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2nd INTERNATIONAL MILITARY HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Polish Section of S.O.E. and Poland's "Silent and Unseen" 1940-1945,
"Cichociemni" - The Airborne Soldiers of the Polish Home Army A.K.

THE POLISH SECTION OF S.O.E.

AND

POLAND'S 'SILENT AND UNSEEN'

1940 -1945

CONFERENCE PAPERS
Saturday 11th June 2016

LONDON 2017

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Polish Heritage Society (UK)

Conference date: Saturday 11th June 2016

- Location: The Embassy of the Republic of Poland, London
- ISBN: 978-0-9957341-0-4
- Conference Speakers: Dr Andrzej Suchcitz, Dr Paul Latawski, Dr Jeffrey Bines, Dr Bogdan Rowiński, Kris Havard, Colonel Mike Russell, General John Drewienkiewicz (DZ)
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- Volume number: 01/2017
- Editorial Advisory Board: Dr Mark Stella-Sawicki, Dr Andrzej Suchcitz, Dr Paul Latawski
- Published: 01 January 2017

The Polish Heritage Society UK relies on the generosity and support of our patrons, institutions, individual donors, charitable donations, charitable trusts, foundations and corporate or business partners. We are extremely grateful to our loyal supporters, http://www.polishheritage.co.uk/

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Poland in London

The Polish Heritage Society UK would like to thank The Embassy of the Republic of Poland for their generous support in the hosting of The Cicho Ciemni - Silent and Unseen Conference in 2016 and for all help rendered to make it possible.

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Foreword

In 2013, The Polish Heritage Society UK organised its first two day conference with The British Commission for Military History at The Royal College of Defence Studies in London. It was received with great acclaim. A number of those who attended suggested our involvement in further Military History Conferences, and indeed, I am happy to say that a new series of Military History Conferences are planed for 2017.

In 2016, The Senate of the Republic of Poland announced that 2016 was to be the year of the 'Cichociemni' – those soldiers parachuted into Poland to join the Home Army. In response to this, The Polish Heritage Society UK has worked to highlight the enormous contribution that members of 'Cichociemni' delivered in Poland under the German oppression and also in their wider efforts within the Allied Forces in Europe during WWII. After the formation of the Polish Section of the SOE and the VI Department of the Polish General Staff, it began discreetly recruiting volunteers to parachute into Poland for special duties. The object was to inject a number of specialists trained in areas such as covert operations, intelligence, demolitions and general sabotage within the Polish underground military. Volunteers included 1 general officer, 112 staff officers, 894 junior officers, 592 NCOs, 771 privates, 15 women and 28 civilian political couriers. There is little doubt that during 1941-45, the 'Cichociemni' or the Polish Home Army Parachutists influenced operations of the underground in most of occupied Poland in its pre 1939 borders. Their wartime spirit and sacrifice deserves to be remembered forever.

In May 1945, Winston Churchill requested a report summing up the achievements of the Polish Intelligence Service throughout the war years. It showed that between 3rd of September 1939 and 8th of May 1945, there were 45,770 reports generated by British Intelligence, of which 22,047 (48%) had come from Polish sources covering a wide range of enemy activities. This information only came into the public domain in 2005.

The Organizing Committee of this conference wish to thank the many individuals and organisations for their help, participation and support in organising this conference.

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Introduction - The Polish Section of S.O.E. and Poland's 'Silent and Unseen' [1]

Immediately after the formation of S.O.E.'s Polish Section, Department VI began discreetly to recruit volunteers to parachute into Poland for special duties. The object was to inject into the Polish underground military a number of specialists trained in areas such as staff work, covert operations, intelligence, document forging, demolitions, signals and general sabotage skills. This was very much in line with S.O.E.'s primary mission. There was a gratifying surge of volunteers for the dangerous assignment to return to Poland, which included: 1 general officer, 112 staff officers, 894 junior officers, 592 NCOs, 771 privates, 15 women, 28 civilian political couriers.

Of these 2,413 volunteers, 606 completed the training and 579 qualified to jump. Hence the selection was exceptionally rigorous, with exactly one in four candidates completing training. Once accepted and trained, a volunteer became a *Cichociemny* and a member of what later came to be known collectively as the *Cichociemni* (the 'Silent and Unseen'). First of all, however, the candidates had to take a number of tests, after which they were sent for special training, since each of them would become a specialist in several skills. A great emphasis was laid on physical fitness, marksmanship and map-reading and this was followed by courses in covert operations and explosives. In September 1940, SOE set up the first covert operations course for Poles at Inverlochy Castle near Fort William.

Aircraft which left for Poland in a number of successive operational seasons, were tied closely to the arrival of longer nights. It was possible to fly from Great Britain from the end of August to the first half of April, while from Italy, which was a shorter route, from July to the end of May, thus almost continuously.

[1] "First to Fight, Poland's Contribution to the Allied Victory in WWII", Edited by Dr Mark Stella-Sawicki, Jarek Garlinski and Stefan Mucha, ISBN 978-0-9557824-4-2, 2009 MSS Consulting.

The period of trial flights began in February 1941 and ended in April 1942. The subsequent seasons were given code-names: *'Intonacja'* —September 1942 to April 1943, *'Riposta'*—September 1943 to July 1944 and *'Odwet'*—August to December 1944. Flights took place on moonlit nights with a full moon, or in the so-called third phase between the beginning of the second and the end of the third quarters of the moon. At the beginning of 1943, trials were made flying on moonless nights, initially only with supplies, but from the spring of 1944 with parachutists too.

During *'Intonacja'* 42 drops were made, 28 with C*ichociemni* and the rest just with supplies; 106 C*ichociemni* were dropped, as well as 9 couriers and a Hungarian radio-telegraphist who was later slipped into Hungary. One of the C*ichociemni* was killed jumping, and a further 3 perished together with their Polish aircrew.

'Riposta' began with flights from England, followed by a short period from Tunisia and then from Brindisi in Italy. Two hundred and five missions were carried out, of which 36 carried parachutists. They also included 3 *'Wildhorn'* missions (called 'Bridges' by the Poles) when *Dakota* aircraft actually landed on Polish soil. One hundred and forty-six parachutists were carried—135 C*ichociemni*, 10 couriers and 1 woman. *'Odwet's'* main effort focused on helping the Home Army during the Warsaw Uprising. There were 229 successful missions out of 410 attempted, not counting those which ended in *'blind'* drops, all carried out by American, British, Polish and South African aircrews. *Cichociemni* were dropped in only 7 missions. Thirty-one C*ichociemni*, 2 couriers, as well as the 4 British members and 1 Pole of the British Military Mission were dropped. One of the C*ichociemni* was killed jumping. Seventy aircraft, of which 30 were piloted by Poles, were lost flying to Poland; out of these 112 Polish airmen, 6 were rescued by the AK, 28 became POWs in German camps and the rest perished. Of the 606 people who

completed the training, eventually 316 of them were secretly parachuted into occupied Poland.

