apr. 1990 – the Wolrdwide Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Katyń Massacre; J. Żelazko, "Pamięć i propaganda…", pp. 413, 419.

[36] The memory of Katyń was revived again after the Polish presidential aircraft crashed at Smolensk on 10th Apr. 2010. The state delegation was travelling to attend the commemoration ceremonies on the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre.

[37] The first deportation in February 1940 involved ca. 140,000 people (ca. 82 percent of whom were Polish); two more operations took place in April and in June that same year. The last wave of deportations (carried out in several stages) organised in May and June 1941 was never completed due to the outbreak of the German–Soviet war. The lowest estimated number of deported persons, ca. 320,000, comes from the research presented in A. Głowacki, "Deportowani w latach 1940–1941" [in:] W. Materski and T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…,* pp. 238–246. Interesting data can be gleaned when these numbers are compared with these presented in the Soviet documents on Poles from the eastern regions living in the USSR – the latter are decidedly lower; W. Roszkowski (ed.), *Konflikty polsko-sowieckie 1942–1944. Z archiwów sowieckich,* vol. 3, Warsaw 1993, p. 17, 35–48, 167–176. More on deportation operations in: A. Jaracz, *10 lutego 1940 roku…,* pp. 46–63; idem, "13 kwietnia 1940 roku – druga deportacja ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich w głąb ZSRR", *Rocznik Koszaliński* 1993, no. 23, pp. 68–84; idem, "Trzecia i czwarta deportacja ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich w głąb ZSRR (1940–1941)", *Rocznik Koszaliński* 1994, no. 24, pp. 58–68.

[38] R. Dzwonkowski SAC, "Straty osobowe Kościoła katolickiego obrządku łacińskiego pod okupacją sowiecką w latach 1939–1941 i 1944–1945" [in:] W. Materski and T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…,* pp. 327–332.

at the time of the region's formal incorporation into the USSR, i.e. on 1st and 2nd November 1939) was a decree by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed on 29th November 1939. The decision also referred to persons who had moved to these territories earlier. The significance of the decision lay in the fact that under the USSR constitution of 1936, each Soviet citizen was obliged to perform military service. Violations of the military oath were severly punished. The exact number of Polish nationals conscripted into the Red Army in 1939–1941 is now difficult to assess. Estimates vary greatly, placing the total somewhere between 100,000 to over 300,000 men.[39] Forced enrollment of Polish citizens into the Soviet army was a form of repression. It is not easy to calculate how many Poles died in Red Army uniforms and how many were taken prisoner. It should nevertheless be noted that the Red Army was multinational in character; it was a medley made up of millions.[40] Poles were not the only nationality forcibly conscripted to serve in Soviet military units following the annexation of their native lands into the USSR. The fate of many Red Army soldiers was laced with tragedy, and – regardless of the crimes they may have committed – they often also fell victim to the communist dictatorship at the Kremlin. This being said, as a military formation which helped implement the imperialist plans of the Soviet authorities, the Red Army was perceived by Poles as one of the most brutal structures of totalitarian communism and an occupying force not welcome in Polish territory.[41]

SOVIET/RUSSIAN MILITARY FORCES IN THE POLISH TERRITORY BETWEEN 1944 AND 1993

Military significance

In the course of the Second World War the Red Army crossed the Polish border as an invader twice, on 17th September 1939 and in January 1944. It captured eastern territories for the USSR, while continuing its fight German forces with the anti-Nazi coalition.

In June 1944 the strategic operation under the code name "Bagration" started in the east. The offensive, conducted in the summer and autumn months (from

[39] A. Głowacki, "Przymusowo wcieleni do Armii Czerwonej, w tym pełniący służbę w tzw. Strojbatalionach" [in:] W. Materski and T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…*, pp. 253–260.

[40] "By 1945, the total number of people who had been mobilized into the Soviet army forces since 1939 exceeded thirty million"; C. Merridale, *Ivan's War. Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945,* New York 2006, p. 4.

[41] It should be emphasised that the forces sent to conquer new territories such as the Baltic states (or Poland) were not composed of randomly selected soldiers. They were handpicked, chosen to be "politically reliable"; C. Merridale, *Ivan's War…*, s. 74.

July to October) of 1944, reached the line of the Biebrza, Narew, Vistula and Wisłoka rivers. The decisive role in this phase fell to the troops of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian Front, active in the operations at Białystok and in the Lublin–Brześć Offensive. Other crucial formations included the 1st Ukrainian Front conducting the Lvov–Sandomierz Offensive.

By the summer of 1944 the members of the anti-German coalition were engaged in a competition that came to be known as "the race to Berlin". In 1944–1945 the military potential of the Red Army was twice as great as that of the Allied Forces in Europe.[42] Nonetheless, it refused to aid the insurgents of the Warsaw Uprising, allowing the defenders of the Polish capital to bleed out.[43] Under Stalin's pressure, in November 1944 a military plan was drawn to ensure that the Red Army would reach Berlin. Crushing the German troops stationed in Poland was essential to its implementation.[44] Preparations took almost half a year. The offensive was carried out by forces of five fronts. "It was the main stage of the second World War, decisive and final, engaging more than two thirds of the Nazi army".[45] By then the Soviet Union had already become a crucial player in the anti-German coalition. As noted by the British official historian Lionel Ellis, "the campaign could not have been fought successfully in 1944–45 if Germany had not at the same time been fighting for life against Russia".[46] Germany lost almost as much of its manpower in the hostilities that took place in Polish territory as it did on the Western Front fighting against the combined force of the United States, Great Britain and France.[47]

The plans for the winter and spring campaign on the Eastern Front included the launch of a great offensive by the Red Army and the Polish People's Army. The decisive stages of the plan were the Vistula–Oder Offensive, the East Prussian Offensive, and the battles fought in February and March 1945 in Pomerania, Lubusz Land, Silesia (Lower Silesia, the Opole region and the Cieszyn region). On 12th January 1945 four Russian fronts, a force some 4 million strong, started their march from the line of Vistula, Narew and the Great Masurian Lakes. The 1st Belorussian Front under Marshal Georgy Zhukov and the 1st Ukrainian Front under Marshal Ivan Konev advanced from central and southern Poland towards the general direction of Poznań and Wrocław. Their objective was to destroy the German Army Group "A". Later in the campaign, they were to pursue the retreating German forces westwards and attack Berlin. The 2nd and 3rd Belorussian Fronts were ordered

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42 P. Masson, *Historia Wehrmachtu 1939–1945,* Warsaw 1995 (original title: *Histoire de l'armee allemande 1939–1945,* Paris 1994), p. 248.

43 J. Garliński, *Polska w drugiej…,* pp. 290–308.

44 H. Stańczyk, *Operacja krakowska 1945,* Warsaw 2001, pp. 42–50.

45 F. Skibiński, *O sztuce wojennej na północno-zachodnim teatrze działań wojennych 1944–1945,* Warsaw 1977, p. 12.

46 Lionel Ellis, *Victory in the West: The Defeat of Germany,* vol. 1, London 1968, p. xvii.

47 B. Dolata, *Wyzwolenie Polski 1944–1945,* Warsaw 1974, p. 11.

to crush the Army Group Centre in Eastern Prussia; additionally, a part of the the 2nd Belorussian Front forces was sent west, to provide cover for the eastern flank of the 1st Belorussian Front. The German military was considerably outnumbered. The Soviet command also exploited the fact that the Germans had not managed to regroup and send more forces to the most vulnerable positions. The Red Army struck in intervals, several days apart, on different sections of the front. The 1st Ukrainian Front attacked on 12th January 1945 from around the Sandomierz bridgehead. The advance of the 3rd Belorussian Front started on 13th January 1945 from Gąbin and Pilkały, under the command of General Ivan Chernakhovsky (after his death on 18th February the command was taken by Marshal Alexandr Vasilevsky). A day later the offensive began for the 1st Belorussian Front, advancing from the Magnuszew bridgehead, and the 2nd Belorussian Front, moving from bridgeheads around Różan and Serock. The 4th Ukrainian Front (created in the summer of 1944 from the forces of the west flank of the 1st Ukrainian Front) under General Ivan Petrov moved on 15th January 1945, heading for Cracow. Outnumbered by the USSR forces, the Germans were forced to retreat. Polish territories to the west of the former front line were captured very quickly, since after the initial defeats the Germans ceased to put up much resistance; they decided to allow the Soviet offensive to reach the pre-war borders of the Third Reich and make a stand there. The German lines of defence by the Vistula river were broken shortly before 30th January 1945 by the 1st Belorussian Front and the 1st Ukrainian Front.

The offensive of the 2nd Belorussian Front progressed at a slightly slower pace, since it developed in two directions: the main force was advancing from the Różan bridgehead towards Elbląg, while auxiliary forces moved from Serock towards Toruń and Świecie. In January 1945 the Soviet High Command came to the conclusion that it was feasible to continue the offensive as far as Berlin; their wishes were communicated to the commanders of the 1st Belorussian and the 1st Ukrainian Front. In such circumstances Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky was ordered to move the military operations of the 2nd Belorussian Front to the western banks of the Vistula as soon as possible.[48] Having beaten the Army Group "A", the forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached the Oder in early February 1945. The Sandomierz–Silesian Offensive resulted in these forces seizing almost the entire territory of southern Poland with the Dąbrowa basin, Upper Silesia and the Opole region; under the provisions of the Potsdam Treaty these lands ultimately became the Śląsko-Dąbrowskie voivodeship. The operations conducted by the 1st Ukrainian Front in February and March ended with them reaching the line of the Lusatian Neisse.[49] The

[48] H. Stańczyk, "Bitwa o Toruń w styczniu i lutym 1945 roku" [in:] M. Biskup (ed.), *Historia Torunia,* vol. 3, part 2, Toruń 2006, pp. 705–707.

[49] For a detailed description of the operations conducted by the 1st Ukrainian Front in 1944 and 1945, see: H. Stańczyk, *Od Sandomierza do Opola i Raciborza,* Warsaw 1998.

winter and summer campaign in 1945 concluded in May with operations in the Szczecin and Kłodzko regions and in Żuławy Wiślane.

The fact that Soviet forces defeated the German occupiers was not tantamount to Poles regaining their sovereignty. At the end of 1944 and in early 1945 the political situation of Poland remained complicated and volatile, due to the hostile actions of the USSR[50] and the submissive attitude of its allies. Most countries in the international arena acknowledged the existence of the Polish state; Poles were fighting on all the fronts of the Second World War and indubitably contributed to the ultimate defeat of the Axis, yet the Western powers were willing to pay any price to maintain proper relations with Moscow. In practice, their stance allowed the Soviet state to extend its sphere of influence to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. After many years, George Kennan stated that the Allies wanted Poles to resist Germans, but surrender to the Soviet Union.[51]

The Red Army entered the territory of the Second Polish Republic on 4th January 1944 and Stalin deliberately broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile, who did not agree to having Poland's borders redefined and to the interference in internal issues of the country. Since then the civil and military structures of the Polish state, which had been developed in secret, could not come out into the open and start functioning in Polish territory under the authority of the government in London. Polish leaders in exile could not return home. In July 1944 Stalin created a communist structure of which he was in full control – the Polish Committee of National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, hereinafter: PKWN; colloquially known as the Lublin Committee). Thus, he was able to work towards his specific aim of turning Poland into a state fully dependent on and controlled by the USSR, while maintaining the image of an upright ruler not interfering with the internal affairs of another country. "The PKWN was subject to its eastern principal in very many aspects, a reality which stemmed not only from Soviet policy, but also from the relatively meagre support Polish communists enjoyed in their own country," writes Janusz Wróbel. "To maintain and consolidate their power, they needed to rely on the Soviet army and Soviet secret service".[52] Poland's "victory" in the Second World War was an empty

[50] Before ultimately deciding to seize the eastern regions of the Second Polish Republic and to turn Poland into a satellite state, Stalin contemplated the possibility of transforming Poland into another Soviet Republic. Information on this subject has been preserved e.g. in the documents of the Home Army in Białystok; "Załącznik nr 13 do raportu sytuacyjnego Komendy Okręgu AK Białystok z 5 listopada 1944 r." [in:] J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945 w dokumentach podziemia i oficjalnych władz. Dokumenty do dziejów PRL,* issue 10, Warsaw 1998, p. 74.

[51] G. Kennan, quoted in: W. Długoborski, "Od klęski powstania do inscenizacji wyzwolenia: społeczeństwo polskie na przełomie 1944/1945 roku" [in:] Z. Woźniczka (ed.), *Zakończenie wojny…*, p. 47.

