STRATEGIC REVIEW

FALL 1984

UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INSTITUTE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INSTITUTE
915 FIFTEENTH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20005
(202) 331-1776

STRATEGIC REVIEW

A Quarterly Publication

of the

UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INSTITUTE

Washington, D.C.

STRATEGIC REVIEW is published quarterly by the United States Strategic Institute. Publishing Office, 265 Winter Street, Waltham, MA 02154 USA. Telephone: (617) 890-5030. Fall 1984. Vol. XII, No. 4. Printed in U.S.A. Send all requests for copies and correspondence regarding undelivered copies to United States Strategic Institute, Publishing Office, 265 Winter Street, Waltham, MA 02154 USA. ISSN 0091-6846.

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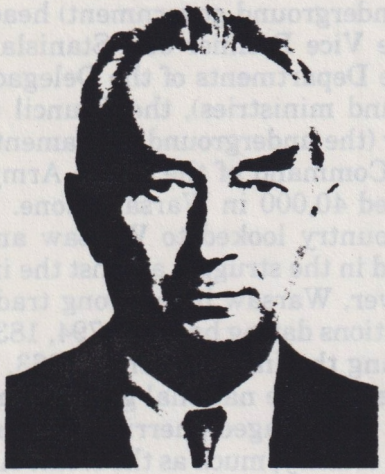
VOL. XII FALL 1984 No. 4

STRATEGIC REVIEW is dedicated to the advancement and understanding of those principles and practices — military and political — which serve the vital interests and security of the United States.

CONTENTS

THE WARSAW UPRISING AND POLAND'S SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT, FORTY YEARS LATER

STEFAN KORBONSKI



THE AUTHOR: In 1939 Polish Army Lt. Korbonski was taken prisoner by Soviet troops, but then escaped to help organize the Polish Underground Movement, becoming Chief of the Civil Resistance in 1941. During the Warsaw Uprising he was appointed Secretary of the Interior in the underground government and later performed the duties of Chief of the Polish Underground State until his arrest by the NKVD in June 1945. After release from prison through the so-called amnesty law, he was active in the leadership of the Peasant Party until his escape from Poland in 1947. He is today Chairman of the Polish Council of Unity in the United States and of the Polish Delegation to the Assembly of European Captive Nations.

IN BRIEF

On August 1, 1944, in one of those episodes of tragic valor that have dogged Poland's tortured history, the underground Home Army rose against the German panzers in occupied Warsaw, fighting desperately in a battle of two months that left over 200,000 dead combatants and butchered civilians in its rubbled wake. The rising was staged without the knowledge by its leaders of the high-level Allied decisions that had already consigned Poland to the Soviet sphere. While airdropped Western supplies were delayed by weather and Soviet obstructionist tactics, the Red Army halted its advance on the city, permitting the bloodbath to take its ultimate toll. Forty years later, the memories and lessons of the Warsaw Uprising continue to condition the organization and tactics of a new underground struggle in Poland.

On August 1, 1984, Poles throughout the world commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising on August 1, 1944. In Poland itself, in keeping with the two planes on which life has evolved in the country, two celebrations took place. One, the formal and official, was headed by the dictator Jaruzelski, who thus completed the cycle of a personal career—from fighting against the Home Army soldiers in 1945–1946 to erecting a monument in their honor in 1984.

On the second plane were the national celebrations featuring crowds of Warsaw citizens at the graves of their Home Army soldiers in Powazki Cemetary, singing Solidarity songs and demonstrating their faith in the eventual achievement of freedom through upraised arms and fingers extended in the victory sign. They thus expressed their deep belief in the spiritual union of Solidarity and the Warsaw Uprising—a union that was dramatically affirmed in the ovation given at the Powazki Cemetery to Anna Walentynowicz from Gdansk, whose dismissal in 1980 had triggered the strike that led to the birth of Solidarity.

In light of this spiritual linkage, it behooves us to look back upon the epic and tragic events

in Warsaw forty years ago, and then to note how the indelible memories and lessons of those events continue to condition the tide of developments in Poland today.

The Genesis of the Warsaw Uprising

The story goes back to the dark days preceding the capitulation of Warsaw to the Germans in 1939. On September 26, 1939, General Michal Tokarzewski approached General Juliusz Rommel, appointed by Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly as the Supreme Military Commander in Poland, with a proposal. He suggested that Rommel, inasmuch as he himself had no chance to evade capture by the Germans, transfer his command to Tokarzewski, thus enabling the latter to organize the underground armed resistance in Poland and to prepare the country "to engage in an open struggle at a time when the war situation would make it feasible,"—i.e., to prepare for a general rising.

The statute of the Union for Armed Struggle called this "open struggle" by name when it referred to "preparing behind the lines of the occupying forces an armed uprising that will go into effect at the moment when the regular Polish armed forces will enter the country." General Wladyslaw Sikorski's plan for a general rising of October 10, 1940, detailed some of these preparations, e.g. flying to Poland the largest possible contingents of land forces in support of the action.