The first operation *"Air Bridge",* as it was called took place on 15 February 1941. After 27 December 1944 further operations were discontinued, as by then most of Poland had been occupied by the Red Army. Of 316 Cichociemni, 103 perished during the war, in combat with the Germans, murdered by the Gestapo, or in air crashes. A further nine were murdered after the war by the communist secret services.

Almost 100 C*ichociemni* were in Warsaw or in the area of the Kampinos Forest nearby when the Warsaw Uprising broke out. Their contribution to operations during the Uprising was considerable. They were to be found everywhere: on the front line they commanded well-known detachments such as 'Parasol', 'Baszta', 'Czata 49' and 'Rum'. They worked on staffs, in communications and in weapons manufacture. Eighteen of them, 20%, were either killed or were missing in action. One of them was in on the final act, the capitulation, which was signed in Ożarów by Colonel Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, a *Cichociemny*, on behalf of the AK Commander-in-Chief. After Warsaw's capitulation, some of the *Cichociemni* went into captivity. Others left the city with the civilian population in order to keep working underground until the end of the war.

Four key figures shaping AK (Home Army) strategy 1939-1943: Top left: General Władysław Sikorski, Top right: Colonel Stefan Rowecki, Bottom left: General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Bottom right: Tadeusz Bór Komorowski. Interaction of the Polish Government in Exile and the AK leadership led to an on-going development of strategy grounded in a common approach between 1939 and 1943.

Dr Paul Latawski

Chapter 1 THE POLISH HOME ARMY: AIMS, STRUCTURE AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT

The aggression against Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 marked the start of what was to be a brutal and costly occupation. Affirming this point, the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, stressed in a wartime speech that that 'in severity and scale' the oppression in Poland exceeded that of any occupied country in Europe.[2]

With Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union both driven by extreme ideologies, the consequence of the occupation was geopolitical reordering and mass murder on a very large scale that resulted in Poland suffering population losses of over 6,000,000 or 21% of its pre-war population.[3]

Such circumstances, not surprisingly, fuelled Polish resistance during the Second World War. Given the nature of the occupation which posed an unprecedented threat to statehood and the very existence of the nation itself, Poland produced a model of total resistance in political, military, economic and social terms whose comprehensiveness has been described as forming an 'underground state'. At the core of resistance was the military effort of the *Armia Krajowa* (AK) or Home Army.

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[2] Speech by Prime Minister Winston Churchill 'The Day Will Dawn', in *The Times*, 5 May 1941, p. 5.

[3] T. Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), p. 304.

This chapter will provide an overview of the aims, structure and development of the Home Army during the Second World War and the broad features of external support to the AK.

Occupation of Poland

The German and Soviet invasions of Poland on 1 September and 17 September 1939 led to the partition of Poland on the basis of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact signed on 23 August 1939. Poland had two different occupation zones until June 1941 when Germany invaded the Soviet Union breaking cooperation between the two partitioning powers. Until June 1941, however, ideological differences between the Nazi and Soviet regimes proved no barrier to mutual oppression in Poland. Both regimes worked to eliminate the Polish state and to displace the Polish population from annexed Polish territory.

In the German case, Nazi racial ideology identified Poles as subhumans (*untermensch*) justifying mass expulsions and murder. In contrast, Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology treated Poles as class enemies which led to mass deportations to the Soviet interior, imprisonments and executions. German policy ultimately envisaged the physical obliteration of the Polish population and in the meantime Nazi Germany treated the Poles as a subject people to be economically exploited as a pool of labour. Soviet policy worked to remove the Polish population in the ethnically mixed part of eastern Poland known as the Kresy. The discovery in April 1943 of the mass graves of thousands of Polish officers executed by the Soviet authorities (Katyn Forest massacres) made plain that the German and Soviet occupations shared a common willingness of targeting the leadership element of Polish society through mass murder between 1939 and 1941.[4] The Soviet

[4] J.T. Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement 1939-1944*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), J.T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet*

authorities shot 22,000 captured Polish officers at a variety of locations in the Katyn Forest massacres.[5]

The territorial arrangements for the occupation of Poland where largely settled in 1939 by Germany and the Soviet Union. Germany annexed large chunks of Polish territory into the Reich. The territory included parts of western Poland in the north and south and even parts of central Poland that were contiguious to Germany. Forming part of the German administrative entities *Reichsgau Dantzig-Westpreussen* and *Reichgau Wartheland*, Germany incorporated nearly 92,000 square kilometres of Polish territory containing a population of 10.1 million, of which 8.9 million were Poles. Polish Upper Silesia in the south was annexed to the German *Oberschlesian* province. The remainder of German occupied Poland became effectively a colony that containing 16 million Poles and covering a territory of 142,000 square kilometres was designated the General Government (*Generalgouvernement*) under the direction of the Nazi official Hans Frank.[6] The Soviet Union, in contrast, incorporated the entirety of occupied Polish territory into the Soviet state which included an area of 202,069 square kilometres and a population of over 13 million.[7] After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, all of pre-war Polish territory was placed under German control. The boundary of the General Government was enlarged eastwards and other parts of eastern Poland became part of *Reichskommissariat Ostland* and the *Reichskommissariate Ukraine*.

Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), R.C. Lukas, *Forgotton Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation 1939-1944*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986) and Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*.

[5] Anna M. Cienciała, Natalia S. Lebedeva and Wojciech Materski (eds.), *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 332.

[6] R.C. Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust*, pp. 6-7.

[7] Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, p. 9.

In keeping with the ideologically driven occupation policies, both Germany and the Soviet Union conducted mass deportations that had a dramatic impact on the Polish population. The Nazi regime expelled 923,000 Poles from annexed Polish territory into the General Government.[8] The Soviet Union deported Polish citizens to the interior of the Soviet Union with the most reliable sources suggesting that they numbered between 1.2 and 1.5 million.[9] Polish population losses due to Soviet action amounted to about 1 million Polish citizens who died with many of the surviving deportees never returning to Poland after the war.[10]

Terror against the Polish population began from the entry of German forces into Poland. Operation *Tannenberg* targeted members of the Polish intelligentsia, politicians, military officers and clergy in a decapitation strategy aiming to eliminate the leadership element of Polish society.[11] The German occupation relied on the support of large numbers of German army and Luftwaffe formations based on Polish territory and the establishment of an elaborate network of security services and police formations. The German security apparatus comprised a complex web of agencies that included: the *Ordnungspolizei* or *'Orpo'* (public order police), the *Grenzschutz* (border guard), *Bahnschutz* (railway police) and *Werkschutz* (factory police). The *Sicherheitspolizei* or 'Sipo' (Security police) was at the heart of the security apparatus with its 4th Bureau, the Gestapo, staffed by ruthless and ideologically driven functionaries. The behaviour of the German occupation authorities had no real legal or moral limits on the application of terror. Individual Poles were subjected to curfew and other control measures. Draconian legal measures meant that many violations of occupation law became