[52] J. Wróbel, "Represje sowieckie…", p. 100; documents on the creation of the National Committee of Polish Liberation [in]: W. Roszkowski (ed.), *Konflikty polsko-sowieckie…*, pp. 63–90.

slogan. Territorial, economic and population losses proved enormous. In the already cited observation, Mirosław Golon points out that "Poland was the greatest 'spoil of war' seized by the USSR in the Second World War and was treated accordingly".[53]

The Red Army did not leave Polish territory in 1945; it remained there long after the cessation of all hostilities. Its soldiers did not feel any restraint in their actions, treating the land and its inhabitants as they saw fit. On 10th June 1945, following a decision co-signed by Stalin and General Alexei Antonov on 29th May that year, the Soviet authorities created an occupying unit in Polish territory – the Northern Group of Forces of the Red Army.[54] For diplomatic and propagandistic reasons, Stalin ensured that the foundation of the Northern Group was formally based on a "pact of friendship and cooperation" signed on 21st April 1945 by representatives of the USSR government and the Polish communist Provisional Government. Since the official name of the Soviet army changed in March 1946, the structures associated with it were also renamed. The Northern Group of Forces, formed of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, began to station in Poland and did not leave until 1993.[55] It took over the function of the various Front units and continued the work carried out by them earlier (i.e. before the end of the war). The increased presence of Soviet soldiers and the secret service was, on the one hand, related to Poland's strategic geopolitical position as a gateway to the West, and on the other, it stemmed from Stalin's imperialistic agenda.

The political and military significance of the Soviet forces was immense for, in essence, the entire duration of their stay in Poland. The issue is still impossible to fully analyse or reconstruct on the basis of the available source material. The political aspect, connected with the activities of the Soviet intelligence, the influence on Polish political life, policing, and actions of repressive nature, was strictly related to the military significance of having a foreign army structure stationed within the state's borders. These issues

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53 M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich…,* p. 10.

54 In May 1945 the Soviet units stationing outside of the USSR were divided into four so-called Army Groups. The Southern Army Group was posted in Hungary, Romania and partially in Bulgaria and remained there until its dissolution in 1947. The Central Army Group was garrisoned in the occupied part of Austria until 1955, when the Austrian State Treaty was signed. In 1949 the formation stationed in the eastern lands of the former Third Reich was titled the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, and renamed the Western Army Group in June 1989. These Army Groups were led by their general commanders, who also presided over all allied control committees. They held military power and controlled civil administration on their territories; the only exception to this rule was the Northern Army Group, where the commander-in-chief retained only military authority; B. Potyrała, "Północna Grupa Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej w Polsce i w województwie legnickim", *Szkice Legnickie* 1996, vol. 18, pp. 117–118.

55 M. Golon, "Rola Północnej Grupy Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej w Polsce w czasach stalinowskich 1948–1956" [in:] R. Sudziński (ed.), *Oblicza polskiego stalinizmu. Materiały z konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej w dniu 20 maja 1999 roku przez Wydział Humanistyczny WSHE,* Włocławek 2000, p. 183

cannot be analysed in isolation, since they are interconnected. Aspects such as the deployment, numbers and the military character of Soviet units had a connection with the military function of the Northern Group of Forces. In practice, after the end of the war the Group pursued objectives formerly carried out by the 2nd Belorussian Front. Stalin's imperialistic ambitions meant that his plans of expansion into the West did not end with the defeat of the Third Reich.

Officially, the Soviet forces in Polish territory were to protect the supply base of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany and communication routes between Germany and the USSR. After 1947, the Northern Group's stay in Poland also began to be justified with the threat of the "re-emerging militarism of West Germany and imperialistic forces".[56] Unofficially, however, each Soviet unit stationed in Poland was taken into consideration as a force that could potentially assist in military operations conducted in Western Europe. According to Bolesław Potyrała, in the case of a war of aggression, the Northern Group was to mount an offensive after breaking the enemy front at the river Elbe. Should the enemy attempt an attack, the Northern Group would have to stop them by launching a counteroffensive in order to allow the units stationed in the bordering military regions (the Baltic and Belarus) to arrive.[57] Golon claims that since the size of the Northern Group had been reduced, the implementation of these tasks would have only been possible if the units acted in cooperation with the Polish army or reinforcements from the Baltic and Belorussian Military Districts.[58]

The significance of the Northern Group of Forces was strictly dependent on the size and location of its units. As early as in 1945, Soviet armies began to use elements of military infrastructure abandoned by the Germans in the Recovered Territories[59] and some structures within Polish borders. Moreover, in the first few years after the war many Soviet soldiers stationed outside of military bases, and even outside of garrisons. In July 1945 the high command of the Northern Group was established in Legnica. The choice of this city, located at the meeting point of important communication routes, was hardly accidental. The fact that the Red Army took over the best section of Legnica indicates that Soviet officers were behaving like yet another occupying force.[60]

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[56] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu. Armia Radziecka w Polsce 1944–1956,* Warsaw 2000, p. 6.

[57] B. Potyrała, "Północna Grupa…", p. 119.

[58] M. Golon, "Północna Grupa Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej w Polsce w latach 1945–1956. Okupant w roli sojusznika", *Czasy Nowożytne* 1999, vol. 6, p. 54.

[59] Recovered Territories – a term used to denote north-western parts of Poland that were included as part of the Polish territories following the Potsdam Conference in 1945.

[60] The first headquarters of the Northern Group of Forces was an unspecified garrison in the west of Poland, most likely in Western Pomerania. According to Golon, Soviet authorities may also have been considering to place the high command in Toruń. In July 1945 the decision was taken to establish the Group's headquarters in Legnica, and the command was moved there from Bydgoszcz. The Russians

By the early 1950s the network of military facilities and the location of Northern Group units had solidified. The Soviet army was then in control of ca. 70–80 bases and garrisons, more than a dozen of which were abandoned by the mid-1950s. What remained was a network of ca. 60 key Soviet military facilities, which became the foundation for the Northern Group's operations in Poland until the 1990s.[61]

The existing sources make it impossible – with very few exceptions – to specify the exact location of garrisons occupied by the Northern Group of Forces in the aftermath of the war. Soviet units moved frequently, their whereabouts were kept secret, and the Polish authorities had limited or no access to related information. In 1945 the larger Soviet garrisons (ones which had appropriated entire enclosed districts) were stationed, among others, in Legnica, Brzeg, Oleśnica, Żagań, Wrocław, Szprotawa, Białogard, Świdnica, Świebodzice, Wałbrzych, Szczecin and Świnoujście, though the units in the latter two locations initially were not subject to the Northern Group. Smaller garrisons, some of which were abandoned in the mid-1950s, were located for instance in Poznań, Września, Bydgoszcz, Gorzów, Toruń, Gdańsk, Łowicz, Rembertów, Malbork and Elbląg. Relatively large Soviet units withdrew from many cities in Poland in 1947–1950. Also, Northern Group's bases entirely closed to outsiders existed in rural areas as well; those were Borne Sulinowo near Szczecinek, Strachów and Świętoszów near Bolesławiec.[62] The most important of the Soviet bases and garrisons were situated in Western Pomerania and Lower Silesia, i.e. the "new" territories, near the western borders of Poland. The importance of Soviet facilities in other parts of the country was small. The

appropriated ca. 1/3 of the city. Its Polish residents were forced to vacate the area and were robbed during their move, losing whatever leftover German goods they had acquired. The Russian sector comprised all the most important edifices and equipment, to which Poles were denied access. The Polish side managed to reclaim some of them in later years, usually in exchange for some service. The Soviet quarter was separated from the rest of the city with a wall and refered to colloquially as Kwadrat [the Square]; B. Potyrała, "Północna Grupa…", p. 118. Legnica remained the seat of the Northern Group's command between 1945 and 1984, and then in 1991 to 1993. From the end of the 1984 until April 1991 the city was occupied by the staff of the Western Theatre of War Command, which had moved there from Świdnica. In 1984–1988 this formation was under the command of Nikolai Vasilevich Ogarkov, and after him (until 1991) of Stanislav Ivanovich Postnikov. The operations of the Northern Group became subordinate to the Theatre. The high command of the Northern Group returned to Legnica only after the headquarters of General Postnikov was moved to the USSR in 1991; M. Tujdowski, "Krajobraz po bazach", *Siedlisko,* no. 4, pp. 5–6.

[61] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 188–189; for a more detailed description of the location of garrisons and other 54 facilities in Poland where Northern Group's units were stationed in 1956–1993, see the appendix to: idem, "Północna Grupa…", pp. 110–115.

[62] Idem, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 188–189. Soviet garrisons and bases were extraterritorial, and as such they were not subject to Polish jurisdiction or, in fact, any kind of control. Independent garrison units founded in Poland functioned according to the Soviet model known as ZATO (Zakritye Administrativno-Territorialnye Obrazovania, i.e. closed administrative-territorial formations). The majority of bases were not taken over by Poles until after 1992. For more on the former Soviet bases in Kęszyca Leśna, Bagicz, Borne Sulinowo, in: M. Tujdowski, "Krajobraz po bazach…", pp. 5–14.

process of withdrawing a part of the Soviet military and returning facilities to Polish authorities did not conclude until the early 1950s. What is more, small groups of Northern Group's soldiers, usually officers, were billeted in many Polish cities. They performed strictly specified tasks, connected with, for instance, communication and contact with the Polish military, but also with intelligence and counterintelligence.[63] The first list of facilities occupied by the Northern Group, prepared in July to November 1958, indicates that the largest concentration of Soviet units was around Legnica, Borne Sulinowo, Świętoszów, Wrocław, Białogard, Świnoujście and Warsaw. The essential nexus points in the Group's networks were bases located near Legnica, Borne Sulinowo, Świętoszów, Kluczew, Szprotawa, Kęszyca (handed over to the Soviet army in 1956), Rembertów, Świnoujście and Trzebień. The garrisons in Świętoszew and Borne Sulinowo were crucial for the combat utility of the Group's ground forces.[64] Strachów near Żagań housed one of the largest artillery emplacements in Central Europe. The Northern Group of Forces was in possession of eight airports, located in Chojna, Kluczewo, Bagicz, Krzywa, Legnica, Brzeg, Szprotawa and Żagań. It also utilised five auxiliary grass airfields. Świnouście was the home base of the 24th Motor Torpedo Boat Brigade. The bases in Dobrowo, Buszno and Trzemeszno Lubuskie used to hold nuclear weapons, a fact that did not come to light until 1991, as Soviet troops were withdrawing from Poland.[65] The basic network of Soviet bases and garrisons, which solidified in the 1950s, had existed since 1945. Only several facilities and grounds were added later, for instance the Kluczewo airfield, obtained in 1948, the nearby village of Burzykowo, incorporated into the military zone in 1952, as well as the Polish Army's airfields in Krzywa and Wschowa, handed over in 1953 and 1956 respectively. The Northern Group of Forces took control of several other facilities in the 1950s, yet these were returned to Polish forces after several years; in 1955, for instance, the Soviet unit extended their section of the coast in Świnoujście – as it later turned out – for purely recreational reasons. The profound influence the Group extended over Poland is evident from the fact that the boundaries of the Zielona Góra and Wrocław voivodeships were changed so that the bases in Szprotawa and Świętoszów could belong to the latter. Consequently, the entire testing ground was under the administration of the Bolesławiec county.[66]

Soviet units moved between the facilities by public roads or by rail. Very often, even after formal agreements on this issue were signed (1957), Polish

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[63] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 188–189.

[64] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 35–36, 38; B. Potyrała, "Północna Grupa…", p. 121.

[65] B. Potyrała, "Północna Grupa…", p. 121. This information was corroborated on 7th Apr. 1991 by General Viktor Dubynin; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu. Armia Radziecka w Polsce 1956–1993,* Warsaw 2001, p. 54.

[66] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 190; idem, "Północna Grupa…", p. 52.

authorities were not informed of such movements. Traffic accidents aside, such journeys contributed to substantial damage to local infrastructure.

The structure of Northern Group's garrisons in Poland stabilised after 1956; the changes introduced later were minor. The Soviets did, however, make efforts to modernise, and invest in, the bases and garrisons they occupied.[67] The agreement on the legal status of Soviet troops temporarily stationed in Poland, signed on 17th December 1956, and the separate accords to which it referred, upheld the state of Northern Group's bases as of the late 1956. These comprised 59 military facilities spanning over 170 thousand acres.