Three years later, the military and political situation dictated a more realistic conception of a general rising in Poland. In specifying the conditions under which the impending "Operation Tempest" would go into effect—an operation involving sabotage and diversionary activities behind the German lines directed at the destruction of German communication lines and attacks on the German rear guard—the underground government's instruction of October 7, 1943 (modified subsequently by resolutions adopted in February 1944) also spelled out in detail the conditions for the outbreak of general rising and defined its aims. The instruction anticipated the entry of the Soviet armies into Poland and the need to coordinate military operation with them. Yet, it also contemplated the contingency of a rising taking place regardless of the conditions specified —e.g., in the event of a collapse of the German eastern front and a breakdown in the morale of the German army. The sole stipulation was that the government would have the final decision and the choice of the proper moment.

The reasons for the decision to stage the uprising in Warsaw itself were clear. That city had never lost its identity as the pulsating heart of Poland, despite German efforts to downgrade it by making Krakow the capital of their regional administration. Within the walls of Warsaw were sheltered the Home Cabinet (the underground government) headed by Delegate Vice Premier Jan Stanislaw Jankowski, the Departments of the Delegacy (the underground ministries), the Council of National Unity (the underground parliament), and the High Command of the Home Army, which numbered 40,000 in Warsaw alone.

The entire country looked to Warsaw and followed its lead in the struggle against the invaders. Moreover, Warsaw bore a long tradition of insurrections dating back to 1794, 1831 and 1863. During the Insurrection of 1863, it had been the seat of the national government while partisan units waged guerrilla warfare throughout the country, much as the Home Army units were now doing.

It was unthinkable for Warsaw to be liberated by Soviet forces rather than the Home Army: this would be an affront to the national sense of honor and dignity. Furthermore, it would confirm Soviet claims that the Polish Underground State and Home Army were a fiction, and would allow the Polish Committee of National Liberation, contrived by the Soviets on July 21, 1944, to parade in Warsaw as the Polish government, uncontested and unquestioned. The move to establish control over the city by the Home Army and to place the reins of government into the hands of the underground authorities was intended to preempt this contingency and to create a *fait accompli* for the postwar status of a liberated Poland.

Nor could the underground leadership disregard the mood in the capital. The flame of hatred burned bright among the inhabitants of Warsaw, stoked by five years of unspeakable German terror. For those five years the men of the Home Army had been preparing for this one great moment of revenge, and now they chafed for the action to begin. An order of restraint conceivably could result in spontaneous actions destined to be drowned in blood.

Finally, the Warsaw Rising began as an act of self-defense. On July 28, 1944, the Germans had posted notices ordering 100,000 men to report at specified assembly points for work on fortifications. This conveyed a clear threat that the Germans would apprehend the youth of the capital. According to rumors long circulated in Warsaw by the Germans themselves, the Polish youth had been marked for liquidation on Hitler's orders.

The High-Level Political Context

It is a significant but scarcely known fact that the decision to trigger the rising in Warsaw was taken by the underground leaders in that city in the absence of knowledge of what had transpired in the high-level dealings among the Allies with respect to Poland, particularly in the agreement concluded more than six months earlier by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin in Teheran. The Teheran Agreement assigned Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence, and thereby to the exercise of Russia's power. Nor was there real knowledge in Warsaw about the basically negative attitude in the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington toward including the Warsaw Rising in Allied operational plans. The Chiefs had listened to an emissary of the Home Army, General Stanislaw Tatar (pseudonym Tabor), but the Polish representative with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Colonel Leon Mitkiewicz, was told repeatedly that Poland belonged to the Soviet theater of operations and that all Home Army actions should be coordinated with the Soviet command.

Why these high-level decisions and attitudes were unknown in Warsaw remains somewhat of a puzzle after forty years. The Polish government in London must have had some inkling of the terms of the Teheran Agreement—if not, it would have been guilty of gross neglect of the trustworthy sources through which confidential information was routinely and easily obtained in Washington. Certainly, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, was thoroughly familiar with the position of the Combined Chiefs of Staff from the many reports sent to him by Colonel Mitkiewicz, and he undoubtedly passed these reports on to the London government. But did he also pass them on to General Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski, Commander of the Home Army? Was the latter misled about the meaning of the reports—and particularly their implications for the planned uprising—by the fact that the Western allies were continuing to conduct airdrops over Poland? Whatever may have been the reason, General Bor-Komorowski never mentioned such matters at the meetings of, for instance, the Directorate of Underground Struggle, of which this writer was a member. Thus, at least the civilian leaders of the underground approved the decision on the Warsaw Uprising without awareness of the larger context of political developments relevant to Poland and to the rising itself.

The Immediate Decision

On July 31, 1944, the Underground Home Army General Staff was to meet in Warsaw at 1800 hours in an apartment at 67 Panska Street. Colonel Antoni Chrusciel (pseudonym Monter) arrived one hour early, but found Commander-in-Chief General Bor-Komorowski, Chief of General Staff General Tadeusz Pelczynski, and General Leopold Okulicki already present. He informed them that Soviet tanks were approaching the suburb of Praga, and that a number of localities in the immediate vicinity of the capital—Radosc, Milosna, Okuniew, Wolomin and Radzymin—were already in Soviet hands.

On the basis of this information, the commanders concluded that a Soviet attack on Warsaw might be launched at any time and that the Home Army should take up arms without delay, lest the main objective of the uprising—the liberation of Warsaw by the Poles themselves—be compromised.