[8] *Ibid.,* p. 22.
[9] Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, p. 194.
[10] Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust*, p. 20.
[11] A. B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), pp. 14-15.

capital crimes and reprisals by summary execution became common place.[12] German manpower engaged in the occupation of Poland ranged between 50,000 to 80,000 police with the Wehrmacht presence fluctuating between 400,000 and 2 million.[13]

The Soviet security apparatus in eastern Poland between September 1939 and June 1941 showed itself to be more efficient than its German counterparts. The NKVD (*Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del* - The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) had a central role in Soviet repressive action. The NKVD's efficiency in gaining informers among the national minority population in eastern Poland undermined Polish resistance which was effectively suppressed.[14] In economic terms, the Soviet authorities worked to remake eastern Poland in the image of the rest of the Soviet Union. Communization policy resulted in seizure of property, state-ownership of enterprises and a general impoverishment of the Polish population.

German economic policy was one of naked exploitation of occupied Polish territory. The occupation authorities expropriated natural resources, goods and businesses on a massive scale draining away economic capacity so that by 1943 only 51,000 of the 195,000 pre-war commercial enterprises remained.[15] Overall, the economic policy of the German occupation was to impoverish the Polish population in the General Government making it one large pool of unskilled labour.[16]

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[12] S. Korboński, *The Polish Underground State: A Guide to the Underground, 1939-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 9-11.
[13] Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust*, p. 34.
[14] Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, pp. 147-148.
[15] Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust,* p. 29.
[16] *Ibid*., pp. 27-32.

Development of the Polish Underground State

In political and military terms, the Polish underground state owed its allegiance to the Polish Government-in-Exile that was resident in Paris and then later in London. The policy of the Polish Government-in-Exile sought more representative political participation in order to build a wartime government of national unity. Poland's underground political institutions reflected this inclusive approach. In occupied Poland, pre-war parties across the political spectrum were represented in a succession of underground organizations: the Consultative Political Committee (*Polityczny Komitet Porozumiewawczy – PKP*) (1940-43), the National Political Representation (*Krajowa Reprezentacja Polityczna*) (1943-44) and, finally, the Council of National Unity (*Rada Jedności Narodowej- RJN*).[17] Largely through self-exclusion, the extreme right and left (communists) remained outside in the underground political structures.[18]

The political structures in occupied Poland were linked to a clandestine organisation called the Government Delegacy (*Delegatura*). The *Delegatura* was in effect provided the institutional dimension of the underground state that included fifteen shadow departments.[19] These departments replicated function of the state. For example, one of the departments of the *Delegatura* organized a Polish education system outside German control that had, by 1944, more than 100,000 pupils studying in underground secondary schools.[20] The *Delegatura*, however, was not the only institution established.

[17] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland Vol. II 1795-present*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 466.
[18] Korboński, *The Polish Underground State*, pp. 104-105 and p. 111.
[19] Włodzimierz Borodziej, *The Warsaw Uprising of 1944*, (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), p. 21.
[20] Korboński, *The Polish Underground State*, p. 47 and p. 50.

The Directorate of Civil Resistance (*Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej* – KWC) headed by the politician Stefan Korboński provided guidance to the Polish population regarding behaviour during the occupation. The KWC set out a 'Code of Rights and Obligations of a Pole' that emphasized the requirement for universal resistance to the occupation and set boundaries as to what was permissible and what was not in relation to engagement with the occupying authorities. An underground justice and court system dealt with extreme cases of collaboration and treason. Those individuals convicted had capital sentences carried out on them by special units.[21] Such cases, however, were exceptional as collaboration was on an individual basis and not extensive. As Stefan Korboński, a senior political figure in the underground stressed 'Poland produced no Quisling'.[22]

Creation of the Home Army

Preparation for resistance to occupation began even before the conclusion of hostilities in 1939. As in the case of political institutions, the Polish Government-in-Exile had a significant role in shaping the organisation of military resistance in Poland. The difficulties in running a clandestine military organisation from London led to the underground military leadership in occupied Poland operating with great autonomy, but within the broad strategic guidance of the Polish Government-in-Exile. Establishing the military wing of the Polish underground state evolved between 1939 and 1942. The first organization was called the Service for Poland's Victory (*Służba Zwycięstwu Polski* - SZP) and after two months it became Union for Armed Struggle (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej* - ZWZ). The Polish

[21] See: Paweł Maria Lisiewicz, *W Imieniu Polski Podziemnej: Z Dziejów Wojskowego Sądownictwa Specjalnego Armii Krajowej*, (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, 1988).
[22] Stefan Korboński, *Fighting Warsaw*, (Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), p. 31.

Government-in-Exile policy toward armed resistance aimed to create a non-partisan and unified military organisation that was not tied to any political grouping and that would follow a coherent strategy of resistance to German occupation. It succeeded in realizing these goals by February 1942, when the ZWZ became the *Armia Krajowa* - AK or Home Army. Only the extreme right and left of politics remained outside of the AK. This only partially changed when some resistance units of the political right joined the *Armia Krajowa* in 1943, but others continued to operate independently.[23] The Communist Party having a very tiny base of support preferred to follow the direction of Moscow.[24] With a peak strength approaching 400,000 members, the AK was unquestionably the dominant and most important organization conducting armed resistance in Poland. Moreover, it was the most representative of Polish politics and society.[25] In contrast, the Communist People's Army (*Armia Ludowa - AL*) never fielded more than 10,000 and was dependent on Soviet support.[26]

Officers from the pre-war Polish Army provided the senior leadership of the AK. The military leadership, however, proved to be very capable in organising resistance. The officer who emerged as the Commander-in-Chief of the AK was Colonel Stefan Paweł Rowecki. Appointed Commander-in-Chief of the ZWZ in June 1940, the forty-five year old Rowecki was a soldier who combined the qualities of a military intellectual with operational military experience at the sharp end of his profession. He was a highly prolific author of articles on a wide range of topics including the problems of urban warfare against insurgents. On this subject he published what was to be his most important book, *Walki Uliczne* (*Street*

[23] *Ibid*., p. 106.
[24] *Ibid*., pp. 22-33 and pp. 58-59.
[25] *Polskie Siły Zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej Tom III Armia Krajowa*, (London: Instytut Historyczny im. gen. Sikorskiego, 1950), p. 124. (Hereafter referred to as PSZIII).
[26] Davies, *God's Playground Vol. II*, p. 466.