The secret agreement on the size, location and mode of operations of the Soviet units temporarily stationed in Polish territory, signed between the governments of the People's Republic of Poland and the USSR on 23rd October 1957, was the first document specifying the size of the Russian force. It was to amount to 62–66 thousand soldiers. The total number for the years 1956–1991, including civilian personnel and family members, was estimated at ca. 100,000 people. Naturally, until the 1990s Polish administration was not at liberty to verify the number of soldiers or the amount of equipment located in Northern Group's bases. The agreement committed the Group's commander to inform the Minister of National Defence of any changes in the units; also, the routes which could be used for moving Russian troops without additional consultations with Polish authorities were specified, as was the location of thirty-nine Northern Group's bases.[68] Thirty-five of those bases had the status of independent garrisons. As long as they remained under Soviet administration, Poles had only limited access to these facilities. Half of the 59 facilities were small in size; 21 bases encompassed ca. 148,000 acres, i.e. 86 percent of all the land in Northern Group's possession in 1956. Some of those facilities played a number of military roles; they were operating and alternative airfields, independent fuel supply bases, ground-troop bases, fuel storage sites and stations functionally connected with specific facilities, military complexes with testing grounds, munitions depots, city garrisons, and one military port. Many bases, e.g. those in Świnoujście and Legnica, combined multiple functions.[69]

The exact size of Soviet units stationing in Poland before the year 1957 cannot be ascertained using the sources that are currently available. In the

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[67] Idem, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 190–191.

[68] An addendum to the agreement on the number, location and the mode of operations of Soviet troops temporarily stationed in Poland was signed on 18th Nov. 1970. It introduced small changes to the provisions of the original document from 1957. In spite of the stipulations made on 23rd Oct. 1957 regarding the number of Northern Group's garrisons and the list of towns occupied by the troops, Russians were not reporting any changes to the state of their units; moreover, the factual number of Soviet garrisons was larger. A state resembling the officially stipulated one was only reached in the late 1980s; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1956–1993,* pp. 22, 35–37.

[69] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 191–192.

final stage of the Second World War (April and May 1945) ca. 1.5 million Red Army soldiers were scattered throughout the lands that would become post-war Poland. Large units were deployed to the northern part of Eastern Prussia, governed by military authorities until May 1946 and subsequently transformed into the Kaliningrad Oblast. Soviet troops had been withdrawing from Poland *en masse* since May 1945, yet there is much to suggest that in 1946 their numbers were still substantial. The demobilisation of Soviet soldiers started in June 1945 and concluded in 1948. It is estimated that between 1946–1949 their numbers in Poland amounted to ca. 300,000. More precise information could only be obtained after consulting sources held in Russian archives.

Both the number and the nature of Northern Group's bases testified to their military significance; such power would hardly be necessary if the troops were kept there only to protect communication routes. It should be noted that the size of Soviet forces in the neighbouring German Democratic Republic is estimated at 400,000 soldiers. Substantial numbers of troops were also stationed in the Kaliningrad Oblast and beyond the Bug River. Moreover, in the Stalinist period, Soviets extended an ever-growing influence over Polish armed forces, a process personally overseen by Rokossovsky.[70]

Despite the 1957 agreement, the Polish Ministry of Defence was never informed on the size, equipment or movements of Northern Group's units in Polish territory until the late 1980s. Only after the 1990 intervention by Brigadier General Zdzisław Ostrowski did the Soviet command provide some information in this respect.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the commander cadre of the Northern Group of Forces was composed primarily of generals who had led units of the 2nd Belorussian Front. Later years brought changes, but even then the highest positions were given to officers who already had experience in working for the Group. The supreme commander answered directly to the Soviet Minister of Defence, making Group's command entirely independent of Polish authorities. From 1953 onwards, the commander-in-chief of the Northern Group of Forces would hold the Soviet military title of group commander.[71] In 1945–1993 the command was successively held by eighteen officers.[72] The

[70] Ibidem, pp. 193–195. A number of Soviet officers remained in Poland. In the late 1945, the issue of regulating the legal status of Soviet citizens working in the Polish military was handled by Nikolai Bulganin, who, supported by various USSR services, supervised the creation of the "new Poland". The essential decisions as to their status in the Polish army were taken in 1949–1950, when 835 former Red Army oficers who had been transferred to the Polish army were relieved of their Soviet citizenship and remained in the Polish military as Polish nationals. The matter of these officers was finalised by Bulganin's successor in the Ministry of Defence, Marshal Vasilevsky; M. Golon, "Radzieckie służby dyplomatyczne i konsularne w Polsce w latach 1944–1959", *Czasy Nowożytne* 2007, vol. 20, pp. 165–251.

[71] B. Potyrała, "Dowódcy Północnej Grupy Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej (Federacji Rosyjskiej) w latach 1945–1993", *Szkice Legnickie* 1994, vol. 16, p. 88.

[72] For a full list of Northern Group of Forces commanders, see: ibidem, pp. 88–106; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1956–1993,* pp. 194–195.

remaining cadre were generals leading specific units, which were gradually being demobilised: until 1948, the 65th Army that was a part of the Northern Group was commanded by General Pavel Batov; General Konstantin Vershynin led the Northern Group's air forces until April 1946 (during the war he had commanded the 4th Air Army, which remained a part of the Group after 1945); General Pyotr Tertyshnyi was the leader of the Northern Group's Operational Training Unit in 1945–1948; General Dmitri Vilkhovnenko held the function of the Northern Group's deputy chief of staff for political issues until 1953. The first head of the Group's Political Directorate was General Andrei Okorokov. Some of the several thousand Soviet officers transferred from the Polish Armed Forces to the Soviet army in 1945–1946, including all officers of the political branch, were also assigned to units of the Northern Group of Forces, which amply demonstrates that the intended functions of the Group went well beyond the military.[73]

Political significance

The political significance of the Soviet forces in Polish territory, directly linked with their military importance, revolved around several issues, the most important of which was their interference with internal matters of the Polish state. It also included aspects of policing and propaganda, and the legal status of the foreign units remaining in Polish territory.

In May 1945 the Supreme Headquarters of the USSR Armed Forces took the decision to have the soldiers of the Northern Group of Forces stay in Poland. Until then the Polish communists – assisted by the NKVD and Red Army units – had been taking over power, consolidating it, and subjugating the government of the country to USSR interests. Officially, the agreement between the USSR and the puppet PKWN signed on 26th July 1944 precluded any interference with Polish internal affairs; yet in practice the provision was never respected. The agreement formally sealed decisions already made by the USSR and policies that had been underway. Stalin had planned the creation of communist state structures. The terror and repression used against members of the Polish Underground State and the civilian population was officially justified by the "need to provide security for the supply lines to Red Army fronts".

Soviet military governorships in Polish territory began to be established during the war. The creation of the network was initiated by Order No. 0416 issued on 22nd September 1944 by the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, and Note No. 092 by Nikolai Bulganin.[74] Governors would temporarily take

[73] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 195–197; idem, "Północna Grupa…", pp. 43–44.

[74] The possibility of creating wartime commandant offices was provided for in art. 43 of the Fourth Hague Convention, signed on 18th Oct. 1907, "Regulations and Customs of War on Land".

control of areas in which direct military actions had already ceased. Their principal duties included maintaining order and security behind the front lines. In theory, if a given region already had an existing civil administration, the governor was obliged to act in concert with its organs and wield supreme authority temporarily, i.e. in wartime. Stalin made use of wartime governorships not only to satisfy the needs of the Red Army, but also to consolidate the influence of Soviet and communist authorities in Poland. In his instructions issued on 23rd August 1944, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, General Rokossovsky, obliged wartime governors to maintain contacts exclusively with the administrative organs created by the PKWN. The instruction granted commandants extensive power: they could issue the order to open fire on Polish citizens, they could decide whether a given individual was instigating oppositional activity, and were obliged to demand that local authorities establish a citizen militia force in each town and village and fight "enemy agents" sent behind the front lines, as well as confiscate weapons, radio transmitters and receivers from civilians.[75] The scope of responsibilities and duties of wartime commandants within Polish borders (as per 1939) was ultimately delineated in the "Instruction for wartime commandants in Polish territory" issued on 10th October 1944. The document obliged them to eliminate the practice of marauding and enforce military discipline. Since the territories under their authority were soon taken over by communist civil administration, the main task of the commandants was to watch over the territory behind the fighting Soviet units.

The situation was different in the western lands, whose territorial ascription to Poland was only confirmed in the summer of 1945. In theory, it was decided that the stretch of land behind each front line (60 to 100 km wide) would be governed by wartime military governor offices "cooperating" with the organs of civil administration. Beyond that zone, authority would be wielded by the Polish communist administration, with commandants controlling only railways and transportation. In practice, however, in the last few months of the war it was the governors that held factual authority in the whole of Poland. The first wartime governorships in the western territories were established in January 1945, and since no communist authorities existed there, for a considerable amount of time the scope of the governors' authority was much broader than in Central and Eastern Poland. Additional duties included maintaining order, protecting real estate, re-establishing normal life in towns, and helping in creating administrative structures. According to communist propaganda, the cooperation between the communist authorities and the Red Army was very

[75] "[…] the actions of wartime governors of cities, counties and communes usually went far beyond Rokossovsky's instructions, since they were notorious for usurping the right to wield absolute power, and were often able to execute it, with NKVD units at their disposal. PKWN organs were entirely powerless to stop them"; J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…,* p. 165, note 426.

successful. Yet the reality was not always so rosy; Soviet governors would often disregard the Polish authorities, ignoring their official directives and orders.[76] There were, however, regions where the mutual collaboration proved effective. Everything depended on the goodwill of the governor and on his personality. Officially, representatives of the Provisional Government took over the entirety of civil administration on western territories pursuant to the decisions of the Warsaw Conference dated 28th May 1945. Governors were retained only military authority. It was decreed that governors' offices would operate until the ultimate conclusion of Soviet military operations, even though, in theory, they should have ceased to exist with the capitulation of Germany. In practice, despite the directives signed in May 1945, many war governors in the western regions refused to accept any authority but their own. The situation improved in the summer of 1945, after the communist administration began to operate.

Many governorships ceased to exist in July and August 1945, though some continued to function until the early months of 1946. The last governors were relieved of their offices in the summer of 1946, when the process of moving the so-called captured assets into Russia was complete. The Red Army front command offices were dissolved in June 1945. Wartime governors subsequently became subordinate to the commander-in-chief of the Northern Group of Forces, Rokossovsky. There were many cases of governors hindering the work of the communist administration. They also frequently supported NKVD operations, used terror against Poles, organised transports of the so-called "spoils of war"; they also played a vital role in the deportation of Polish nationals to the Soviet Union. The activities of governors' offices safeguarded the interests of the USSR and the Red Army.[77]

During the war and in its immediate aftermath, the Soviet military and other services were actively involved in persecuting the members of Polish state structures and subjugating Poland to the will of the USSR.[78] "Military

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[76] R. Techman, *Armia Radziecka w gospodarce morskiej Pomorza Zachodniego w latach 1945–1956,* Poznań 2003, pp. 26–28; "Raport dekadowy kierownika PUBP w Brodnicy za okres 9–18 kwietnia 1945 r., 18 IV 1945" [in:] B. Binaszewska, P. Rybarczyk (eds.), *Rok pierwszy. Powstanie i działalność aparatu bezpieczeństwa publicznego na Pomorzu i Kujawach (luty–grudzień 1945),* Warsaw–Bydgoszcz–Gdańsk 2010, pp. 91–95. For examples of the problems the communist administration had with the Soviet governor of the Białogard region, Major Bocharov, and with the governor of the Połczyn Zdrój subregion, see: Cz. Partacz, "Armia Czerwona a Polacy i Niemcy", *Koszalińskie Studia i Materiały* 1999, no. 1, pp. 330–332.

[77] More on Soviet wartime governors' offices in: M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 11–21; M. Golon, "Życie polityczne Chełmży po II wojnie światowej (do połowy lat osiemdziesiątych)" [in:] M. Wojciechowski (ed.), *Dzieje Chełmży,* Chełmża 1994, pp. 263–266; B. Tracz, "Gliwice pod zarządem Komendantury Wojennej Armii Czerwionej (styczeń–marzec 1945)" [in:] Z. Woźniczka, *Zakończenie wojny…,* pp. 169–194; M. Żukowski, "Komendantury Wojenne na Pomorzu Zachodnim w 1945 roku", *Rocznik Koszaliński* 1995, no. 25, pp. 103–113; R. Kozłowski, „Czerwony" *Włocławek. Mity a rzeczywistość,* Włocławek 2000; pp. 21–23.