Government Delegate Jan Stanislaw Jankowski was brought in hurriedly. He was briefed by General Bor, posed a few questions concerning the preparations for the struggle, and said: "All right, go ahead." General Bor then gave his orders to Colonel Chrusciel: "Tomorrow at 1700 hours you will go into action."

Opposing Orders of Battle

On August 1, 1944, at 5 P.M., when the Home Army soldiers, distinguished by their red-and-white armbands, first attacked the German garrison, the arrays of opposing forces in Warsaw were roughly as follows. The Home Army sent into action, under the command of Colonel Chrusciel, 32,500 men in Warsaw and 4,000 men in the suburban sector. These were joined by 800 men from the National Armed Forces,

500 from the Communist People's Army and 100 from the Polish People's Army. During the uprising they were also joined by a Jewish formation which filtered in from outside the city through sewers, a platoon of Slovaks, some Georgians, a number of Soviet soldiers freed from German captivity by the uprising, a few Frenchmen and one British airman, John Ward.

The armament of the Home Army in Warsaw was as follows: 20 heavy machineguns and 35,000 rounds of ammunition; 98 light machineguns and 15,800 rounds; 844 submachineguns and 121,000 rounds; 1,386 rifles and 234,000 rounds; 2,665 handguns and 52,000 rounds; 2 small-caliber antitank guns and 100 shells; 12 antitank rifles and 1,170 rounds; 10 flamethrowers (to be increased in the course of the uprising to 150); 6 6-inch mortars; several British antitank guns (PIATs); 50,100 hand grenades; 5,000 Molotov cocktails; and 700 kg of explosives.

These figures rose in the course of the uprising as a consequence of 73 airdrops by Polish and Allied planes. The drops brought 13 mortars and 325 rounds; 150 light machineguns and 1,400,000 rounds; 300 submachineguns and 1,000,000 rounds; 230 PIATs and 3,450 projectiles; 130 rifles and 280,000 rounds; 950 handguns and 36,000 rounds; 10,300 hand grenades and 3,000 antitank grenades. Toward the end of the uprising, on the night of September 13, low-flying Soviet planes began airdrops that ultimately yielded 5 heavy machineguns and 10,000 rounds; 700 submachineguns and 60,000 rounds; 143 antitank rifles and 4,290 rounds; 48 mortars and 1,726 antitank grenades; 160 rifles and 10,000 rounds; and 4,000 hand grenades.

These figures, of course, were decimated in the course of battle. According to the *Kriegstagebuch* (Operational Log) No. 11 of the German 9th Army, after the capitulation on October 2, 1944, the following weapons were surrended by the 11,668 Home Army soldiers taken prisioner by the Germans: 1,087 rifles, 633 handguns, 54 antitank rifles, 467 submachineguns, 33 grenade throwers, 49 light machineguns and 7 heavy machineguns. The overall data confirm the general impression that only one of every four Home Army soldiers actually bore some weapons at the beginning of the uprising: the rest were to capture their arms from the Germans or to receive them from the airdrops.

According to SS Obergruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the commander of the German armies combatting the insurgents, against these Polish forces, during the 63 days of the Warsaw Rising, were ranged German forces numbering 50,000 men and commanded by 14 officers of general rank. The figure does not include the German Luftwaffe units under the command of General Colonel Ritter von Greim, which bombarded Warsaw daily, nor the men from the two SS panzer divisions ("Herrmann Goering" and "Viking"), the 73rd Infantry Division, and the troops on the German armored train, all of whom were involved at one time or another in the Warsaw fighting. The Germans had at their disposal the most up-to-date weapons and the support of their artillery, including 188-mm cannons and 600-mm mortars mounted on railroad platforms, as well as small tanks guided by remote control, the so-called Goliats.

The Home Army's Assault

Unmindful of this overwhelming superiority of the Germans, the Home Army soldiers attacked with furious and desperate bravery, seizing control of most of the city in the first four days of fighting. The city sections of Zoliborz, the Old Town, Wola, Ochota, Mokotow, Powisle and Czerniakow were all in Polish hands. The Germans, however, managed to hold the fortified strongholds into which they had turned the army barracks and command posts, office buildings and institutions guarded by special units. These were surrounded by the Home Army and isolated, but repeated attempts to seize them imposed heavy losses on the insurgents.

Although the Germans knew about the preparations for the uprising, nevertheless on August 1 some motorized columns, marching troops and individual soldiers were surprised by the insurgents, and soon the streets of the capital were strewn with their bodies. The same fate befell tanks sent into action by the German command. Those that had not been destroyed by the all too scarce antitank weapons were burned down with flamethrowers and Molotov cocktails. Teenage boys distinguished themselves particularly in this action.

At nightfall the elated inhabitants of Warsaw swarmed out onto the streets and crisscrossed them, as instructed, with a network of barricades. They broke through the cellar walls

of adjacent buildings and created a vast underground labyrinth throughout the city. Warsaw blossomed with red-and-white Polish flags. German loudspeakers in the streets were promptly put to use blaring patriotic songs, appeals and instructions for the population. Underground authorities, courts and police emerged and began to function. At long last, there was a feeling of freedom in Warsaw.