Fighting).[27] The relevance of this body of research proved important preparation for his wartime role in command of the AK. Rowecki shaped the development of the AK until his arrest by the Gestapo in June 1943. Replacing Rowecki was General Tadeusz Komorowski in July 1943. Komorowski like Rowecki, was a professional soldier. He remained the Commander-in-Chief of the AK until he became a German prisoner-of-war at the end of the Warsaw Rising in 1944.[28] Komorowski, however, was a less strong and dynamic personality than his predecessor, but a 'first class gentleman' whose patriotism and courage were beyond question.[29]

Resistance Strategy

The Polish Government-in-Exile and the AK evolved between 1939 and 1943 a measured strategy of resistance that prepared for the long term liberation of Poland while conducting resistance activity that offered the greatest military impact with potentially the smallest cost to the civilian population. Komorowski, Commander-in-Chief of the AK, stressed in his memoir that it was important to be 'morally convinced' that any military action undertaken justified the loss of civilian life resulting from German reprisals.[30] By early 1940, the Polish Government-in-Exile issued a comprehensive set of guidelines for the development of military resistance in occupied Poland. The Directive of 16 January 1940, outlined five key tasks: systematic collection of intelligence, sabotage, reprisals, diversion and insurrection. The launching of an armed insurrection was a long-term aspiration

[27] S. Rowecki, *Walki uliczne* (Warszawa: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowy-Wydawniczy, 1928).
[28] Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert (ed.), *Generał Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski w relacjach i dokumentach,* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2000), pp. 14-15. See also: T. Bor-Komorowski, *The Secret Army*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951).
[29] Quoted from Mitkiewicz in: Kunert (ed.), *Generał Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski w relacjach i dokumentach*, p. 106.
[30] Korboński, *The Polish Underground State*, p. 47 and p. 50.

linked to the return of regular Polish armed forces from abroad in the closing stages of the war.[31]

Rowecki sought to operationalize this guidance by issuing his own 'Organisational Directive No. 1', dated 7 February 1940. His clear intention in the Directive was 'to prepare in occupied territory a national insurrection [*powstanie narodowe*]'[32] Undergoing steady evolution, the AK's definitive plan for a national insurrection emerged in September 1942. This key document, Operational Report No. 154, set out the criteria for launching a national insurrection: 1) the collapse of the German administration, party apparatus and population in occupied Poland, and 2) the voluntary or forced withdrawal of the German armed forces.[33] The planning assumptions in Operational Report No. 154 were based on a catastrophic German defeat at the front or the internal collapse of Germany creating conditions favourable for the launch of a national insurrection.[34] This long-term strategy of preparation for a national insurrection did not indicate that the AK was unwilling to engage in armed action against the occupation. What it did reflect was a view that armed action had to result in military gains greater than the cost to the civilian population. Every resistance organization in Europe during the Second World War faced this brutal calculus in one way or another.[35]

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[31] Sosnkowski to Rowecki, Instruction no. 2, 16 January 1940 in *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach 1939-1945 Tom I Wrzesień 1939 –Czerwiec 1941*, (London: Figaro Press). [Hereafter referred to as AKDI], p. 11.

[32] Rowecki, Organisational Directive no. 1, 7 February 1940 in AKDI, p. 145.

[33] Operational Report No. 154, 8 September 1942, *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach 1939-1945 Tom II Czerwiec 1941 – Kwiecień 1943*, (London: Gryf Printers, 1973), pp. 328-9. [Hereafter referred to as AKDII]

[34] *Ibid*., p. 329.

[35] See: Paul Latawski, 'The *Armia Krajowa* and Polish Partisan Warfare, 1939-43', in: Ben Shepherd and Juliette Pattinson (eds.), *War in a Twilight World: Partisan and Anti-Partisan Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1939-45*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 137-155.

As a result of the AK's resistance strategy, any armed action was to be under strong central control. The Union for Retaliation (*Związek Odwetu* - ZO) in April 1940 was the earliest organisation created for armed action.[36] The targets of ZO action included attacks on industry contributing to the German war effort, rail transport, and petroleum products as well as action taken against Gestapo agents or military units engaged in repression of the Polish population.[37] In the aftermath of Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, a separate organisation named *Wachlarz* or the Fan, emerged with the purpose of conducting diversionary operations to disrupt German lines of communications on Soviet territory.[38] However, by 1943, all diversionary activity was consolidated into a new structure with a new name: Diversionary Command (*Kierownictwo Dywersji - Kedyw*). Better integrated and more effective, the mission of *Kedyw* remained largely unchanged, but *Kedyw* also now assumed the responsibility for establishing, training and controlling AK partisan units.[39] AK partisan units increased in number and operated in the complex terrain and isolation afforded by Poland's tracts of forests and southern mountains.[40]

External Support

External support for the AK originated largely from Britain. The Polish Government-in-Exile exercised independent control and coordination of supply operations to Poland through the Sixth Bureau of the Polish General Staff in

[36] PSZIII, pp. 439-440.
[37] Rowecki, Report no. 61a, 27 March 1941 in AKDI, p. 480.
[38] Grzegorz Korczyński, *Polskie Oddziały Specjalne w II Wojnie Światowej*, (Warszawa: Bellona, 2006), p. 118.
[39] PSZIII, p. 462.
[40] M. Jasiak, 'Działanie partyzanckie na terenach górskich Polski południowo-wschodniej 1942-1945 Cz. I' *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny*, XL, (1995), pp. 57-58.

London.[41] The Sixth Bureau, however, was dependent on British resources and in practice lacked complete operational autonomy. The Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) was the British organisation that supported resistance throughout Europe and as such was the key British Government organisation to support externally resistance activities in Poland. While the S.O.E. provided valuable assistance in supplying equipment, training and aircraft, there were also significant practical challenges to providing external support to Poland. Foremost among these were the geographical challenges associated with the distance from UK to Poland. This pushed the limits of the operational capabilities of the aircraft of the day as few aircraft types could be employed and payloads were limited. Moreover flights to Poland required transiting some of the densest air defences over Germany. The entry of allied forces into Italy led to the acquisition of airfields in Italy which eased these problems to a certain extent. Political constraints also effected S.O.E. priorities as British policy toward the Soviet Union saw Poland as being in a Soviet operational area.