[78] M. Golon, "Represje Armii Czerwonej i NKWD wobec polskiej konspiracji niepodległościowej w latach 1944–1946", part 1, *Czasy Nowożytne* 1996, vol. 1, pp. 75–110; idem, "Represje Armii Czerwonej i NKWD

operations undertaken by the Red Army played a major part in the pacification of Polish society," writes Janusz Wróbel,[79] and the cooperation between Soviets and the emerging apparatus of repression proved crucial to achieving these objectives.[80] Communists would not have been able to assume power in Poland without the help of a foreign military and services. Terror was used against everyone who posed (or potentially could pose) danger to the communist order. By the year 1947 the opposition had practically been pacified and the structures of underground Poland destroyed. Sixteen leaders of the Polish Underground State, arrested by the NKVD in March 1945 in Pruszków, were tried and convicted in Moscow in June that same year.[81] Communist authorities consolidated their power even further, owing to the falsified results of the referendum in 1946 and the parliamentary election in 1947.

Repression and policing activities the Soviets undertook in 1944 in the east of Poland were a direct continuation of the occupational policy implemented there in 1939–1941 and interrupted by Germany's aggression on the USSR.[82] As early as in 1944, the commander of the NKVD Rear Security units warned Soviet officers of "the hostile underground structures active in eastern regions of the Second Polish Republic". These included all military organisations answering to the government in exile.

In February 1944 Soviets started targeting Home Army soldiers in Volhynia; a month later the same fate befell the Lvov Locality of the Home Army. In the summer the NKVD began arresting Poles in Belarus. The first major confrontation between the Red Army and Home Army soldiers in the Vilna

wobec polskiej konspiracji niepodległościowej w latach 1944–1946", part 2, *Czasy Nowożytne* 1997, vol. 2, pp. 107–136; G. Baziur, "Represje sowieckiego i polskiego aparatu bezpieczeństwa wobec polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego w województwach: gdańskim i bydgoskim w latach 1945–1948", *Teki Gdańskie* 2000, vol. 2, pp. 110–130; idem, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947,* Warsaw 2003, pp. 71–102.

79 J. Wróbel, "Represje sowieckie wobec mieszkańców Polski centralnej w latach 1945–1947" [in:] D. Rogut, A. Adamczyk (eds.), *Represje sowieckie…,* pp. 99–123.

80 J. Żelazko, "Organizacja aparatu przymusu i pierwsza fala represji" [in:] *Rok 1945 w Łodzi…*, p. 116.

81 The entire process was an open violation of international law. Polish nationals were tried in a Russian court, under Russian law. Fabricated evidence material was used to charge leaders of the Polish underground with alleged collaboration with Germans; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 6, note 2.

82 The situational report of Home Army Białystok Locality for November 1944 read: "The month of November brings a continuation to the consistent destruction of the active Polish element. The methods and means used by the occupier are no different from the ones employed in 1940–41 [by] the NKVD, the superiors of the puppet PKWN are finishing their work of annihilation interrupted on 22nd June 1941". The passage refers to the last deportations to Siberia, which were discontinued due to the German army's attack on the USSR; "Raport sytuacyjny nr 10 Komendy Okręgu AK Białystok z 5 grudnia 1944 r." [in:] J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…*, p. 76. Discussing president Putin's visit to Poland in 2002, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański emphasised that there is a need to differentiate between the first Soviet occupation and the one that began in 1944, since "by then the Soviets had shifted their goals from the extermination to the Sovietisation of the Polish society"; quoted after: W. Długoborski, "Od klęski powstania…", p. 44.

region took place in June 1944. On 14th June, the Supreme Command ordered the disarmament of Home Army units in the region; the task was to be executed by tactical formations and units of the 3rd Belorussian Front, with the cooperation of the NKVD. The operation was supervised on site by Ivan Serov, the USSR Commissar of the Interior. It began on 18th July 1944 and lasted two days, resulting in the disarmament of 7924 soldiers and officers of the Home Army.[83] Between July 1944 and January 1945, the NKVD and NKGB[84] operating in the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic arrested 12,449 people, including 3,976 activists of the Polish underground. After the establishment of the PKWN, the main body of the Soviet forces intended to fight the Polish underground was moved to Lublin. Serov's NKVD units were assisted by NKGB personnel, the SMERSH (a counter-intelligence unit), NKVD Internal Troops division under General Boris Serebriakov, as well as the PKWN security department and the counter-intelligence of the Polish Army. In October 1944 the NKVD intensified its pacification of the Białystok region.[85] Poles were arrested not knowing the charges. Lavrenti Beria's Order No. 0016, issued on 11th January 1945, instructed the NKVD to secure the front-line zone. NKVD activities consisting in "clearing the rear of Soviet forces of hostile element" were conducted in the whole of Poland.

After the nominal end of the Second World War and the establishment of the Northern Group of Forces, the central role in this process of elimination was played by three units of the USSR interior ministry. The one deserving particular mention was the 64th NKVD Division of Internal Troops (4199

[83] "Raport Ł. Berii dla J. Stalina, W. Mołotowa i A. Antonowa o działaniach operacyjno-czekistowskich w Wilnie, 16 VII 1944 r." [in:] T. Cariewskaja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, S. Rudnicki (eds.), *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina. Raporty NKWD z Polski. 1944–1946,* Warsaw 1998, s. 36–40; "Raport Ł. Berii dla J. Stalina, W. Mołotowa, G. Malenkowa i A. Antonowa o rezultatach operacji rozbrajania AK oraz działaniach operacyjnych przeprowadzonych na terytorium Litewskiej SRS, 3 VIII 1944 r." [in:] ibidem, pp. 47–51.

[84] On 15th March 1946 the Council of People's Commissars in the USSR was transformed into the Council of Ministers, and People's Commissars' offices became ministries. The People's Commisariat for Internal Affairs (in Russian abbreviated to NKVD) was renamed the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), while the People's Commisariat for State Security (NKGB) became the Ministry for State Security (MGB). However, in relevant literature the abbreviations NKVD and NKGB are used in reference to later years as well; T. Cariewskaja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, S. Rudnicki (eds.), *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina…,* p. 5, footnote 1.

[85] "It was a ruthless occupation by the Red Army, used to install the authorities imported from Moscow. It was also nothing but a desperate act of self-defence by a society that did not want to consent to Soviet occupation, since it knew the murderous side it had shown in 1939–1941. The numerous military operations undertaken by Soviet security organs to crush this resistance had the form of extermination procedures carried out in cold blood, and were often very similar to the actions of the Einsatzgruppen. As during the German occupation, Polish villages were torched and people were murdered in broad daylight, robbed of their possessions, or taken to labour camps by the thousand"; J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945,* pp. 14–20. See also: A. Paczkowski, "Represje sowieckie wobec uczestników polskiego podziemia zbrojnego w latach 1944–1947" [in:] W. Materski, T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…,* pp. 279–290.

men), which conducted regular operations in Polish territory until October 1946.[86] It contributed to the execution of 1475 "bandits" (some of them Home Army soldiers), 872 "enemy soldiers and officers" (the majority of whom were probably German), as well as to the arrest of 47,329 individuals.[87] In 1945–1947, the Northern Group of Forces had its own police unit, amounting to almost 3,000 soldiers. It was its Rear Area Security Force, including two regiments of border troops. The government communications units, 6,400 soldiers strong, were also formally a part of the Northern Group, though they *de facto* counted as MVD troops. The 64th Division and Northern Group's NKVD units maintained close cooperation. The post of the NKVD plenipotentiary for the Group was given to Lieutenant General Nikolai Selivanovsky, who was an advisor to the Polish Ministry of Public Security. The NKVD Rear Security Forces working with the Group ultimately joined the activities aimed at combating Polish underground units. The Northern Group never undertook any major operations aimed directly against members of the Polish conspiracy, yet its intelligence capacity constituted a major contribution to the process of exposing, and thus eliminating, the Polish underground. In October 1946, two MVD regiments securing the rear of the Northern Group were withdrawn from Poland.[88] Direct Soviet involvement in eliminating Polish conspiracy was therefore over; yet the political significance of the presence of Northern Group's units was still immense. For the entire time of communist rule in Poland, especially in the Stalinist period, the fact of having foreign forces stationed in the country made the Polish society abstain from open opposition to the communist regime.

In contrast to other Soviet army groups, the Northern Group was never used in pacification operations to secure the "achievements of socialism" in Poland and did not have to provide "internationalist aid". However, its presence alone safeguarded the continuation of totalitarian rule.[89]

The political aspect of the Northern Group's functioning in Poland was accentuated by the decision to give the high command to Marshal Rokossovsky

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[86] In October 1946, during his talks with General Kruglov, Bolesław Bierut asked for the evacuation of the NKVD forces from Polish territory to be delayed until March 1947. His request was granted only partially; Z. Woźniczka, "Z działalności polskiego i radzieckiego i radzieckiego aparatu represji na Górnym Śląsku w 1945 r." [in:] A. Topol (ed.), *Obozy pracy przymusowej na Górnym Śląsku,* Katowice 1994, p. 53.

[87] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 44.

[88] "Raport S. Krugłowa dla Ł. Berii o wycofaniu wojsk MSW ZSRR z terytorium Polski, październik 1946 r." [in:] T. Cariewskaja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, S. Rudnicki (eds.), *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina…,* p. 547; M. Golon, "Północna Grupa…", pp. 63–66

[89] B. Potyrała, "Północna Grupa…", p. 121. The Army Group stationed in East Germany took part in curbing anti-communist demonstrations in Berlin in 1953; the Southern Army Group pacified an uprising in Hungary for the second time in 1956; the Central Group was used again in 1968, after the suppression of the "Prague Spring"; ibidem, p. 121. The Northern Group was involved in the military intervention in Prague in 1968; W. Suworow, *Wyzwoliciele,* Poznań 2011, pp. 204–233.

(analogically to Zhukov's function as the commander of the Western Group of Forces in Germany and Konev's command of the Central Group of Forces in Austria). On 7th November 1949, Rokossovsky was appointed the marshal of Poland and the minister of defence. Stalin did not fail to take advantage of the new minister's Polish roots.[90] The knowledge Rokossowski acquired as the supreme commander of the Northern Group of Forces could always be used to defend USSR's interests, should the need arise.

The first test came in October 1956. Soviet forces advanced on Warsaw. The minister of national defence had intended to provide the Northern Group with reinforcements from the Polish army. He later explained that he had not wanted the situation to run its course as it had in Poznań. The intervention of Soviet forces was halted, yet the fact it even commenced was a result of political transformations and the Soviet authorities' fear that their influence over Poland would be diminished. Nikita Khrushchev's attestation that Poland would not stage a counter-revolution was what probably prevented bloodshed and a reiteration of the Hungarian scenario. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ultimately abandoned the plans of intervention on 23rd October 1956, ordering tens of thousands of Soviet troops to return to their bases. Historians are still discussing the reasons why the Soviet intervention was halted halfway. It was the closest Poland had come to this threat until the 1980s. The military operation of October 1956 resulted in financial losses, mostly related to road infrastructure, amounting to over 36 million PLZ.[91] The Northern Group never paid for the damage. This demonstration of Soviet power had one more severe consequence – it suppressed all processes of liberalisation of political life in Poland, and even caused a regress of some of the "October achievements".[92] No situation similar to the one extant in 1956 happened again. In times of crisis, the Northern Group's command would only increase the combat readiness of its units.

Another problem stemming from the Red Army's presence in Polish territory were internments and deportations to the USSR,[93] conducted since 1944 as

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[90] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 198. As the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, Rokossovsky had the authority to aid the insurgent soldiers in Warsaw in 1944, yet chose not to; idem, "Północna Grupa…", pp. 41–42. He was called the marshal of two nations. Marian Spychalski remembered him thus: "Rokossovsky is a complex figure. Definitely more Russian than Polish. Even wearing a Polish uniform, he was thinking in Russian. He was taught to. He had to leave Poland because Poles did not accept him as one of their own"; quoted after: B. Potyrała, "Dowódcy Północnej…", p. 91; M. Zaremba, "Jest marszałek, wyszedł cukier", *Gazeta Wyborcza,* 9 Nov. 2009, pp. 16–17.

[91] From 14th Apr. 1924 the Polish currency was, and still is, the Polish złoty; however, two abbreviations are used for it: PLZ for the pre-denomination currency and PLN, i.e. the new Polish złoty, for the post-denomination one, in use since 1st Jan. 1995. These abbreviations are used throughout the book.

[92] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 210–211; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 30–31.

