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The dissolution of the Home Army

The reasons for the arrest of the leaders of the Polish Underground State in March 1945





At the meeting of the Council of Ministers at Home (KRM, from the Polish *Krajowa Rada Ministrów*) held on 23 February 1945, a decision was made to publish the next issue of *Rzeczpospolita Polska* (The Republic of Poland) (the previous issue was published on 25 December 1944), which included the resolution of the Council of National Unity (RJN, from the Polish *Rada Jedności Narodowej*) on the Crimea Conference and the order to dissolve the Home Army.

During the same meeting, the reorganisation of the underground authorities was also discussed.

On 28 February, Kazimierz Pużak and Zygmunt Zaremba informed London about the decision to commence the overt activities of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS, from the Polish *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*). At the beginning of March, the executive of the Polish People's Party (PSL, from the Polish *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*) decided to unmask the party on 1 April. Also the Labour Fraction (SP, from the Polish *Stronnictwo Pracy*) and the National Party (SN, from the Polish

Stronnictwo Narodowe) prepared for their exposure.

On 27 February, Prime Minister Tomasz Arciszewski, in his cable to the Delegate, stated that the KRM could unmask after the establishment of the Provisional Government (RT, from the Polish *Rząd Tymczasowy*) stated that its replacement was to exist in conspiracy. This issue was so important that, as early as at the beginning of March, during the meeting of the executives of the peasant movement in Warsaw, a decision was made to unmask the party on 1 April, and the government in exile was informed about this in a cable dated 9 March. Some time earlier, on 28 February, Kazimierz Pużak and Zygmunt Zaremba informed London about the decision that the Polish Socialist Party (PPS from Polish *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*) should commence overt operations. Also, the Labour Fraction (SP, from the Polish *Stronnictwo Pracy*) and the National Party (SN, from the Polish *Stronnictwo Narodowe*) prepared for their exposure.

Arrests and sentences

During the meetings of the representatives of the SP and the SN in Brwinów on 8 March, the NKVD arrested Jan Hoppe from the SP and Aleksander Zwierzyński from the SN. On 3 March, Wanda Modlibowska, a secretary of the Government Delegation for Poland (Polish — *Delegatura Rządu na Kraj*) was arrested.

The appointment of the Council of the Republic of Poland (Polish - *Rada Rzeczypospolitej*) was called on to operate during the transitional period. It was to be comprised mainly of representatives of the parties

with seats in the Council of National Unity (in Poland) and the National Council (Polish *Rada Narodowa*) (in London).

The following people were imprisoned: Government Delegate (Deputy Prime Minister) J.S. Jankowski, his deputies (ministers): Adam Bień from the SL, Antoni Pajdak from the PPS and Stanisław Jasiukowicz from the SN, the Commander of the (dissolved) Home Army Leopold Okulicki, Head of the RJN Kazimierz Pużak and party representatives: Aleksander Zwierzyński, Zbigniew Stypułkowski and Kazimierz Kobylański — the SN, Kazimierz Bagiński and Stanisław Mierzwa - the SL, Józef Chaciński and Franciszek Urbański — the SP, Eugeniusz Czarnowski and Stanisław Michałowski — the SD, as well as an employee of the Department of Information and Press, who was to be an interpreter — Józef Stemler-Dąbski.

After a dinner in Colonel Pimenov's quarters, they were taken to the Włochy district and then to the Praga district (10/12 Strzelecka Street), and on 28 March, they flew to Moscow instead of London. During the flight to Moscow, the plane was forced to make an emergency landing near Ivano-Voznesensk, from where they were transported the rest of the way by train.

In the trial that took place before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR on 21 June 1945, the following sentences were passed: General Okulicki — 10 years in prison, Jankowski — 8 years, Bień — 5 years, Jasiukowicz — 5 years, Pużak — 1.5 years, Bagiński — 1 year, Zwierzyński — 8 months, Czarnowski — 6 months, Mierzwa, Stypułkowski, Chaciński, Urbański — 4 months. The following were

acquitted: Michałowski, Kobylański and Stemler-Dąbski, while Pajdak was sentenced to 5 years in prison in a separate trial.

In view of the post-Yalta situation

In order to better understand the reasons behind the kidnapping of the leaders of the Polish Underground State, it is necessary to examine the arrangements made by the Council of National Unity on 24 February 1945. The representatives of the most important Polish political parties decided to support Stanisław Mikołajczyk's candidacy for the post of Prime Minister, i.e. the President of the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN, from the Polish *Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej*). History lessons taught us that Stanisław Mikołajczyk was the Prime Minister from summer 1943 to October 1944. He was succeeded by Tomasz Arciszewski, a representative of the PPS, who arrived from the Homeland.