Despite these difficulties, S.O.E. support was forthcoming. The S.O.E. provided training for specially trained operatives who were dropped into Poland to work in the AK. An elite group known as the *Cichociemni* or 'Silent and Unseen', during the period from 1941 to 1944, 317 *Cichociemni* were delivered to occupied Poland out of some 346 parachutists transported to Poland during the war.[42] Between 1941 and 1944, 868 flights were attempted and delivered to Poland 600 tons of arms and other equipment.[43] The challenges and limitations of the external aid to

[41] Józef Garliński, *Poland, S.O.E. and the Allies*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 28.
[42] Korczyński, *Polskie Oddziały Specjalne w II Wojnie Światowej*, p. 60.
[43] M.R.D. Foot, *S.O.E. The Special Operations Executive 1940-46,* (London: BBC, 1985), p. 191; Garliński, *Poland, SOE and the Allies*, pp. 235-236, p. 238; and, Andrzej Pepłoński and Jan Ciechanowski, 'The Role of the II Bureau of the Union of Armed Struggle – Home Army (ZWZ-AK) Headquarters in the Intelligence Structures of the Polish Armed Forces in the West', in: Tessa Stirling, Daria Nałęcz and Tadeusz Dubicki (eds.), *Intelligence Co-operation between*

Poland was well summarized by Major General Collin Gubbins, a leading figure in the S.O.E.:

> *At its formation [S.O.E.] in July 1940 Poland had already the nucleus of a secret army, and collaboration between us and the Polish General Staff in London commenced immediately . . . with the . . . objective of establishing contact by air and parachute with the homeland. The physical difficulties were stupendous – the enormous distances involved at the very limit of endurance of aircraft then available . . . But the scale of these operations throughout the war remained always miniscule compared to the crying needs of the Home Army with its units scattered over a vast area: the adverse factors were too strong.*[44]

Conclusion: Unresolvable Geopolitical Dilemmas

The strategy of the AK was predicated on a major assumption that the conclusion of the war would bring a German collapse not dissimilar to the one Germany experienced in 1918. The entry of the Soviet Union into the war in June 1941 as a result of a German invasion greatly changed the geopolitical circumstances. These new geopolitical realities created political and military dilemmas that were virtually impossible to resolve. By 1943, the Soviet Union was clearly not going to be defeated by Germany and the Red Army was now shifting to offensive operations that would eventually take it to Berlin. The Red Army was now to be the 'liberator' of Poland. Although this inevitably forced a rethink of AK strategy,

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Poland and Great Britain during World War II Vol. I: The Report of the Anglo-Polish Historical Committee, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), pp. 115-116.

[44] Garliński, *Poland, SOE and the Allies*, p. 10.

the options open to the AK placed it in an invidious political and military position. Given the Soviet Union's 1939 aggression against Poland and subsequent occupation policies, entry of the Red Army onto Polish territory was likely to mean the exchange of one occupier for another. Moreover, the Polish-Soviet Rapprochement in 1941 had given way to a crisis in relations by 1943. The Katyn Forest Massacres, the creation of the communist dominated Union of Polish Patriots (*Związek Patriotów Polskich – ZPP)* (April 1943) and its military formation (Kościuszko Division) saw a rupture in relations between the Polish Government-in- Exile and the Soviet Union. As the Red Army advanced westward the need to find political and military solutions for the AK grew more acute.[45] The search for a way forward led to the AK's launching the 'Tempest' (*Burza*) operations and the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 to try to claim a place in the shaping post-war Poland. The efforts, however, ended in failure and the Uprising was a political and military blow from which the AK could not recover.

External support by S.O.E.: Training of Polish operatives – elite group known as the Cichociemny or 'Sient and Unseen', material support between: 1941-1944: 346 parachutists (majority Cichociemni) were delivered to occupied Poland, 600 Tonnes of arms and other equipment dropped, 868 flghts undertaken.

[45] See: George Kacewicz, *Great Britain, The Soviet Union and the Polish Government in Exile (1939-1945)*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979) and Edward J. Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1958).

Dr Andrzej Suchcitz

Chapter 2 THE POLISH SECTION OF SOE: ITS ORGANISATION AND ROLE 1940-1945

When in July 1940 the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, made his clarion call „to set Europe ablaze", words uttered to Hugh Dalton, the newly appointed head of the recently established Special Operations Executive, two of Britain's allies were already in the process of organising and equipping their resistance organisations[46]. This process had been going on for well nigh a year before Churchill's famous call. The two allies mentioned were Czechoslovakia and Poland both which had fallen to enemy occupation. The former had surrendered its independence without a fight in autumn 1938 and spring 1939. The latter had been the first country in Europe to resist Germany's demands and been ready to defend its independence by force. The result was the first campaign of the Second World War which ended with military defeat for Poland and the country being occupied by both the Germans and the Soviets. A new Polish President and Government were soon set up in allied Paris from where the struggle to bring freedom continued. By spring 1940 the new Polish Army numbered 80,000 strong. Maybe without its state, but the Polish war effort was to continue to the maximum possible. Meanwhile the Czechs were organising a resistance army called *Obrana Narodu* organised on a non conspiratorial basis with the elderly Gen. Jan Bily (1872-1941) as its commander[47]. Despite several sabotage actions it

[46] David Strafford, *Britain and European Resistance 1940-1945. A Survey of the Special operations Executive with Documents,* Toronto and Buffalo 1983, p. 26.

[47] Andrzej Suchcitz, *Military, Naval and Air Commanders of the II World War,* unpublished manuscript; A.Suchcitz, *Bily Josef (1872-1941),* in: *World War II in Europe, An Encyclopedia,* edited by David T. Zabecki, New York & London 1999, p. 232.

was soon under pressure, with Bily being arrested in spring 1940. The Poles on the other hand were adepts at this sort of warfare, having a long history of conspiratorial work. They had begun to establish a resistance force at the end of September 1939 under the name, *Service for Polish Victory.* In November 1939 this was reorganised under instructions from Gen. Sikorski the Polish Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, into the *Union of Armed Struggle* which in turn, in February 1942 was renamed the *Home Army – Armia Krajowa,* which become the largest and arguably most effective of the European resistance movements.

During the Polish 1939 Campaign there had been a small British Military Mission in Poland under Major-General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart. Its Chief of Staff was a Lt-Col. Colin McVean Gubbins and two of its junior officers were Acting Captains Peter Wilkinson and Harold Perkins. Little did they suspect, that their war service was to be to a greater or lesser extent connected with the Poles to the very end. Whilst their growing connection with the Poles in September 1939 and subsequently in France in 1939-1940 where Gubbins headed the British Military Mission to the Poles is common knowledge, little is known of their pre war connections with that country. It is these connections which in many ways led to the unique relationship between the SOE Director and his staff with that of the London based, VI renamed in 1942 Special Bureau of the Polish General Staff, responsible for all military contacts with the resistance army in occupied Poland.