German Responses

On August 5th the Germans began their attack. Its objective was to reopen two communication lines running over the Kierbedz Bridge and the Poniatowski Bridge and linking the Warsaw garrisons with the German armies on the eastern bank of the Vistula. From barricades and buildings, the insurgents defended their positions doggedly. The German attack advancing toward the Kierbedz Bridge was supported by a tank company of the SS Division "Herrmann Goering," an armored train and Luftwaffe sorties. It moved along Wolska Street, Chlodna Street, the Saxon Gardens and Pilsudski Square. Along the way, in accordance with their orders, the German soldiers evacuated all houses, shooting the inhabitants—men, women and children—on the spot and setting fire to the buildings. In the Wola section of Warsaw alone they butchered some 38,000 people.

The German attack was halted for a time by the crack "Kedyw" units commanded by Lt. Colonel Jan Mazurkiewicz (pseudonym Radoslaw). But, launched again in twice the strength, it finally succeeded—but only toward the end of the uprising—in opening up the approaches to the Kierbedz Bridge. Before that happened, the German attack cut off from the rest of the city the Zoliborz section and the Old Town, where the Government Delegate, the High Command of the Home Army and the Chairman of the Council of National Unity, Kazimierz Puzak, remained.

Yet, the second German attack, advancing along the main thoroughfare of Aleje Jerozolimskie toward the Poniatowski Bridge, never succeeded in reaching its objective. Although the German tanks and troops progressed as far as the intersection of Marszalkowska Street and Aleje Jerozolimskie, they failed to gain control of the sector between Marszalkowska Street and Nowy Swiat, which remained in Polish hands throughout the uprising. Thus the Germans were denied the second, and most important, communication artery.

Patterns of Battle

Protracted and ferocious battles erupted in the city. The Home Army units attacked and captured isolated German strongholds, such as the Police Headquarters and the neighboring church of the Holy Cross on Krakowskie Przedmiescie, the Telephone Exchange at Zielna Street, the building at the corner of Aleje Jerozolimskie and Bracka Streets which guarded the approach to the Poniatowski Bridge, and the PASTA Building (Polish Telephone Company Headquarters) on Pius XI Street. In these actions, the Poles used flamethrowers of their own manufacture.

During the siege of the Telephone Exchange the Home Army units had to fight simultaneously on two fronts—against a strong and well-armed garrison within, as well as against attacks from the direction of the Saxon Gardens, barely 200 yards away, aimed at breaking through the Polish ring and freeing the besieged Germans. These attacks were beaten back, and the Telephone Exchange was captured after grim fighting waged with submachineguns and hand grenades on every stairway and for every floor of the building.

The struggle for the besieged PASTA building was similarly mounted on two fronts. The building housed a large German contingent, including sharpshooters. German tanks from the Gestapo Headquarters on Szucha Street hurried to the rescue, proceeding along Aleje Ujazdowskie to Pius XI Street. On Pius XI Street, between Aleje Ujazdowskie and Mokotowska Street, they were greeted with a hail of Molotov cocktails. German crews, fleeing their tanks, were mowed down with submachinegun fire, and the remaining tanks hastily withdrew.

In this way, the Poles succeeded in liquidating most of the German strongholds in the city. Meanwhile, the Germans reorganized their forces and proceeded with systematic attack against one section of the city after another in accordance with a preplanned pattern. The section under attack was first bombarded from the air, from early morning until late in the afternoon. The German Stukas could swoop low over the section because the Home Army had no antiaircraft: in the course of the

entire Warsaw Uprising only one German plane was downed. Thus building after building and street after street were razed by the German bombers.

Whatever remained after the bombing and the resulting conflagration was finished off by the artillery, followed with an attack by tank and infantry units. Although the Germans expected no further opposition from within the ruins, invariably they were greeted with machinegun bursts, rifle fire and grenades. Their tanks would be devastatingly targeted by PIATs from the British airdrops, flamethrowers and Molotov cocktails, and entire German infantry columns were annihilated. Many Germans threw down their arms and surrendered to the Poles—often only to die later from German bombs. Log No. 11 of the German 9th Army provides the best testimony on the fierceness of the fighting:

- August 5, 1944: We are up against a stubborn resistance from the insurgents.
- August 6: The Kaminski group is still fighting in the Ochota section, where the insurgent resistance is very stubborn.
- August 8: The resistance from the insurgents stiffens.
- August 9: No special progress in Warsaw may be noted. The initial, improvised disturbances gave way gradually to a militarily well-organized resistance movement.
- August 11: The insurgents' defense of their positions is extremely stubborn.
- August 12: The fighting against the insurgents in Warsaw continues equally intense.... The Poles fight with an extreme doggedness.... On the German side, all manner of technical equipment is being brought into the fighting. Besides the "Goliats" and the "Taifuns" used by the sapper storm units, the Funkenpanzer armored cars directed by remote control were also introduced.
- August 15: No conspicuous progress in Warsaw can be noted. A new piece of equipment will arrive shortly in Warsaw 0040—the 60-cm mortar "Karl"....
- August 28: Our losses up to August 28 amount to 91 officers and 3,770 enlisted men. In fighting in the Old Town, we are losing an average of 150 men each day.
- September 5: The fighting in Warsaw continues with unabated stubbornness.
- September 24: The defense [of Mokotow] is very fierce.