[93] On 19th Sept. 1939 Beria issued an order creating a new NKVD structure, the Main Administration for Affairs of Prisoners of War and Internees; see "Rozkaz ludowego komisarza spraw wewnętrznych ZSRR

a part of planned Soviet repressions. Aside from German nationals, these operations targeted members of the Polish pro-independence underground, and persons deemed to have been involved in conspiracies or regarded as a potential threat to the communist government. From 1944 onwards, deportations were conducted in the regions incorporated into the USSR and in the so-called Lublin Poland (the area liberated by the Soviet Army, governed from the Lublin region by the State National Council). After the successful Red Army offensive in the early 1945, they were continued in other regions of Poland, including the German territories annexed in 1945. The command issued on 11th January 1945 aside, deportation of civilians was sanctioned by Beria's Order No. 0061 signed on 6th February 1945. It referred to "the detainment of Germans", yet due to the complicated nationality status of the inhabitants of Polish territories annexed to the Third Reich in 1939,[94] and later also of the western regions incorporated into Poland in 1945, thousand

nr 0308 w sprawie organizacji systemu obozów dla jeńców wojennych" [in:] Cz. Grzelak, S. Jaczyński, E. Kozłowski (eds.), *Agresja sowiecka na Polskę w świetle dokumentów 17 września 1939. Geneza i skutki agresji,* vol. 1, Warsaw 1994, pp. 176–183. Eight camps for imprisoned Polish soldiers were established at the time, initiating the development process of such facilities. In the course of the Russo-German war their network had grown to several hundred camps which housed millions of prisoners of war and several hundred thousand interned civilians (including tens of thousands Poles deported to the USSR). The system mirrored that of the Gulag, the only difference being that it had been organised for POWs and civilians from outside the USSR; M. Golon, "Od Pomorza Gdańskiego do Górnego Śląska – deportacje ludności cywilnej z ziem polskich do obozów pracy w ZSRR w 1945 r." [in:] A. Dziurok, M. Niedurny (eds.), *Deportacje Górnoślązaków do ZSRR w 1945 r.,* Katowice 2004, pp. 11–12.

[94] The German ethnic policy implemented in these territories had several important consequences, including the fact that a large part of the Polish population was classified as belonging to the third category of the DVL (Deutsche Volksliste – German People's List). It was introduced by the decree concerning German people's list and German nationality in the incorporated Eastern Territories of 4th March 1941 and functioned in the areas incorporated into the Reich: Upper Silesia, a part of the Cracow voivodeship, Greater Poland, a fragment of the Łódź voivodeship, Pomerania, the Free City of Danzig and a part of Mazovia. Very many citizens were added to that list without their consent. The German occupier was using the List to acquire new soldiers for the Wehrmacht, since obtaining the third DVL category meant being subject to compulsory military service in the German army. Unlike leaders of the Western countries, Stalin refused to give Poles serving in the Wehrmacht any preferential treatment. The Conference in Yalta held on 4th–11th Feb. 1945 validated the practice of drafting the civilian population of the territories seized by the Red Army to help rebuild the Soviet economy as a form of war reparations. The USSR authorities had *de facto* started doing this even before any regulations were made; what is more, the agreement stipulated that the practice would not extend to people whose nationality had been changed during the war. The major deportation actions in territories annexed to Poland were concluded in April 1945; M. Golon, "Od Pomorza Gdańskiego…", pp. 11–24; Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia w Zabrzu w 1945 r. Internowania i deportacje,* Zabrze 2005, p. 23. For more on Poles deported to the USSR see also: M. Golon, "Życie polityczne Chełmży…", s. 263–265; A. Dziurok, M. Niedurny (eds.), *Deportacje Górnoślązaków…*; J. Bonczol, "Rok 1945" [in:] J. Drabina (ed.), *Historia Gliwic,* Gliwice 1995, p. 430–435; J. Drabina, *Historia Chorzowa 1257–2000,* Chorzów 2007, pp. 287–289; J. Drabina (ed.), *Ofiary stalinizmu na ziemi bytomskiej w latach 1945–1956. Dokumentacja zbrodni,* Bytom 1993; J. Drabina, *Historia Bytomia od średniowiecza do współczesności 1123–2010,* Bytom 2010, pp. 294–300; D. Węgrzyn, "Górnoślązacy jako forma reparacji. Deportacje z Górnego Śląska do ZSRR w 1945 roku", *Zesłaniec – kwartalnik Rady Naukowej Zarządu Głównego Związku Sybiraków,* http://zeslaniec.pl (accessed 7th Jun. 2012).

of Poles were also subject to repressions. Despite the fact that, from 1942 onward, Soviet authorities were aware of the reasons why many people had been counted into the third category of the Deutsche Volksliste, none of these justifications were taken into account. The scope of deportation of civilians was the largest in Gdańsk Pomerania, including the north-western Greater Poland, and in Upper Silesia. NKVD personnel was assisted by the Red Army, Soviet wartime administration and the local militia. Systematic actions were conducted in, among others, Bydgoszcz and other Pomeranian cities.[95] Before being transported to the USSR, the arrestees were kept in prisons or camps.[96] Thousands of Silesians went through the camps in Silesia to be sent to the USSR; the total number of deportees is usually estimated at ca. 25,000,[97] yet it could have been higher. Approximately 20,000 Polish nationals were deported from the region of the pre-war Pomeranian voivodeship.[98] Thousands died before reaching their destination.[99]

It should be noted that not all individuals detained by the Soviet authorities in the early 1945 were sent to the USSR; some worked in factories in Poland that provided a direct supply of goods to the Red Army. As late as in August 1945, camps in Blachownia and Kędzierzyn still held people "mobilised" to work for the army in February that year and forcibly detained later.

The deportation operation was supervised and organised by the NKVD, but the Red Army also participated in the process. First of all, the necessity to "clear the rear of the Red Army from hostile element" worked as a convenient pretext to displace many individuals, especially members of the pro-independence conspiracy movement; secondly, Soviet soldiers cooperated with the NKVD,

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95 W. Jastrzębski, *W dalekim obcym kraju. Deportacje Polaków z Pomorza do ZSRR w 1945 r.,* Bydgoszcz 1990; M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich…,* pp. 47–192; idem, "Deportacje mieszkańców powiatu grudziądzkiego do ZSRR w 1945 r.", *Rocznik Grudziądzki* 1996, vol. 12, pp. 187–215; idem, "'Pomorska obława'. Deportacje Polaków z Pomorza do obozów NKWD z ZSRR w 1945 r." [in:] W. Materski, T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…,* pp. 291–303; idem, "Działalność radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych w Bydgoszczy w latach 1945–1946", part 1, *Kronika Bydgoska* 1995, vol. 17, Bydgoszcz 1996, pp. 85–116.

96 The exact number and location of all the camps is impossible to ascertain. Some were managed by the NKVD, others by the military authorities of the Red Army; Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…,* pp. 29–31; Z. Woźniczka, "Z działalności polskiego i radzieckiego aparatu represji na Górnym Śląsku w 1945 r." [in:] A. Topol (ed.), *Obozy pracy przymusowej na Górnym Śląsku,* Katowice 1994, p. 62. The managing of camps constituted another act of repression committed by the "liberators", J. Bonczol, "Zbrodnie w Miechowicach i okolicy" [in:] J. Drabina (ed.), *Ofiary stalinizmu…,* pp. 64–67.

97 M. Golon, "Od Pomorza Gdańskiego…", p. 24. The actual number of Poles sent to the USSR is still difficult to ascertain; more research is needed; S. Fertacz, "Problemy statystyki Górnoślązaków deportowanych w 1945 r. do ZSRR" [in:] A. Dziurok, M. Niedurny (eds.), *Deportacje Górnoślązaków…,* pp. 48–49. Fertacz estimated that only ca. 20 percent of the deported Poles managed to return; quoted after: Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…,* p. 59.

98 M. Golon, "Życie polityczne Chełmży…", p. 264.

99 Several thousand Poles and Germans were deported from Pomerania alone. Ca. 1,000–1,500 of them died on the way or soon after reaching their destination; M. Golon, "Od Pomorza Gdańskiego…", p. 25.

aiding them in their activities.[100] The deportations had significant economic and political consequences. It was, for instance, impossible for individuals sent to the USSR to be completely rehabilitated and regain their civil rights in full.[101] "Another significant tendency," writes Mirosław Golon, "was the intensification of the (already prominent) anti-Soviet sentiments, as people who had watched thousands of innocent citizens being brutally persecuted by Soviet authorities could not find it in themselves to accept the USSR as Poland's ally".[102] Reports by local authorities in Upper Silesia dating from 1946 describe the population's negative attitude towards the Red Army in the context of the ongoing internment and deportation operations: "Many families in the Wieszowa commune, where Grzybowice lie, were affected by the internment operations. […] The situation of these families was dire. Poverty was widespread. The chief reported that locals felt resentment towards the Red Army, especially since few of the internees have returned".[103] In the context of deportations, citizens of Upper Silesia and Gdańsk Pomerania, both of Polish and "German" ethnicity, were treated with particular ruthlessness by the Soviet repression apparatus. Since no heed was paid to the complex citizenship status of the inhabitants of this region, Soviets often targeted individuals who had previously been persecuted by the German occupying forces, e.g. the insurgents from Silesia. Nominally, the deported were to help the Soviet economy recover, but the principal aim was to exterminate them. Corroboration for this claim may be found in the testimonies of the victims and in statistics, which indicate that only one in five people survived the deportation.[104]

In spite of international regulations, Red Army soldiers committed numerous atrocities against POWs of various nationalities (e.g. near Głowno on the route from Łowicz to Łódź and in the village of Biadki).[105]

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[100] Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…*, pp. 20–22. A report by the Municipal Government in Gliwice written in April 1945 informed that "the Red Army's attitude towards the population is usually ruthless, and the Red Army military governor declares that they cannot in any way differentiate between Polish and German people, forcing both groups to provide services for the army, since they all were citizens of the Reich and fought against the Red Army"; quoted after: Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…*, p. 23.

[101] The holders of the 3rd and 4th category of the Deutsche Volksliste were guaranteed to obtain full civil rights provided they signed a declaration of allegiance, whereas those listed as 1st- and 2nd-category citizens had to undergo a rehabilitation process, which also determined whether they would obtain the same rights; J. Drabina, *Historia Chorzowa…*, pp. 290–291.

[102] M. Golon, "Od Pomorza Gdańskiego…", pp. 28–29.

[103] Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…*, p. 38. The negative attitude the locals harboured towards the Red Army was mentioned in other reports as well; e.g. Voivode Aleksander Zawadzki mentioned the issue during a meeting of the Central Committee of the PPR: "The Central Committee ought to take a stand regarding the deportations. This stand ought to be made known to the Soviet Union and the Red Army. The people of Silesia had been enthusiastic towards the Soviet Union, now the same people are decidedly disapproving, uttering curses. […] The deportations must stop"; quoted after: ibidem, p. 49.

[104] J. Drabina, *Historia Chorzowa…*, p. 289.

[105] J. Wróbel, "Represje sowieckie…", p. 114.

Another form of repression regularly employed in the centre of Poland was pacification. It was usually done in retaliation for actual or alleged acts of collaboration with members of the pro-independence underground. The most extensive persecutions took place in the Lublin and Białystok regions. A pacification operation on a large scale was conducted only once; it was the so-called Augustów Roundup, regarded as the most heinous post-war crime committed against Polish nationals.[106]

Other political action of a repressive nature included compelling Poles to military service. From 1944 onwards the conscripted were usually sent to Bering's army; Polish citizens of other ethnicities were drafted directly into the Red Army. An earlier conscription, conducted in the spring of 1941 in Polish territories under the Soviet occupation, involved several thousand young men and women. It was *de facto* a means to remove Poles from the eastern territories. Few of them survived until 1944. International laws were violated yet again.[107]

The Northern Group's special forces submitted reports that kept the Soviet authorities updated on the political situation in Poland, including anti-Soviet demonstrations and publicly expressed sentiments. The reports also pertained to territories where no larger units of the Group were stationed. Thus, they constituted a valuable source of information on Poland.[108]

The Northern Group of Forces also engaged in tracking USSR citizens in Polish territory, as well as individuals assumed to be such. Such persons were held in a special camp in Wołów near Wrocław and later sent to the USSR. Among them were hundreds of people who had become Soviet citizens as a result of military conquests made by the USSR, e.g. Estonians, Lithuanians, Latvians and people who had acquired the right of Polish citizenship, for instance through marriage. The resettlement, referred to as "repatriation" in the communist propaganda, affected tens of thousands. In many cases conducted forcibly, the "repatriation" was just a prelude to repressions conducted within USSR territory. Some of the resettled persons managed to return in 1956 or 1957. The process of "repatriation", concluded in 1951, was managed by representatives of the Northern Group of Forces working in voivodeship offices. When the department officially finished its activity, Polish authorities were not even informed. Meanwhile, as late as in 1952 the Soviets were still

[106] M. Zwolski, "Represje wobec ludności cywilnej po wkroczeniu Armii Czerwonej w latach 1944–1945" [in:] W. Materski, T. Szarota (eds.), *Polska 1939–1945…*, p. 271–278; J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…*, pp. 232–233, note 564; A. L. Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski 1944–1991,* Cracow 2011, p. 49.