Anglo-Polish military contacts between the two world wars was far more varied and of greater import than is normally recognised[48]. This was true at all levels,

[48] Andrzej Suchcitz, *A brief outline of Anglo-Polish military contacts 1918-1939,* in: Edward Roland Sword, *The Diary and despatches of a Military Attaché in Warsaw 1938-1939,* ed. Elizabeth Turnbull and Andrzej Suchcitz, London 2001, p. 16-30.

the more senior politically motivated military visits and those of a more practical nature, intended to create a working relationship between professional soldiers. The latter intensified in the months prior to the outbreak of war. Between May and the end of August 1939 several visits by Gubbins were made to Warsaw, whilst representatives of the Polish Intelligence Bureau and specialist technical officers visited London. In May 1939 Lt-Col. Gubbins as Staff Officer General Staff Research a small section studying in depth the possibility of organising guerrilla warfare in the event of a war in Europe, went on a top secret mission to visit Poland, Romania and the Baltic states[49]. He held several meetings with representatives of the Polish Military Intelligence General Staff, better known as the II Bureau, especially with its Technical Section, responsible amongst others for producing devices for use in guerrilla warfare. The Poles had a long tradition of clandestine operations, most recently in Sub-Carpathia during the Czech crisis and prior to that the operations of the Polish Military Organisation (1915-1923) working behind enemy lines both on the eastern front as well as in Silesia. It soon became evident that both sides had much to offer each other.

In July Lt-Col. S. Gano Chief of the Independent Technical Section of the II Bureau, paid a three day visit to London to discuss technical details concerning equipment *„suitable for guerrilla activities, problems of railway demolition and peace time preparations".* The Poles were shown various devices which had recently been produced by the British. At the same time the Poles supplied samples of their own inventions and as Gubbins noted *„these have now arrived and are of considerable interest to us"* [50]*.* The following week Major Edmund Charaszkiewicz Chief of

[49] Peter Wilkinson, Joan Bright Astley, *Gubbins and SOE,* Barnsley 2010, p. 33-36. The National Archive (TNA), HS4/195, letter (Dear Joe) to Lt-Col. J. C. F. Holland head of the GS(R) renamed MI(R) from Lt-Col. C. Gubbins, 20th May 1939.

[50] TNA, HS4/195, Résumé of Discussions with Polish General Staff regarding Para-Military activities, prepared by Lt-Col. C. Gubbins, 29 July 1939; *Ósmy Ułan Beliny. Generał brygady*

Network nr. 2 of II Bureau responsible for all clandestine operations in foreign lands was in London. It was with him that the essential talks concerning Polish plans for the organisation and carrying out of clandestine guerrilla warfare in the event of war with Germany and a German occupation of Poland were held. The talks were surprisingly detailed, covering possible operations, organisation, training and communications. In his conclusions, Gubbins noted that „*the discussions were carried on throughout by the Polish officers in the frankest possible manner, many matters being disclosed which are known to literally only a handful, of their own staff [...] In general the principles he has followed and the tactical and administrative doctrines he is teaching, follow very closely those laid down in the manuals we ourselves prepared; in some aspects the similarity is remarkable".*

Gubbins went on to report that the Polish plan for carrying out guerrilla warfare if the necessity arose was in place and what was needed was the „*consolidation particularly of the guerrilla bands into a higher organisation to secure co-ordination of effort".* There followed various recommendations the most important being the securing of wireless communications[51].

Detailed discussions were held with Maj. Charaszkiewicz concerning the organisation of the guerrilla bands, their composition, training and plans, all of which he willingly supplied to the British staff. In conclusion the British report made clear, that „*In general, the system and methods employed by the Poles in the organisation of destructive and partisan warfare against the Germans correspond very much to our own. It is only owing to shortage of time that they*

Józef Marian Smoleński „Kolec" 1894-1978 (Belina's Eighth Lancer. Major-General Józef Marian Smoleński „Kolec" 1894-1978), ed. Grzegorz Nowik, Warsaw 2008, p. 301-303.

[51] Op. cit, p. 4-6.

have not yet completed the higher organisation and they propose, as time permits and commanders are found, to appoint the chiefs of partisan groups and of districts [...] At the same time, arrangements for communication in time of war are by no means complete, and the Poles do not appear to have considered much the question of using wireless for this purpose" [52].

Further correspondence showed that the Poles were very interested in wireless apparatus for special purposes. Drawings were exchanged and the Poles agreed to make their types different from the British, only purchasing the necessary valves from Britain.

The Chief of II Bureau Col. Józef Smoleński, sent the head of the Bureau's Cypher Department Lt-Col. Gwido Langer to London to cover all wireless communication matters[53]. This was none other than the man who headed the Polish Enigma team, which barely a fortnight earlier had demonstrated and presented both the British and French with the secrets of Enigma, together with copies of the actual machines and the decrypting paperwork. In mid August Lt-Col. Gubbins was once more in Warsaw for further detailed discussions, where one of the topics which concerned both parties was Romanian oil production and supplies to Germany. It is interesting to note that in a paper prepared by Gubbins in mid August he wrote

[52] TNA, HS4/195, Résumé of conversations with Major E. Charaszkiewicz on the organisation of Para-Military Activities in Poland, 27 July 1939, p. 6; Edmund Charaszkiewicz, Report concerning co-operation with British Intelligence before the war published in: *Zbiór dokumentów ppłk. Edmunda Charaszkiewicza (Lt-Col. Edmund Charaszkiewicz's collection of documents),* ed. by Andrzej Grzywacz, Marcin Kwiecień, Grzegorz Mazur, Kraków 2000, p. 131-134.

[53] For biographies of leading Polish intelligence officers during world War 2 see: Tadeusz Dubicki, Andrzej Suchcitz, *Oficerowie wywiadu WP i PSZ w latach 1939-1945, (Intelligence Officers of the Polish Army and Polish Armed Forces 1939-1945) Vol. I,* Warsaw 2009, *Vol. II,* Warsaw 2011.

„The Poles are now convinced that we have a great deal of practical experience of guerrilla warfare, and are most anxious for our views and help". Interestinly Col. Smoleński's note from the same meeting was more focused and contained concrete proposals and measures to be taken[54]. Gubbins again saw Lt-Col. Gano of the Intelligence's Technical Department and was promised various devices including special fuses. Gubbins in turn assured the Poles that vibro-switches, automatic pistols and demolition explosives could be supplied to the Poles. There remained as ever, the question of price and delivery dates. The one thing that was not available was time.

Within two weeks of the above discussions, courtesy of Germany and Soviet Russia, Europe was plunged into a Continental war barely 21 years after the last had ended. This war was to last nearly six years, encompassed the whole world and resulted in the demise of Britain as a world empire and brought about the enslavement and destruction of Poland as an independent player on the European scene for over half a century.