Inevitable Turning of the Battle

Still, it was an unequal struggle. The Old Town, subjected to a concentrated attack and reduced to rubble, could no longer be defended. On the night of September 1, the last Home Army units, led by Colonel Karol Ziemski (pseudonym Wachnowski), took to the sewers, making their way—often neck-deep in sewage—to the center of the city.

It was only then that the Germans could begin to use their communication line over the Kierbedz Bridge without interruption. The Government Delegate, the Chairman of the Council of Unity and the Commander of the Home Army also left the Old Town through the sewers and reached the center of the city. In the ruins of the Old Town were left a few thousand wounded and the civilian population. The Germans savaged the Old Town similarly to Wola, butchering some 35,000 inhabitants and wounded Home Army men.

The German attack now turned to Powisle, a riverside section of Warsaw situated between the Kierbedz Bridge and the Poniatowski Bridge. Captain Cyprian Odorkiewicz (pseudonym Krybar) was in command of the Home Army forces in this section. After heavy fighting, Powisle fell on September 6, giving the Germans control over the western bank of the Vistula between the two bridges.

On September 13, the Germans pushed southward, attacking the section of Czerniakow Gorny. After prolonged and heavy fighting Czerniakow was captured on September 24. The entire bank of the Vistula on the Warsaw side was now in German hands.

Delayed Allied Airdrops

On September 15, I received two identical, consecutive telegrams from London addressed to the Government Delegate: "Today, American planes took off with supplies for Warsaw. Anticipated fly-past fourteen hours your time."

This was, of course, a secret message, but owing to someone's indiscretion the news spread through beleaguered Warsaw like wildfire. At fourteen hours Home Army fighters and citizens alike were going about with upturned heads. There was no sign of the planes. Later that afternoon I received a

telegram with the shocking news: "The planes had to turn back owing to bad atmospheric conditions."

At last, on September 18, a fine sunny day, the sound of an unfamiliar, deep and powerful hum of engines reached the tortured city. Before the planes could even be seen, German antiaircraft batteries put up a terrific barrage. High—unfortunately, too high—over burning Warsaw, over the heads of a population crying with emotion and raising their arms heavenward, soared the gigantic, shiny, silvery planes. From them hundreds of multicolored parachutes floated down. Most of them landed beyond the insurgent lines.

The Final Battles

On September 24 the German attack on the Mokotow section began. The Home Army units there, combined into the 10th Infantry Division named after Maciej Rataj, were commanded by Lt. Colonel Jozef Rokicki (pseudonym Karol). After three days of furious fighting, Mokotow fell on September 27.

On September 28, the German panzer division moved against the Zoliborz section. Led by their wounded commander, Lt. Colonel Mieczyslaw Niedzielski (pseudonym Zywiciel), the Home Army units in Zoliborz—combined into the 8th Infantry Division named after Romauld Traugutt— fought gallantly for two days, surrendering on September 30 on General Bor's orders.

In downtown Warsaw, defended by the 28th Infantry Division under the command of Colonel Edward Pfeiffer (pseudonym Radwan), it was another story. By the end of September, all underground leaders—both civil and military—were gathered in the center of the city. It withstood concentrated German attacks from September 6 to September 20. Shortly thereafter negotiations began with the German commanding officer, von dem Bach-Zelewski, regarding the capitulation, and thus the central section of the city remained in Polish hands throughout the uprising. Its capture by the Germans was forestalled by the signing of the act of capitulation on October 2, 1944, which, among other provisions, accorded the Home Army soldiers all the privileges specified in the Geneva Convention of July 27, 1929.

Closely connected with the Warsaw Rising were the Home Army operations in the region of Kampinos Forest, where a base had been established to provision the uprising and receive allied airdrops. Arms, ammunition and men flowed to Warsaw from the Kampinos Forest, where some 1,500 Home Army soldiers were concentrated under the command of Major Alfons Kotowski (pseudonym Okon). As part of the overall German operations against the Warsaw insurgents, large German forces launched an attack on the forest on September 27, forcing Major Kotowski to lead his men out of the forest in the hope of reaching the Holy Cross Mountains.

On September 29 superior German forces, supported by three armored trains, the Luftwaffe, panzer units and artillery, succeeded in surrounding the Home Army forces near Jaktorow and crushing them completely. In this unequal battle Major Kotowski was killed. Yet, part of the infantrymen fought their way back to the Kampinos Forest, and some 250 cavalrymen managed to get to the Opoczno region. Polish losses were 110 killed, 180 wounded and 100 captured by the Germans. They exacted German losses of 200 dead, one plane shot down, and several tanks and armored cars destroyed.

The Toll of Losses

More generally, Polish losses in the course of the Warsaw Rising were substantial. Including the Kampinos operation, they numbered 10,200 killed, 7,000 badly wounded and 5,000 missing—altogether about 22,000 casualties. In addition, about 200,000 inhabitants of Warsaw perished. This compared with German losses, according to the report of von dem Bach-Zelewski, of 10,000 killed, 7,000 missing and 9,000 wounded—a total of about 26,000. The magnitude of the casualties on both sides can be appreciated in relation to the total numbers engaged in the battle: about 40,000 Poles and some 50,000 Germans.