[107] A. Adamczyk, "Represje sowieckie wobec narodu polskiego i narodów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w myśli politycznej i publicystyce piłsudczykowskich środowisk emigracyjnych w Londynie w okresie instalowania 'władzy ludowej' (1944–1945)" [in:] D. Rogut, A. Adamczyk (eds.), *Represje sowieckie…*, pp. 54–55.

[108] M. Golon, "Północna Grupa…", pp. 66–68.

pressurising the government's delegate to the Northern Group's command in Legnica to search for people who were avoiding relocation to the USSR.[109]

Very little is known about the arrests of Polish citizens made by the soldiers of the Northern Group. Such incidents involved Poles whose activity in territories incorporated into the USSR attracted the interest of the special services. They were first sent to the Legnica prison, where the Soviet military court resided, and subsequently to camps in the USSR. This happened to, among others, Antoni Rymsza, a Home Army soldier from the Vilna locality, arrested by the security police in 1948.[110]

Despite the substantial reduction in size, in the late 1940s the Northern Group of Forces maintained its substantial military and political significance. It was still able to serve its principal function of safeguarding the interests of the USSR in Poland. The presence of the Northern Group in Poland (even after the decrease in numbers) generated additional problems.

Propagandistic activities

The Red Army participated in numerous propaganda campaigns designed to indoctrinate the Polish society in the spirit of affirmation for the USSR and the communist system. The Northern Group's ideological influence, consisting of propagandistic activities, was closely connected with its political function. Propaganda actively involving the Northern Group was conducted in the entire period when its units were stationed in Poland. Among other things, it included attempts to convince Poles of the "friendship" and the "benefits" of their having the USSR as an ally.[111] The image constructed through these means had, naturally, little in common with the actual situation, since the relations between Poland and the USSR lacked any sort of balance. On the one hand, the propagandists lied to Polish citizens (since it was a method of indoctrination); on the other, attempts were made to scare them and to fuel a sense of impending doom that could only be mitigated by the "friendship" with the Soviet Union, the guarantor of peace and security. The creation of a positive image of the USSR and the Red Army was of paramount importance, as the latter had already acquired a bad reputation, and justly so. Surprisingly, the propaganda was apparent even in confidential documents prepared for the Soviet authorities in Moscow. The anti-communist and anti-Soviet

[109] Idem, "Rola Północnej…", p. 202; idem, "Północna Grupa…", pp. 68–69; J. Wróbel, "Represje sowieckie…", pp. 116–117.

[110] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", pp. 202–203.

[111] In some cases no aid was actually provided, e.g. in 1946 in several Polish cities soldiers of the Northern Group publicly unloaded wheat flour, only to pack it up again and send it elsewhere. Polish citizens received nothing; it was purely a propagandistic trick. In other publicised instances Poles were indeed given goods, but only ones of little value; M. Golon, "Północna Grupa…", p. 71.

sentiments in Poland were described as resulting from a decrease in agitation and propagandistic activities, and not – as they should have been – as a consequence of the political and economic subjugation of Poland by the Soviet Union.[112]

The Northern Group of Forces influenced Polish society through various means, one of them being its own press releases. The main title issued by the Soviet army for Polish citizens was the paper *Wolność*, published in 1944–1955. It was a continuation of Polish-language press distributed by the Red Army during the war. *Wolność* was published by the Northern Group's political directorate in Legnica; as an illustrated daily paper, it was printed first in Poznań, and from 1947 in Legnica.[113]

Another important element of the Northern Group's propaganda included activities that aimed at concealing the scale of crime and damage caused by Red Army soldiers in Polish territory. In 1950, Soviet authorities demanded that all documents pertaining to the Northern Group – ones held in state administration offices, postal offices, customs, gas distribution offices, forestry offices etc. – be destroyed. The decision was motivated by the alleged threat of the disclosure of military secrets. Thus, all "documents related to issues that had been concluded, held in the archives of these institutions" were to be destroyed.[114] In many of these cases, there were grounds to reopen proceedings. The official justification for the destruction of material pertaining to the Northern Group – i.e., protection of military secrets – was only a pretext. Much information could have been acquired without access to such documents. They could, however, constitute solid evidence to confirm the argument that the presence of Soviet forces in Polish territory had the nature of an occupation. The authorities of the People's Republic of Poland refused to comply with this demand. The destruction of such a large portion of documents not only went against the letter of the Polish law, but also presented a serious technical problem. Consequently, many sources of information on the Northern Group survived; some, however, were lost in unclear circumstances or are presumed to have been destroyed.[115]

Other methods used by propagandists to create a false image of the Polish-Soviet relations included awarding state decorations, organising ceremonial meetings, conferences and events, social services performed by Soviet forces, and concerts of the Group's musical band given for Poles.

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[112] Ibidem, p. 206.

[113] Ibidem, p. 203; A. L. Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski…*, p. 56; J. L. Świącik, *Podwójnie strzeżeni. Armia Radziecka w Legnicy (1945–1993)*, Wrocław 2010, p. 118.

[114] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 206.

[115] W. Janowski, "Delegatura Rządu RP–PRL przy Dowództwie PGW AR w Legnicy w l. 1946–1957. Przyczynek do dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich", *Archiwista* 1992, no. 87, pp. 36–52.

The propagandistic role of the Red Army in Poland had yet another clear and permanent manifestation in the form of the nationwide initiative of erecting "monuments in gratitude" towards the Red Army. These started to appear *en masse* after 1945, openly propagated by communist party activists, military commanders and various propaganda institutions, such as the Polish-Soviet Friendship Association (Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej; hereinafter: TPPR). Many of these monuments were situated in spectacular locations, which made them significant and lasting instruments of communist propaganda. Being the focus of the present work, these monuments are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Personal contacts between Polish citizens and Soviet soldiers were prohibited and, in the Stalinist period, penalised. The restrictions were later eased, yet such relations were never truly tolerated. The Soviet tactics was to emphasise the friendship between the two nations in official messages, while limiting real-life contacts and planting distrust of Poles in Red Army soldiers. All other information regarding the Soviet army in Poland was strictly confidential, accessible only to the highest dignitaries. Naturally, inhabitants of the villages and towns in the nearest vicinity of Soviet garrisons had ample opportunity to discover the reality of the "peaceful and amicable coexistence" of the two nations.

Despite the widespread propagandistic activities, most Poles were suspicious or even hostile towards the newly arrived Soviet soldiers, as the Red Army was a foreign force and was being used to limit rather than to protect Poland's sovereignty. The negative emotions harboured by Polish citizens towards the Soviet Union and its soldiers, which had "stabilised" in the period of Gomułka and Gierek, began to escalate again in the 1980s, when the increase in pro-independence mood in the society led to increasingly frequent manifestations of long-buried resentment and animosity. It may be assumed that the chance to express these feelings arose only in the decade of the Solidarity movement, when the society finally gained a degree of freedom of speech.[116]

[116] On 6th Feb. 1965, a few months before her death, the eminent writer Maria Dąbrowska wrote in her diary that she had been born in a country enslaved by Russia and would die in a country enslaved by the USSR: "I should be able to bear a lonely existence and a lonely death in my country. And I would bear everything, if it were not for the Russian domination. I am unable to live or write under the Russian yoke. What torture it was, when I was a young woman, to write in subjection. One shook it off, and put it on again, this Muscovite yoke. […] Russia flaunts its power, having managed to warp even socialism into another incarnation of the old Russian empire. Dear Lord! If only I could believe in any chance for Russia's rebirth, I would not be so utterly miserable; and I would not have wasted so completely those twenty years I have lived under the watchful eye of the basilisk"; M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1960–1965,* Warsaw 1997, pp. 336–337. Twenty years after the end of the war, such constatations seemed to have been prevalent in the Polish society, yet even Dąbrowska did not dare declare them publicly.

Economic significance

The presence of Soviet military forces had the greatest impact on Poland's economy in 1944–1947, which is not to mean that its influence disappeared in later periods. Virtually no aspect of the Polish economy remained unaffected. The presence of those soldiers profoundly influenced industry, agriculture, shipping, services (including the supply chain), access to accommodation and real estate, communal and communication services, etc.

The most significant issue and economic loss related to the Red Army was the property its soldiers transported out of Poland. As early as in the 1944, the Soviet army frequently misused the term "spoils of war", choosing to expand its definition to include the property of Polish state institutions and legal entities. A formal regulation for such actions in the territory of pre-war Poland came in the form of an agreement between the Soviet government and the puppet PKWN, signed on 4th August 1944. It gave military units the right to requisition food, animal fodder and industrial goods for the front. Theoretically, this was to be done with the participation of local authorities, whose task was to establish a suitable remuneration for the property. On 9th August 1944, the PKWN and the Soviet government signed an agreement that was to guarantee the protection of industrial property in the former Polish territory. On the same day Stalin issued a strictly confidential order of the USSR State Defence Committee (GKO Order no. 220 172), which specified the meaning of the term 'spoils of war' in Polish territory in its pre-war borders. It included all elements of the German military equipment: weaponry, ammunition, machinery, comestibles, fuel, lubricants, etc. All other property, including transport and industrial goods, was to be left to the Polish authorities. The official transfer of ownership was to commence after the front had moved westwards.

In practice, however, Red Army soldiers would pillage and loot practically everything they could lay their hands on. In August 1944 Edward Osóbka-Morawski himself noted in his diary that as far as spoils of war were concerned, "the Soviet army uses a v. broad interpretation of the term".[117] A report from the Białystok region written in the summer of 1944 read: "The Sov[iet] authorities are taking whatever they can from the city, e.g. textile machinery from the Berko-Pollak factory, the oxygen factory and the equipment from the three textile factories left by the Germans, iron from the Gotlieb factory, in any form, electric engines from the plywood factory in Dojlidy, which had survived, and all material that is of any value. They are even taking down the wires and cable isolation from power pylons, and workshop machines from private

[117] Quoted after: M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 22. Before the Second World War, Edward Osóbka-Morawski (1909–1997) was a politician in the Polish Socialist Party. From 1944 to 1947 he was appointed Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of National Unity.

companies. Sov[iet] (military) requisitions are ongoing in the city, allegedly under the pretext of searching for weapons and military things. They are taking valuables, such as watches, gold, clothing and shoes".[118] More complications arose after the Red Army crossed the Vistula line, since due to the changes introduced by German authorities in regions like Greater Poland the existing regulations no longer sufficed. Large prerogatives were consequently given to war councils of the Front forces and to Soviet unit commanders. The first agreement regarding the materials and machinery in German factories located between the Vistula and the Oder was signed between the communist Temporary Government and the USSR State Defence Committee on 12th February 1945. All facilities built by Germans were to become Polish property and the removal of any equipment for the needs of the Red Army required the consent of the communist authorities in Poland.

On 20th February 1945 Stalin issued a directive under which the only goods allowed to be transported to the USSR were equipment, materials and ready-made commodities necessary for conducting military operations, produced in German-built workshops or Polish enterprises developed by Germans during the war, including those situated in German territories incorporated into Poland after the war, as well as property looted by Germans from the Soviet Union. Their removal had to be consulted with the Temporary Government of Poland. German workshops, factories and other companies were to be surrendered to Polish state administration. Pursuant to bilateral agreements, some of them were to produce goods to supply the fighting armies.[119]

In February 1945, the USSR Economic Mission arrived in Poland. It played a key role in disassembling and transporting industrial property to the USSR, even though its official purpose was to provide aid in rebuilding the war-ravaged regions of Poland.[120]

The USSR State Defence Committee's decision from 20th February 1945 did not pertain to territories incorporated into Poland after the war. As regards the Recovered Territories, no regulations referring to industrial property existed. The Soviet army therefore commenced a mass-scale campaign of disassembling and transporting former German possessions, including industrial property. Some of the factories and plants were used in the war effort. On 26th March 1945 an agreement was signed in Warsaw, stipulating that all companies

[118] Situational report by "Wiktor", the head of counter-intelligence in the Home Army Command for the Białystok-city Locality, dated 17th Aug. 1944, describing the situation in Białystok between 10th Jul. and 15th Aug. 1944 [in:] J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…*, p. 32.

[119] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 23, 92–93.