With the German invasion of Poland on 1st September 1939 the British Military Mission to Poland was activated. At its head stood the heroic figure of Major-General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart. For us more interestingly his closest staff officers were none other than Lt-Col. C. Gubbins, Acting Captain Peter Wilkinson and Acting Captain Harold Perkins. The second was number two to Gubbins, the latter a Polish speaker who for many years had ran a textile company in Bielsko,

[54] TNA, HS4/194, note on further discussions held with Polish General Staff in Warsaw, 14-16 August 1939 (Lt-Col. C. Gubbins); Protocol of conversation held in Warsaw from August 14th-16th with Lt-Col. Gubbins (prepared by Col. J. Smoleński).

southern Poland whilst at the same time helping out SIS. Within fifteen months all three were to be instrumental in the workings of Polish Section SOE.

As we know, SOE was set up in July 1940, a pet project of Winston Churchill. He chose the veteran Labour politician Hugh Dalton the Minister for Economic Warfare to be the political head of the new organisation. The first head of its operations, known as Special Operations Executive was Sir Frank Nelson soon replaced by Sir Charles Hambro. He in turn was replaced in 1943 by none other than Brigadier, promoted Major General, Colin Gubbins, who had been a member of the top S.O.E. team since its inception. Until his promotion to be its executive head, he had been in charge of its operations section S.O.2[55].

The Polish Section of S.O.E. was set up in November 1940, one of many. Each occupied country in Europe had its own section within the organisation, each under direct British control. Each section recruited and controlled agents of its section sending them to their homelands in the fervent hope that they carry out various guerrilla warfare tasks assigned to them. The agents of each national section were regarded as S.O.E. agents, ultimately responsible and directed by the British command of S.O.E. Of all the national sections the Polish one was on a different playing field. Dealing with the largest of the occupied allies and the one with potentially the most important and effective resistance force, already formed into an organised fighting underground army, the Polish Section S.O.E. was hardly in a need to organise and co-ordinate resistance in Poland. In any case the Poles would have none of this. Having the largest fighting force amongst all the occupied Allies and moreover an established underground resistance army they were not about to kow tow to British perceptions on this matter. However,

[55] Michael Foot, *The Special Operations Executive 1940-1946,* London 1999, p. 22-25, 38-41.

as the Polish Government and Polish Supreme GHQ in Exile realised or should have realised, they were, when the crunch came, totally reliant on British and Allied goodwill and understanding to supply the Home Army with the necessary equipment, arms and ammunition for it to carry out its task – fighting the Germans. The problem was that S.O.E., the instrument through which all this was to be achieved, was in reality a junior partner among the big military players around the top table, i.e. the Chiefs of Staff in Britain and more so the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington. And this was something which Polish Supreme GHQ in London let alone GHQ Home Army in far away occupied Warsaw failed to grasp when the chips were down. S.O.E.s problem was that it was perceived by many, including SIS as being something of an interloper, a Churchillian fancy, created with an admirable specific task and aim, but lacking the support and understanding of the old established order of military hierarchy and also of its cousins in the professional tasks to be carried out[56]. Thus relations between SIS and S.O.E. were more than strained, whilst relations between their Polish counterparts i.e. II Bureau (Military Intelligence) and VI Bureau (clandestine warfare in Occupied Poland) though by no means harmonious were more understanding and co-operative with one another.

Of all the national S.O.E. sections, the Polish one was limited in its remit to acting essentially as a liaison mission to the VI/Special Bureau of the Polish General Staff. Basically it had no authority over Polish agents once they were parachuted into occupied Poland. At all times, even when still on British soil, they were soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces loyal to their government, resident temporarily in London. Apart from their normal military oath of allegiance, they took a separate oath making them soldiers of the Resistance, i.e. the Home Army, itself an integral

[56] Op. cit. , p. 31-33.

part of the Polish Armed Forces, subordinated to the Polish Government in London. Moreover as Jeffrey Bines has written, „*In their role as a transportation agency, the Polish Section carried agents and supplies to the places specified by the Polish VI Bureau for military purposes, and political couriers for the Polish Ministry of Interior*"[57].

However this did not mean that Polish Section S.O.E. had no wider role to play. In fact it did and despite having restricted authority over Polish personnel parachuted into Poland, it played a vital role in the areas of training, preparation for flights to Poland and above all in securing the necessary support, be it transport, arms, equipment or financial from their own superiors. It was to be on the effectiveness of S.O.E.s Polish Section's ability in achieving the above, that it would be judged by its Polish ally.

The Polish Section whose official address was Room 98 Whitehall was in fact located first at 64 Baker Street with the rest of S.O.E., subsequently in nearby Berkeley Court and then Norgeby House. Room 98 served as the official meeting place and correspondence address between S.O.E. Polish Section and Special Bureau. Essentially the Polish Section was composed of its head and then the operations, intelligence, training, courier, supply and FANY sub- sections.

The Polish Section of S.O.E. was distinct in that it had what can be termed as two offshoot sub-groups.

The first, codenamed EU/P, was responsible for liaison with the Polish Underground Army in occupied France. This had arisen as a result of the many Polish immigrants who had gone to France in search of employment before 1939,

[57] Ian Valentine, *Station 43. Audley End House and S.O.E.'s Polish Section,* Stroud 2004, p. 27; Jeffrey Bines, *The Polish Country Section of the Special Operations Executive 1940-1946: A British Perspective,* PhD Dissertation, University of Stirling, 2008.

as well as those remnants of the Polish Army who did not get away following the surrender of France in June 1940.

The section was responsible for communications with Polish resistance organisations in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. It was also tasked with liaison with the Polish Continental Action, civilian resistance operations run by the Polish Ministry of the Interior. At its head stood Lt-Col. Ronald Hazell a one time member of the British Military Mission to Poland in 1939 who had been a shipping broker in Gdynia and latterly British honorary vice-consul in that port from 1936 to the outbreak of the war.[58] In 1944 he was succeeded by Major C. B. Ince.

The second sub-section of S.O.E.s London Polish Office was established at the end of 1943 in Monopoli in southern Italy. Its task was to organise and oversee flights by Polish 1586 Special Duties Flight and 148 RAF Special Duties Squadron with equipment supplies to the Polish Home Army as well as the Czechoslovak underground. S.O.E.s codename for the Monopoli Base was Force 139[59]. Its SOE chief was Lt-Col. Henry Threlfall who was responsible to the Polish Section S.O.E. in London and at the same time for all administrative matters subordinated to Major-General William Stawell the S.O.E. Chief in the Mediterranean.

And what of the personalities of Polish Section S.O.E. itself? In the many histories of S.O.E. and its Polish aspects it is the personalities which played a leading role in

[58] *Intelligence Co-operation between Poland and Great Britain during World War II,* Vol.II, *Documents,* ed.by Jan S. Ciechanowski, Warsaw 2005, p. 507-510; Eugenia Maresch, *Special Operations Executive,* in: *Intelligence co-operation between Poland and Great Britian during World War II,* Vol. I ed. by Tessa Stirling, Daria Nałęcz, Tadeusz Dubicki, London - Portland 2005, p. 152.