There was a discrepancy between the Polish and German sources concerning the number of Home Army soldiers captured by the Germans. According to Polish sources, 20,000 Home Army soldiers were taken prisoner by the Germans, while the log of the 9th Army cited the figure of 11,668. The difference may be explained by the fact that a few thousand Home Army soldiers evaded capture by mingling with the civilian survivors fleeing the city.

General Bor, who had been appointed during the Warsaw Rising as Supreme Commander of

Polish Armed Forces following General Sosnkowski's resignation, joined his soldiers in captivity, as did the Chief of Staff, General Pelczynski, the Home Army Commander in Warsaw, Major General Chrusciel, and several other officers of the High Command of the Home Army and General Chrusciel's staff. Yet, General Leopold Okulicki (pseudonyms Kobra and Niedzwiadek), named by General Bor as his successor after the capitulation, left Warsaw with the civilian population in order to carry on his command of the Home Army in the continuing struggle against the Germans.

Soviet Duplicity

There was no question that the Soviet Second Armored Army suffered on August 3, along the approaches to the suburb of Praga, a defeat which thwarted its advance on Warsaw. The Soviet offensive was renewed only a month later, on September 10, and resulted in the taking of Praga on September 14. Two days later, beginning on September 16, a few battalions from the Polish army of General Berling, which had been organized by the Soviets on their territory, crossed the Vistula and landed on the western bank in Warsaw. The First Battalion was commanded by Soviet Major Latishonek.

Did the Soviets deliberately delay the renewal of their offensive in order to see Warsaw and the Home Army destroyed by the Germans? Or were they truly unable to resume their advance before September 10?

In seeking an answer to this question, which lingers darkly not only over the bloodbath of Warsaw but also over the contemporary skein of Soviet-Polish relations, we must examine the evidence presented by the three parties involved: the statements of the Soviet Marshals Rokossovsky and Shukov and of the General of the Army, S. Shtemenko; Log No. 11 of the German 9th Army; and the many Polish publications and statements, of which the most important are the pronouncements of General Bor.

The statements of the three Soviet generals allege that a dangerous and complicated situation had developed at the front following the successful attack against the Soviet Second Armored Army—and the destruction of its Third Corps—by the German 19th Panzer Division, two SS panzer divisions ("Death-Head" and "Viking"), the "Herrmann Goering" airborne and panzer divisions, and infantry units from the German Second Army. Overcoming this situation entailed substantial time and heavy fighting against large German forces.

It was not until the beginning of September, the Soviet statements aver, that Soviet reconnaissance discovered that one German panzer division and other units previously in the forefront of Praga had been moved elsewhere. Taking advantage of the weakened front line, the Soviet 47th Armored Army launched an attack on September 10 and captured Praga.

Even so, in his telephone conversation with Stalin on September 13, Marshal Rokossovsky, in answer to Stalin's query, replied that his armies "would not be able at the present time to liberate Warsaw." The Soviets limited themselves to ferrying an infantry battalion from General Berling's army across the Vistula to the Czerniakow section of Warsaw, which at the time was in the hands of the Home Army. The landing party, according to one statement by General Shtemenko, reported that "there were no insurgents there." Yet, in another statement Shtemenko claimed that the landing party found some "insurgent subunits" in Czerniakow and that they hindered the fighting by withdrawing toward the center of the city. Throughout the Warsaw Uprising, according to General Shtemenko, Stalin returned time and again to the subject of the rising in his conversations with various Soviet commanders. Ostensibly he was greatly concerned with the fate of Warsaw and its inhabitants.

Stalin's alleged concern, however, is in no manner confirmed by German accounts or by the facts cited in Polish sources. Quite the contrary: Log No. 11 of the German 9th Army reported as follows:

> . . . Moscow could have only a seeming interest in the success of the rising. Still, as long as the fighting in Warsaw went on, it constituted a harassment of the Germans that could not but be welcomed by the Soviet command. A successful outcome of the uprising was not in the interest of Moscow, because it was bound to bring demands totally incompatible with Moscow's intended course of action. In order to deflect the charges of passivity and intentional withdrawal of assistance to Warsaw, the Kremlin adopted a special tactic of claiming that a strong German assault east of Warsaw forced the Soviets to limit their operations to defensive ones.

> . . .For days after the German operations, aimed at destroying the Soviet Third Armored Corps, had ended in this region, the Moscow broadcasting station continued to report strong German attacks east of Praga and dressed up this news with detailed descriptions of battles that were completely fictitious.

The Soviets' duplicity is confirmed by facts cited in Polish sources. On August 14, General Bor ordered the Home Army units outside of Warsaw to come to the rescue of the fighting capital. These units—detachments of the 3rd, 9th, 10th and 30th Infantry Divisions—were intercepted by the Soviets on their way to Warsaw, disarmed and interned. The High Command of the Home Army was informed of these developments through dispatches and by the commander of the Lublin district on August 26, September 3 and September 21, 1944.