The foundations of the TRJN were to be built on the four most important parties of the Polish Underground: the People's Party (SL, from the Polish *Stronnictwo Ludowe*), the National Party (SN, from the Polish *Stronnictwo Narodowe*), the Labour Fraction (SP, from the Polish *Stronnictwo Pracy*) and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS, from the Polish *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*). In compliance with the Constitution, the government was to be appointed by the President of the Republic of Poland. The rule of the TRJN in Poland was to be guaranteed by the following - as provided for by the RJN:

1. the recognition of the government by three world powers;

2. the withdrawal of the NKVD from Poland;
3. the release of all arrested, interned and deported Poles (the soldiers of the Home Army, the employees of the Government Delegation, social and political activists);
4. freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, radio and assembly;
5. regulation of the issues of the Polish Army in the Homeland – “the introduction of total structural and organisational independence, above all, of every level of Polish command”.

With regard to the elections to the Sejm, the RJN stated that the conditions of their holding were as follows:

1. to issue a decree on the elections statute: “based on universality, secret voting and admission of all democratic parties”;
2. to stop the occupation and to ensure that total power in Poland be taken over by the TRJN;
3. to ensure the return to the Homeland of residents with voting rights (POWs, forced labourers, deported persons, displaced persons, refugees).

There were calls for the Council of the Republic of Poland to be appointed in the transitional period before the elections, and it was to be composed mainly of the representatives of the political parties with

seats in the Council of National Unity (in Poland) and the National Council (in London). Pursuant to drafts from summer 1944, the composition of the Council of the Republic of Poland was to be as follows: all members of the Council of National Unity and the National Council (from London), 50 members appointed by the RJN, 20 members appointed by the President of the Republic of Poland.

The adoption of such assumptions at the end of February 1945 by the RJN shattered — *de facto* — Soviet plans. It was the defence of the independence of Poland by the RJN which contributed to the arrest of the most important politicians of the Polish Underground State.

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P O L A C Y I

Po wszystkich kłóskach i męczarniach, jakieśmy przeszli, na cmentarzyku milionów ofiar Majdanka i Oświęcimia, po bestialskich gwałtach niemieckich i zbeszczeniu dziesiątek tysięcy kobiet przez sprzymierzeńców sowieckich — nie oszczędzono Polsce najokrutniejszego bólu — upokorzenia.

Przed sądem w Moskwie stanęli najlepsi synowie Polski, którzy przez 5 lat z największym poświęceniem, z bohaterskim narażaniem życia kierowali nieugiętą walką narodu przeciw hitleryzmowi.

Tych właśnie ludzi, przywódców Polski Podziemnej, twórców A. K., ministrów Rządu Krajowego, członków Rady Jedności Narodowej, kierowników największych stronnictw polskich oskarża się o współdziałanie z Niemcami, i zarzuca się im, że stali na czele nielegalnych organizacji antyradzieckich.

Przemilcza się fakt niezbity, że w momencie wkroczenia Armii Czerwonej na nasze ziemie wschodnie i na Lubelszczyznę delegaci okręgów Polski Podziemnej ujawniali się wszędzie, a oddziały A. K. oddawały się do dyspozycji dowódców radzieckich, uderzając na Niemców — jednak aresztowano ich i rozstrzelano, zmuszając resztę do dalszej konspiracji, której ani Rada Jedności ani Delegatura Rządu nie chciały. Ze ludzie ci, już w parę tygodni po ostatniej ofensywie sowieckiej dążyli do ujawnienia się stronnictw i nawiązanie stosunków z rządem ZSSR, że z dobrą wiarą przyjęli zaproszenie władz sowieckich na rozmowy w sprawie ujawnienia się. Zwabionych podstępnie łączy się, stawia przed sąd obcego państwa, gdzie oskarża się ich o różne niepopołnione zbrodnie, zmusza do okrutnego samoponiżenia i oskarżają ich sędziowie rosyjscy.

Proces moskiewski jest czymś tak obcym w swym pomysle i wykonaniu, że nie mieści się w kategoriach myślenia i odczuwania Europejczyka. Przecieramy oczy ze zdumienia, gdy czytamy jak ci najdzielniejsi przywódcy Polski oskarżają się sami.

Jak maltretowano tych ludzi, jakimi zastrzykami preparowano ich, aby ich doprowadzić do takiego stanu! Ponura tajemnica tego znana jest tylko tym, którzy inscenizowali już podobne procesy trockistów i wodzów Armii Czerwonej.

Nie chcemy wglądać w kulisy metod obecnego reżimu rosyjskiego. Wiemy tylko jedno: przebiera się miara cierpliwości ludu polskiego. Możemy znieść wszystko, prócz deptania naszego honoru i poniżania naszej godności narodowej.

Niemcy mordowali nasze ciała, dziś chce się zadać gwałt naszym najświętszym uczuciom, zgnębić nas moralnie, storturować dusze.

Nie dajmy się jednak sprowokować. Jeśli proces moskiewski miał na celu włożyć Polakom broń do ręki, zareagujmy nań inaczej, pełną powagą i skupieniem. Cały naród zjednoczy się duchowo w obliczu przeżywanej przez nas tragedii i okrywa się żałobą.

Rada Jedności Narodowej

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