[120] The USSR Economic Mission in Warsaw, formally led by Vasily Pronin and practically supervised in their actions by Alexei Lavrishchev, operated until August 1945. Under its expert guidance, industrial property was being looted and transported out of Poland; M. Golon, "Północna Grupa…", p. 86; idem, "Działalność radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych w Bydgoszczy w latach 1945–1946", part 2, *Kronika Bydgoska* 1996, vol. 18, Bydgoszcz 1997, pp. 35–66; idem, "Życie polityczne Chełmży…", p. 265.

located in the territories returning to Poland were to be treated as former German property. The communist provisional government allowed 25 percent of industrial equipment in the Recovered Territories to be taken to the USSR "due to wartime needs". This agreement remained in force until the end of the Potsdam conference and the ratification of the settlement on the compensation for the damage inflicted by the German occupation, signed by the Soviet government and the Provisional Government in Poland on 16th August 1945. Yet again, its provisions were not adhered to by the Soviet authorities or their army, which disassembled and took away almost everything that could be removed and was of any value. In many cases much was left to the discretion of Soviet military governors, a fact that influenced the pace and effectiveness of the process of the Polish communist administration assuming ownership of enterprises. There were instances of the Red Army retaking and disassembling the equipment of facilities which had already been seized by Directorate of the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers (Komitet Ekonomiczny Rady Ministrów, hereinafter: KERM). By 16th August 1945, the Red Army operating in northern and western parts of Poland had appropriated ca. 500 million dollars worth of industrial property.[121] In the summer of 1945 all industry was to be returned to Poland; yet for several years after that date the Northern Group of Forces was still administering many facilities, including factories and various types of companies.[122] Consequently, the Soviet forces could become independent of supplies from the Polish market. Under the implementation agreement to the Potsdam Treaty, signed on 16th August 1945, the USSR renounced all claims to German property and other assets, as well as to operating German industrial and transport facilities in Polish territory, including the part of Germany that was to be ceded to Poland.[123] By then Russians had taken everything they cared to acquire. As regards industry, in the final stages of the war most of the machinery located within the borders of the Second Polish Republic was already in the hands of the communist administration. The Soviet army continued to exploit the Recovered Territories long after Hitler's ultimate defeat. Since the new territories had been looted

[121] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 23–24, 94–95, 99–100.

[122] Ibidem, pp. 95–97. "A report by Beniamin Zylberger, an employee of the propaganda department of the Central Political and Educational Directorate of the Polish Army who had travelled through Silesia, informed that the central management of iron and steel industry was worried that Poland would come into 'empty walls' in the Recovered Territories", Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…*, pp. 46–47. In May 1946 the Association of Polish Shipyards sent an urgent message to the authorities in Gdańsk stating that Soviet soldiers were disassembling all movable equipment in the Elbląg shipyard (including doors, windows, toilets and cookers). As these movables were being prepared for transport, the Association was asking for an immediate intervention, "since taking away such furnishing would take millions out of the state treasury […] the date of departure of the units stationed in Elbląg is not known to us"; State Archive (Archiwum Państwowe, hereinafter: AP) in Gdańsk, UW Gdański (1945–1950), 2032, Polish-Soviet relations 1946, Note by the Association of Polish Shipyards to the UW in Gdańsk, 27th May 1946 .

[123] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 101.

(after 1989 some even spoke of them as the "Exploited Territories"), their economic significance was greatly diminished. Rather than strengthen Polish economy, the acquisition had significantly weakened the Polish state in its new borders. What is more, had it not been for the inimical policies of the USSR, Poland would have been able to recover and rebuild her ruined industry after the war. The economic weakness of the country was conducive to a more strict control exerted by the USSR.[124]

On 14th September 1945 the commander of the Rear Security Unit of the Northern Group of Forces (effectively the head quartermaster) and the Minister of Industry and Trade signed an agreement regarding the temporary lease of a group of industrial facilities, free of any charge. From then on, all other enterprises exploited by the Red Army were used unlawfully and had to be returned to Poland. Unfortunately, the provisions of this agreement were not complied with. The number of facilities utilised by Soviets greatly exceeded the one specified in the document; the Red Army took no steps to return them to the Polish administration. Pursuant to this industrial agreement, however, the Northern Group had access to the facilities it required.[125] By the end of 1948, following an intervention by representative powers, the Group handed over ca. 70 percent of the industrial facilities it had thus far been using. Poland recovered the majority of industrial plants utilised by the Group in the mid-1950s, yet the problem was not entirely solved until 1956.[126]

Assuming control over ports and the sea coast, as handed over by the Red Army, was a significant issue for the Polish economy. Unfortunately, difficulties arose in connection with this process as well. Within the borders of the Second Polish Republic, the matter was regulated by Stalin's order dated 9th August 1944. The German shipyards were, however, categorised by Allied superpowers as belonging to arms industry, and as such were liable to be seized by the USSR. Under the agreement signed on 10th May 1945, the Soviet GKO granted Poland a 30 percent share of the shipyard machinery of the Free City of Danzig. Many infringements on the existing agreements were noted in ports in Darłowo[127] and Łeba. The Red Army disregarded the official promises, disassembling entire industrial plants and shipyard structures and sending them away, exploiting factories and denying Polish citizens and civil authorities any access to the facilities. In addition, soldiers ran overt and covert

[124] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 185. The equipment removed and transported to the USSR aside, Poland incurred further losses due to the deliberate or accidental damage, destruction and burning (resulting, for instance, from primitive methods of dissasembly); M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 96; D. Węgrzyn, "Górnoślązacy jako forma…", p. 58.

[125] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 59.

[126] Ibidem, pp. 61, 101–105.

[127] R. Techman, "Radziecki ośrodek portowo-rybacki w Darłowie w latach 1945–1948", part 1, *Rocznik Koszaliński* 1998, no. 28, pp. 125–141; idem, "Radziecki ośrodek portowo-rybacki w Darłowie w latach 1945–1948", part 2, *Rocznik Koszaliński* 2001, no. 29, pp. 73–91.

businesses, such as fishing farms. An agreement on the handover of the port in Darłowo to the Polish authorities was not signed until 16th October 1948.[128]

Assuming control over ports in the Szczecin Lagoon and the Bay of Pomerania constituted a separate problem. All decisions regarding the territory between Szczecin and Świnoujście were taken by the commander of the Occupation Zone in Germany, Marshal Zhukov. The Red Army had seized Wolin and Świnoujście, and subsequently transported all of the industrial equipment to the USSR. The quays in the Świnoujście harbour were only handed over to Poland on 5th September 1946; the Red Army nevertheless maintained a navy base there until the ultimate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland in the 1990s. Although the city of Szczecin was ceded to Poland in July 1945, the port remained in the hands of the Soviet army until September 1947. The agreement regarding its handover to Poland was not signed until 17th September 1947. Nevertheless, Russians were still in possession of the best and most modern part of the port, as the duty-free zone, the "Chorzowskie" harbour, the shipyard, the "Spirytusownia" sidetrack and the sawmill in Łasztownia. Only on 11th January 1955 did Poles assume control of the port in its entirety.[129]

The political influence of the Northern Group of Forces also played a role in the signing of treaties between Poland and the USSR, invariably disadvantageous for the former, also with regard to the economy. An extreme example was the coal agreement, signed in August 1945. For all intents and purposes, it was a contribution. Under the Potsdam Agreement, Poland was to receive war reparations through the USSR. However, in the course of the talks with the Polish delegation held at the Kremlin on 16th August 1945, the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov made the payment of the reparations conditional to Poland's consent to provide the USSR with bituminous coal at "a special contract price", starting from 1946. In the initial year the set amount was 8 million tonnes, in the next 4 years – 13 million tonnes, and 12 million tonnes in the further years of "the period of the occupation of Germany". The duration of the contract was not specified. The USSR paid 1 dollar for one tonne of coal; half the price from 1938 and ten times less than it was worth when the agreement was signed.[130] The Soviet authorities were perfectly aware of the feelings this agreement evoked in the Polish society, as is apparent from

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[128] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 105–109.

[129] Ibidem, pp. 41, 112–119. The duty-free zone in Szczecin was leased to the USSR for the period of 25 years. On 25th Mar. 1954 the Soviet embassy brought forward a proposal to surrender a part of the port and machinery held by the Central Transshipment Base to the People's Republic of Poland. The Soviets offered to sell the equipment from the base to Poland for the sum of 30 million PLZ. Polish experts estimated its value at 4.5 million PLZ. Under the circumstances, the government only bought the machinery that was essential for Polish marine economy. An agreement finalising the liquidation of the base was signed on 17th May 1954. More on the Soviet policy and activity in the Polish coast in: R. Techman, *Armia radziecka…*

[130] Z. Gołasz, *Śląska tragedia…*, p. 55.

the report dated to March 1947, made by General Andrei Okorokov for the Foreign Policy Department at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Okorokov wrote that a comparison of the prices for coal paid by the USSR and Sweden led Poles to the conclusion that "the Polish-Soviet friendship costs Poland 120 million dollars a year".[131] In 1946–1950 Poland supplied the USSR with 500 million tonnes of coal, receiving 57 million dollars, while its actual value in international markets was twice as high. Moreover, until the end of 1947, Poland was obligated to send more than 10 million tonnes of coal to the Soviet occupation zone in Germany free of charge, "to meet the needs of the front". In the period of 1948–1953 Poland was annually sending 5 million tonnes of coal to the USSR to pay for the raw materials it received and the outdated surplus weaponry left over after the war and bequeathed to the Polish Army.[132]

Another important branch of the economy was agriculture. Due to Soviet exploitation, it reached its most dire state in the years 1945 and 1946. In 1945 the Red Army was in control of ca. 2,000 agricultural holdings with the acreage of over two and a half million.[133] As regards the Recovered Territories, the majority of arable land was taken over by the Northern Group units, and much fewer by Zhukov's and Konev's troops. "Rogue" formations of Soviet soldiers also operated in the area; these were usually detected only in the process of handing over former German estates to Poland. Since entering the region, the Red Army had started a ruthless occupation of property, which had tragic consequences for Polish agriculture and did not end with the capitulation of Germany.[134] The facilities surrendered to the communist authorities in Poland at a later date had already been looted, destroyed and neglected. Additionally, for a long time Poles were prevented from making any profit from estates leased to a foreign army free of charge. It was another economic loss for which Soviet forces should have been billed.

Overdue taxation aside, the budgets of many communes were strained with the fact that the Northern Group of Forces failed to pay various kinds of fees. Food shortages became a major problem which resulted in increased mortality rates. Due to the lack of farming equipment, transported to the USSR, destroyed or commandeered by the Soviets, Polish agriculture could not recover enough to reach even its pre-war state. Members of the Northern Group frequently forced the locals to work, without pay, for the Soviet army. Many estates formally handed over to the Polish administration were later seized again and exploited or destroyed with impunity, in a manner akin to

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131 M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 201.

132 M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 224.

133 M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 186; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 68–75.

134 M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 186; idem, "Północna Grupa…", p. 93; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 75–88.

robbery. The Soviets would often deliberately hinder the development of Polish agriculture by appropriating the most important facilities or destroying them thoughtlessly and wantonly. The limited control over the region led to the mass emergence of various forms of crime in estates located outside the garrisons. In the spring of 1946 the starost of the Elbląg county described the widespread thuggery by saying: "In terms of security, the county still resembles Mexico".[135]

Transporting live and slaughtered farm animals to the USSR weakened Polish agriculture for many years afterwards. More than one million animals were taken. As late as in March 1947 reports to the Polish authorities contained data regarding 100,000 animals being transported away from the estates reclaimed by Poland.[136]

Although the Red Army did not pay for the lease of agricultural real estate, the Polish communist administration had to reimburse the Soviets upon their handover. Additional fees were often incurred for the machinery and equipment, which technically belonged to the Polish state all along.[137] There can be no doubt that the orders of the Soviet authorities regarding the deliberate weakening of Polish economy were executed largely through the activities of the army.[138]

The Soviet presence in Polish territory had a significant adverse impact on forestry and the state of the natural environment. Large-scale felling of trees, begun in 1944, was a continuation of the plan implemented in 1939–1941, at least in the eastern regions.[139] The lawless exploitation of all resources from Polish forests and lakes continued throughout the entire period of the Northern Group of Forces' stay in Poland, involving damage, logging, fires and other activities harmful to the environment. Soviet troops honoured no agreements, destroyed stands of trees, killed animals, poached with wild abandon. No heed was paid to seasonal closures, barbaric hunting methods were used. Polish state officials who wanted to intervene were often threatened with guns.[140]

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[135] Quoted after: M. Golon, *Polityka radzieckich…*, p. 304. In 1946, the government commissioner in the Lębork region complained that, despite having been provided with designated meadows and pastures, Soviet soldiers were making use of land belonging to the locals in Łeba and other towns, destroying their property: "Major Kudravtsev, the governor in Łeba, is consciously and deliberately grazing livestock not only on meadows marked to be used by Polish nationals, but even on land that was sown, which dooms the grain crop"; AP in Gdańsk, UW Gdańsk (1945–1950), 2032, Polish-Soviet relations 1946, Note by the government commissioner in the Lębork region to the UW in Gdańsk, 28th May 1946 (date of arrival).