When the Western allies approached the Soviet command with the request that the planes bringing arms to the Warsaw insurgents be permitted to land behind Soviet lines after completing the airdrops, they met with a refusal. Indeed, the Soviet command warned that the crew of any plane that would, for any reason whatever, land behind the Soviet lines would be interned until the end of the war. This prohibition was removed only on September 10, when the Soviet armies began their attack on Praga and when the fate of Warsaw was already sealed.

The planes that did bring aid to Warsaw, both Polish and those of the Western allies, suffered tremendous losses. Taking off from a base in Italy, near Brindisi, they had to fly some 1,200 miles over enemy territory, through antiaircraft fire and pursued by German fighter planes. By contrast, Soviet planes were based no more than 60 miles from Warsaw on Soviet-held territory. According to the log of the German 9th Army, the Soviets had about 100 airfields at their disposal in the area between the front and the Brest-Chelm line. The flying time to Warsaw from any of these airfields would have been, at most, one hour. Technically speaking, this would have been an easy and low-risk operation in view of the tremendous air supremacy enjoyed by the Soviets.

There seemed to be no way to reverse the Soviet decision. The Polish Prime Minister Stanislaw Mikolajczyk asked for help in the course of his meetings with Stalin on August 3 and 9. General Bor sent a dispatch to Marshal Rokossovsky via London on August 8 and sought in vain to establish direct contact with Rokossovsky. The Polish Government in exile in London appealed to Stalin repeatedly through the intermediary of the British Government. Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt interceded for the embattled Polish capital. But all was to no avail. Not only did Stalin refuse all Soviet assistance, when this could have still tipped the balance in the Warsaw battle, but he also blocked aid to the insurgents from other sources.

The landings by the Soviets of a few battalions of General Berling's army on the Warsaw side of the Vistula on September 16—in the Czerniakow section and between the Kierbedz Bridge and the Poniatowski Bridge—and of a small infantry detachment in the Zoliborz section on the following night were token gestures rather than the beginning of a large-scale military operation along the entire western bank of the Vistula. It should be noted that, contrary to General Shtemenko's statement, the landing party found in Czerniakow one of the best formations of the Home Army commanded by Lt. Col. Jan Mazurkiewicz (pseudonym Radoslaw). Berling's men joined the fight under Mazurkiewicz until heavy casualties and lack of support by larger landing parties forced them to withdraw back to the eastern bank of the Vistula. This was the same time when an entry in the log of the German 9th Army noted that the Germans were "not strong enough to repel a mass landing by the enemy" and that "in the event of a large-scale drive the effectiveness of our counteraction cannot be fully assured." In other words, the Soviet command dispatched forces that were too small to ensure the success of the landing operation.

It is clear that, in addition to his devious motives, Stalin viewed the Warsaw Uprising as an act of hostility toward Russia. Throughout the rising TASS and other Soviet propaganda organs deluged the world with mendacious information about the uprising, starting with claims that there was no rising in Warsaw at all and ending with assertions that the High Command of the Home Army wanted no Soviet help whatsoever.

In short, everything points to the conclusion that the Soviets deliberately, cynically and brutally withheld and blocked the kind of

military effort that was needed to give real assistance to the Home Army in Warsaw. The motives that have been described above shine through in Stalin's statement that "under the existing circumstances the Soviet command concluded that it should cut itself off from the Warsaw adventure, since it could not assume either direct or indirect responsibility for the operations in Warsaw."

Against this background, the permission granted by the Soviets to Allied planes to land after September 10, Soviet airdrops after September 13, and the landing of a Polish battalion on September 16 and of a few small units subsequently, must be viewed retrospectively as propaganda moves, calculated to appease and delude opinion in the West, and not as a serious effort to help the Warsaw insurgents. The Soviet "help" did come, but only months after the collapse of the uprising, when the Soviet armies began their winter offensive in 1945, advancing from bridgeheads on the Vistula which the Home Army units from the Radom district had helped to establish. The Soviet encirclement of Warsaw forced the Germans to beat a retreat from the city. On January 17, 1945, after a brief battle with the German rear guard, units of the First Polish Army under the command of a Soviet general, S. Poplavsky, captured Warsaw—or, rather, the ruins of the city.

According to the German plans, Warsaw was to be destroyed and replaced with a small provincial town. According to Soviet plans as well, Warsaw was to be destroyed, but by German hands.

The parallel nature of German and Soviet objectives, however, should not have been surprising. In 1939–1940 both the Germans and the Russians initiated their partition of Poland with mass expulsions and deportations of the Polish population, and with the "de-Polonization" of the territories incorporated into the Reich or into the USSR. The Nazis embarked on the extermination of the Polish intelligentsia, and the Soviets followed suit by arresting and deporting thousands, consummating their policy with the murder of 15,000 Polish army officers—mostly from the reserves — whose mass graves were found in the Katyn Forest. The Germans destroyed all traces of Polish culture and history in the western part of Poland. The Soviets did exactly the same in the eastern Polish territories.

The Warsaw Uprising and Solidarity

Forty years after the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, another rising continues in Poland. This new surge against oppression was triggered by the firing of a Gdansk shipyard crane operator on August 14, 1980. Under the symbols of the national flag and of the portraits of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa and the loyal son of Poland, Pope John Paul II, the strike that began at Gdansk spread throughout Poland. Soon it swept up ten million workers and three million peasants, not counting the Solidarity organizations of intellectuals, professionals, officials and craftsmen. The resounding slogan was and continues to be: "Let Poland be Poland."

This time the struggle has been mounted by a new generation—sons of those who fought in World War II against the Germans and the Soviets from the underground and amid the ruins of Warsaw, and who thus extended a long chain of valor stretching through the uprisings of 1794, 1831, 1863, the anti-Tsarist revolution of 1905, the disarming of Germans in Poland on November 11, 1918, the victorious war with the Soviets in 1920, and the anti-German Silesian Uprising in May 1921.

Yet, the new Polish generation was raised in the shadow of the Warsaw tragedy. There is no question that the lessons of that defeat have conditioned the outlook and tactics of those who are leading the underground struggle today.

Thus, the principle of "no more armed uprisings against overwhelming odds" was starkly mirrored in Solidarity's program, which specifically excluded conspiratorial activities, armed struggle, terror and the use of force. The men and women who are engaged in the new struggle for Poland's redemption are no less courageous than their fathers who fought against the German panzers in the rubble of Warsaw. Yet, theirs is a more sober attitude laced with the understanding that a new bloody conflict—especially one that initially pits Poles against Poles—is not the road toward that redemption. Rather, the final liberation can only be achieved through a patient struggle waged from the shadows.

Another and related lesson of the Warsaw Uprising has clearly influenced the tactics of Solidarity from the outset: this concerns the futility of expectations of material—let alone military—help from the outside. During the last

four years, no Polish heads have been turned skyward waiting for airdropped Western supplies. Much more so than their fathers in Warsaw in 1944, who were ignorant of the high-level politics that had consigned their city—and country—to the Soviet sphere, today's generation in Poland is only too sensitively aware of the global constellations of power—and of the fact that the West will not risk war to help liberate Poland from the Soviet yoke. Thus, from the beginning of their rebellion, the leaders of Solidarity knew that they would have to rely strictly on their own resources, even while seeking and welcoming the value of moral support from the West.

It seems obvious that the memory of the Warsaw Uprising impacted also upon an alarmed Soviet Politburo when it deliberated in 1980 over how this new movement, which challenged Soviet rule in Poland, could be liquidated. The experience of the Warsaw Uprising undoubtedly went far in convincing the men in the Kremlin that the Poles were determined to risk even national suicide in defending the right to independence and in resisting a Soviet invasion. The international consequences generated by such a Soviet-Polish war in 1980 could have been incalculable. Therefore, the Soviets devised the Machiavellian plan to quell Solidarity through the instrumentality of the Poles themselves. In the process, the Politburo even violated its Marxist-Leninist principles by withdrawing governing authority from the Polish Communist Party and vesting it in the military under General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

Today, the underground Solidarity movement depends to a still greater extent on the legacy of the conspiratorial experience gathered during the Second World War and the Warsaw Uprising than did the overt Solidarity Union prior to Jaruzelski's repression on December 13, 1981. In its underground press and clandestine meetings there has been continuous discussion concerning the organization, strategy and tactics of the wartime underground and how these could be adapted to the present needs of the organization. From these deliberations have evolved the following basic principles:

• The Polish Underground State was a wartime phenomenon, whereas the secret Solidarity cells exist and must develop in time of peace. By its very nature, the movement must opt for peaceful methods.

• The main enemy of Solidarity is the Soviet Union and the KGB, not Jaruzelski or the Polish military dictatorship. The initial struggle is for extending pluralism in Polish society, which includes a continuing dialogue with the military government. The ultimate struggle is for throwing off the Soviet yoke.

• The wartime underground was calculated to last several years. The present underground may have to function for an indefinite period. It must adjust its organizational form accordingly, in order to be able to oppose effectively the KGB as well as its Polish branch, the Security Police.

• For the same reasons of staying power and adaptation, the underground Solidarity cannot copy the centralized organization of the wartime Polish underground state with its government, parliament, courts and army. Rather it must confront the KGB and its surrogate with a decentralized movement that cannot be liquidated through attack of its leadership structure.

• The main task of Solidarity is to create an underground society in Poland that functions beneath the "order" commanded by the communist satraps in Warsaw—a society replete with its own political and economic institutions, including taxation, education, press, etc., and its network of contacts with the outside world. This underground society is already well established in its formative stages today.

But if there are differences between the wartime Polish underground and today's Solidarity, there are also strong—indeed, indestructible—linkages between the two. Both were, and are, mass movements enjoying the complete support of the nation. Both were, and are, expressions of the indomitable values of freedom and independence that have sustained the Polish nation under centuries of repeated episodes of suppression and partition.

Consequently, daily life inside Poland today is lived on two separate planes: the upper, official communist, and the lower, underground, national Polish plane. This new underground plane is saturated with the cult of the Warsaw Uprising—as was eloquently testified to by the many thousands of leaflets distributed in 1981 by the Mazowsze Region of Solidarity

commemorating the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising and emphasizing the ideological and national significance of this event to Solidarity. This underground movement presents a greater threat to Soviet rule in Poland than did the overtly functioning Solidarity Union. It will continue to undermine the foundations of the Soviet empire until its inevitable collapse.

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