[136] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 186.

[137] Idem, "Północna Grupa…", p. 95.

[138] For more on agriculture in the former Pomeranian and Gdańsk voivodeships in 1945–1947 see *Polityka radzieckich…*, p. 276–308.

[139] Appendix no. 4 to the situational report by the AK Command of Białystok Locality dated 5th Nov. 1944 [in:] J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…*, p. 57, footnote 102; J. Wróbel, "Represje sowieckie…", p. 118.

[140] In October 1946 a report from the county starost office in Sztum informed that the ban on poaching was only complied with by the civilian population. Soviet soldiers and officers had no inhibitions. It

The situation improved slightly in 1947 and again in the 1970s, due to new regulations, yet serious problems did not cease to emerge until the 1990s. Cases of illegal use of timber and damage caused by military exercises happened every year. In spite of the agreements they had signed, Russians did what they pleased in the territories they occupied, using natural resources in a lawless manner.[141] In the late 1980s and 1990s, the resulting pollution caused the local inhabitants to voice increasingly loud protests. Only in 1989 did the Polish authorities start to impose fines and fees for exploiting the environment. In the settlements made at the time, Russians accepted a number of obligations in this respect, yet ignored them later; the compensations imposed by the courts were never paid to the Polish state. In the early 1990s, the losses sustained by the State Treasury since 1945 solely by the lease of military training grounds to Soviet troops was estimated at ca. 9–10 trillion PLZ.[142]

Financial offences committed by the Northern Group of Forces also included the devastation and illegal exploitation of Polish state property. The damage was done both as a result of conscious actions of the soldiers and through acts of simple vandalism, negligence or, in many cases, as a consequence of alcoholic intoxication.[143] Such incidents occurred with varying frequency throughout the entire period of the Northern Group's stay in Poland. In the western territories, the lack of restraint was often justified as acts of vengeance against the Germans, thus, an aftermath of the war. Sometimes entire cities were razed, with no consideration to the fact that they were to be handed over to Poland. Huge economic and cultural losses resulted from multiple acts of arson. In May 1945, for instance, fires started by Red Army soldiers ravaged Toszek and Strzelce Wielkie, and partially destroyed Brzeg, Opole, Legnica (a part of the Old Town and the castle burnt down), and Nysa.[144] Much of the infrastructure of Olesno was also devastated by fire; not one building in the town centre survived. Isolated acts of arson were also committed in Katowice and Strzelce Opolskie, where the fire consumed the entire marketplace and the castle, a monument of historical significance.[145] The cathedral in Gniezno, a thousand years old, was also set on fire.[146] Cities in Eastern Prussia and in

was stated that game was being killed on a large scale even by individual Russian soldiers, who did this "at any given opportunity"; AP in Gdańsk, UW Gdańsk, 2032, Polish-Soviet relations 1946, Note by the country starost office in Sztum to UW in Gdańsk, 2nd Oct. 1946.

141 M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 62, 177–186.

142 Idem, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1956–1993,* p. 148.

143 For instances of looting and devastation done by Red Army soldiers, see: Note from the county starost office in Białystok dated 10th Nov. 1944 in connection with the Red Army's behaviour in Downary village [in:] J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…,* p. 188; M. Golon, "Północna Grupa…", p. 102.

144 M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* p. 175. After the cessation of hostilities, the "liberators" also destroyed some of the buildings in Bytom, J. Drabina, *Historia Bytomia…,* p. 316.

145 D. Węgrzyn, "Górnoślązacy jako forma…", pp. 55–56.

146 P. Bojarski, "Czołg strzela do katedry, Julian fotografuje", *Gazeta Wyborcza,* 21st Jan. 2011, p. 21.

Pomerania burnt down under Soviet administration, adding to the already massive list of damage done in the course of the war.[147]

Utilities and communication services, as well as billeting, also put a strain on the economy. In 1945–1946 the Soviets often perceived public urban facilities as captured property. They not only disregarded the needs of their Polish allies, but also transported movables to the USSR, paid no heed to the intended functions of the edifices they used (which constituted a problem, for instance, in the case of school buildings) and frequently ruined buildings completely.[148] It was also a time of intense mobility for the Northern Group units, who would leave some facilities and seize others at will, not informing the Polish authorities. At first, no treaties existed and the rules for utilising public property and paying fees for communal services used by the Red Army remained unspecified.[149] The agreement on the mode and conditions of the utilisation of facilities and services in Poland by the Soviet troops temporarily stationed in Polish territory was signed on 18th June 1958. It set the rent for facilities and buildings occupied by the Red Army at very low rates. The Northern Group of Forces paid 50 percent of the lease rates used in the Polish army; it was only obliged to carry out all necessary and full-scale renovations of the rented facilities, as well as meet the payments for running water, gas, electricity and utilities. Forests and arable land could be used free of charge, yet any material losses to the forest management of the Polish People's Republic were to be compensated for; Soviet soldiers were also to enable Polish forestry services to manage the areas leased by the Red Army. The fees for services and the utilisation of equipment and facilities were to be agreed on by the Northern Group of Forces and the relevant ministries and, once set, were not subject to automatic changes due to inflation. Thus, in the entire period of the Northern Group's presence in Poland the rates were adjusted only a handful of times. In practice, the regulations as to the price of leasing communal buildings were

[147] For a detailed analysis of the losses caused by Red Army soldiers in Kwidzyn and Nidzica, see: M. Golon, "Historia Kwidzyna w latach 1945–1957" [in:] K. Mikulski, J. Liguz (eds.), *Kwidzyn. Dzieje miasta,* vol. 2, Kwidzyn 2004; idem, "Nidzica i okolice w czasach PRL" [in:] W. Rezmer (ed.), *Historia Nidzicy i okolic,* Nidzica 2012, p. 306. After the war, Poland took over lands that had been ravaged not by military operations, but by the barbarity of Red Army soldiers. Out of the 39 towns that ultimately fell within the borders of the Olsztyn voivodeship, five reported over 75 percent infrastructural damage, eight reported over 51 percent, and twelve – over 25 percent. Other towns had also sustained heavy losses to their infrastructure, often exceeding 20 percent. This data was listed in a publication from the 1970s, when it was not yet possible to disclose that much of this damage was done by the Red Army; B. Bogdańska, J. Lisikiewicz, *Województwo olsztyńskie. Monografia ekonomiczno-społeczna 1945–1969,* Olsztyn 1974, p. 442.

[148] A detailed analysis of this issue was presented by Golon, who used Toruń as his example. The losses incurred by the commune alone (not counting industrial and private property) between February 1945 and 30th Jun. 1946 due to the stay of Soviet units amounted to over 43 million PLZ; M. Golon, "Straty toruńskiej gospodarki komunalnej spowodowane przez władze radzieckie w latach 1945–1946", *Rocznik Toruński* 1997, vol. 24, pp. 151–169.

[149] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956,* pp. 156–160, 169.

never implemented. Soviet troops quickly applied for lower rates and were given the necessary permission.[150] Despite the very favourable stipulations, the Red Army did not fulfil their financial obligations. Consequently, the Polish economy lost millions of Polish złoty every year.

The arrears in telecommunications services,[151] the use of energy, water and gas,[152] etc., were huge. Often amounting to several million złoty, they were a burden for the local authorities; attempts at collecting the overdue payments were frequently met with difficulties. Many debts remained unsettled.[153] Some of them spanned several years; Soviet units deliberately hindered the process of acquiring accurate data on the usage (there were instances of breaking the seals and damaging meters).[154]

The fact that the Red Army used Polish railways, and applied Polish customs or transportation fees, generated considerable problems as well. Under Stalin's pressure, on 4th November 1944 the PKWN passed a decree which militarised Polish railway lines. One day later representatives of the Committee and the USSR government met in Lublin to sign an agreement on the utilisation and management of Polish railways. This means of transport was reserved almost exclusively for the war effort and handed over to Soviet administration. In 1944 Russians began to transport carriages and equipment owned by Polish railway companies into the USSR, along with railway lines – millions of złoty worth of metal. In November of the same year, the Home Army was reporting from Białystok: "From the moment they entered our territory, the Soviets keep removing the remaining iron from the railway, the lines, the tools and all machines, such as cutters, planers etc. The workshops in Starosielce, which the Germans had not managed to destroy or transport away, are now being picked clean by the Soviets, who send entire trains full of equipment eastwards. In the rail[way] line between Łapy and Łomża the Soviets are stripping tele[phone] poles off their isolation and every bit that could still be usable. […] The process of transporting the remains of the huge rail[way]

[150] Idem, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1956–1993,* pp. 25–26.

[151] As regards the services rendered by the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs to the Soviet army in the first few years after the war, most of them were performed informally. It was established that the amount receivable for telecommunication services rendered to the Northern Group of Forces between 1st July 1945 and 30th Dec. 1947 was 2,376,966,364 PLZ. The debts for services rendered before 1st June 1945 were remitted. Despite the agreement regulating the process of paying fees for telecommunication services signed in 1949, the situation did not improve to any significant degree. It only changed in the 1950s; idem, *Okupacja w imię… 1944–1956,* pp. 120–125.

[152] Ibidem, p. 161–168; Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych, hereinafter: AAN), State Commissioner Office at the Norther Group Command, 204, Note from the electric energy supply company in Poznań, 3rd Aug. 1956.; ibidem, Note by the utilities company in Żagań, 9th Mar. 1956. Similar examples (even with the same signature) can be counted by the dozen.

[153] M. Golon, "Rola Północnej…", p. 186. In 1947 the Northern Group of Forces' arrears related to state and utility taxes, as well as lease fees, amounted to ca. 185 million PLZ for agricultural estates alone; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię… 1944–1956,* p. 87.

[154] M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię… 1944–1956,* p. 64.

workshops in Starosielce and Łapy is coming to an end. The equipment and scrap metal the Soviets took from there was worth roughly 52 million PLZ".[155] The railway lines played a crucial role in transporting the spoils of war to the USSR. Poland only resumed control of the railway system under the agreement signed on 11th July 1945.[156]

The substantial losses resulting from military transports for the USSR[157] and the combined pool of carriages used in transport between socialist countries were all sustained by the Polish State Railways. An agreement regulating these procedures was imposed by the USSR on its satellite states in 1951.

The issue of customs and other related fees was also regulated in a manner that benefited the USSR, in an agreement dated to June 1958, which specified the conditions in which the Soviet troops temporarily stationed in Poland could use various facilities and services. Its provisions were detailed by the directives of the head of the Central Customs Office.[158]

The handful of problems signalled above illustrates that in 1945–1947 the economic significance of having the Soviet army station in Polish territory was indeed profound and resulted in irreparable losses for the Polish economy. Not only did the USSR made direct profit at Poland's expense; its plan of weakening the economy of a country already devastated by war was an important instrument of subjugation. The economic significance of the Northern Group of Forces' presence gradually decreased after 1948, yet it still executed some influence. The most significant issues related to the handover of agricultural estates and industrial plants had been settled by the early 1950s. The utilisation of Polish economy then shifted to other methods, in whose implementation the Northern Group was largely instrumental. The change in the scale of exploitation stemmed, on the one hand, from the reduction in the number of troops stationed in Poland, and on the other, from the fact that the Northern Group of Forces started to order increasing amounts of goods in the Polish market. This new system of supply had as many advantages as independent Soviet production in Polish territory. In 1947 the Northern Group spent 53.6 million PLZ on goods and services; a year later the sum increased to 195.5 million. In the 1950s the Soviet forces were no longer managing any significant number of enterprises; only a handful of them remained under

[155] Appendix no. 1 to the situational report by the AK Command of Białystok Locality dated 5th November 1944 [in:] J. Kułak (ed.), *Białostocczyzna 1944–1945…*, pp. 50–51.

[156] The railways were handed over after some delay. The relevant agreement was signed in Moscow on 5th Mar. 1947. Both parties declared to regard all claims on the seized railway equipment as settled; a provision which was, naturally, disadvantageous for Poland, since no remuneration or even compenstation for the incurred losses was discussed; M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1944–1956*, pp. 126–127.

[157] Ibidem, pp. 127–131, 145.

[158] For more on customs regulations, see: M. L. Krogulski, *Okupacja w imię sojuszu… 1956–1993*, pp. 150–154.