[59] Józef Garliński, *Poland, S.O.E. and the Allies,* London 1969, p. 141.

how effective or not, the Section was, and how relations developed with their Polish counterparts in the VIth Bureau General Staff. And yet for many they remain anonymous, at best known by name only. What is interesting and noteworthy is that the majority of not only the senior but many of the junior S.O.E. personnel had had direct earlier experience of Poland. Some like Perkins, Hazell, Pickles, Massey and Pickford had lived in pre war Poland for longer or shorter periods. Others, like Gubbins and Wilkinson had been in Poland prior to the outbreak of war on military business. All the above mentioned apart from Pickles, Massey and Pickford had been members of the British Military Mission to Poland in August-September 1939. Moreover, Gubbins and Wilkinson had subsequently been members of the No. 2 Liaison Mission, renamed No.4 British Military Mission to the Polish and Czech Armies in France, with Gubbins and then Wilkinson at its head.

In spring 1940 Capt. Perkins joined the Mission[60]. With the setting up of S.O.E. in July 1940 and the appointment of Brig. Gubbins as Head of Operations (SO2) the 'old' crowd was soon together again. This was important for the Poles, as it meant that they were dealing with persons whom they knew and who on the whole were genuinely fond of Poland, understanding of her needs. Whatever else can be said, there is little doubt that the Polish cause had more than just a sympathetic ear at SOE headquarters and Polish Section in particular. They would definitely not be just playing lip service to the needs of their Polish ally. That their efforts gave meagre results was not for want of trying.

[60] Jeffrey Bines, *The Establishment of the Polish Section of S.O.E.,* in: *The Poles in Britain 1940 -2000. From Betrayal to Assimilation,* ed. Peter Stachura, London 2004, p. 25.

The two main S.O.E. players Gubbins and Wilkinson are well served, the first through an excellent biography, the latter through his own interesting memoirs[61]. This cannot be said of even the main characters of the Polish Section S.O.E. above all its two heads, Colonels Harold Perkins and Michael Pickles. Major later Lt-Colonel Perkins (1905-1965) took over Polish Section in late 1940 and headed it until November 1943 when he took over responsibility not only for Poland but Czechoslovakia and Hungary. From surviving sources it does not seem to have lessened his contacts with the Polish VIth Bureau. It's one time chief, Col. Protasewicz recalled that Perkins spoke Polish badly, confusing his endings, good looking and large with hands like loaves of bread. His main contact in the Special Bureau was with Department „S", responsible for transfer of persons and equipment to occupied Poland. This was his most important contact and he was to be seen conferring with its head, Major Jan Jaźwiński often and in great detail, ironing out difficulties and trying to obtain the best possible results for the planned operations of supplying the Home Army in Poland. He acted as main contact and post box for passing on requests and basically all other needs which the Bureau had vis-à-vis the British authorities. As Protasewicz recalled he would on various occasions leave the two of them in hot dispute, reddened cheeks though sensible conclusions were always drawn at the end. In his unpublished memoirs Protasewicz singled out Perkins for special praise. According to the Polish officer, Col. Perkins understood the difficult conditions for both departments in which it came to co-operate but also deeply felt all Polish concerns

[61]Peter Wilkinson, Joan Bright Astley, *Gubbins and S.O.E.,* Stroud 2004; Peter Wilkinson, *Foreign Fields: The Story of an S.O.E. Operative,* London 1997. Both Lt-Col. C. Gubbins and Capt. P. Wilkinson as well as Lt. H. Perkins had been awarded the Polish Cross of Valour in 1941 for their part in the Polish 1939 Campaign and French 1940 Campaign.

and within his remit tried to be as helpful as possible. As he further wrote *„On more than on one occasion I could satisfy myself that he was a true friend of ours; in any case he gave proof of this after the war when he had settled on Poland's western borders and went on to save several Polish lives".*

That is not to say that Perkins could seem to be and at times was arrogant and curt towards his Polish allies. An instance of this was when he berated Polish senior officers in the middle of August 1944 that they had not informed Gen. Komorowski in Warsaw of the difficulties in sending enough supplies by air[62]. Perkins also dealt with the practical matters concerning the arrangement of flights to Poland and sorting things out at the stations prior to the flights.

Perkins saw Protasewicz more or less on a weekly basis providing a synthesis of British plans of action for the immediate future. Col. Protasewicz in turn kept Perkins informed of those matters which as head of Special Bureau he could carry out. However, the Special Bureau's chief, mainly had contact with Lt-Col.Peter Wilkinson and when necessary with Gen. Gubbins. When Perkins was promoted to head the East European S.O.E. Section, his successor in November 1943 was Major Michael Pickles (born 1907), though it seems that at least for a time Perkins continued to be the main link with the Special Bureau. Pickles had been a Cambridge graduate and had had two stints at working as a technical manager in Poland in the late thirties. Connected with the Intelligence Corps he had joined SOE in December 1940. From 1942 to 1943 he had been a member of 26 British Liaison Mission with the Polish Army being evacuated from the Soviet Union to the Middle East. It is thus surprising that Col. Protasewicz seems to have had little knowledge about him. In his post war memoirs he drew a picture of Pickles (whose

[62] Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, London (PISM), KOL. 77/file 5, p. 642, 654. Manuscript memoirs of Colonel Michal Protasewicz, Chief of the Special Bureau, Polish General Staff from spring 1942 to July 1944; E. D. R. Harrison, *The British special operations executive and Poland,* in: The Historical Journal, Vol. 43, 4 December 2000, p. 1089.

name he misspells) as having the looks of a small town tradesman with a rounded stomach. He invariably walked with a swagger stick which he often forgot at VI Bureau offices. Junior officers were quick to have the article returned through one of the ATS despatch riders with an appropriate calling card. However his visits were infrequent and Col. Protasewicz wrote that whilst Pickles was scrupulous and very exact, Protasewicz did wonder what his specific task was[63]. It must be said that on the whole the personnel of Polish Section did not fluctuate too much which allowed for the growth of a better understanding of each other's needs and eventually capabilities. The Section's operations were headed by Captain George Klauber a naturalised Hungarian who had been an insurance-broker before the war. He had joined S.O.E. in April 1941 and initially was responsible for training, organisation and supplies in the Polish Section before taking over operations. In 1943 he was posted to the Mediterranean with Force 139. He was succeeded at ops by Captain R. G. Colt-Williams MC, of whom Perkins wrote that he had „*in the short time he has been with us, obtained the confidence of the Polish authorities with whom he deals"*[64]*.* The Section's Intelligence Officers were Major Richard Truszkowski and Capt. L. M. Massey assisted by Ensign P. Harrison of the FANY. The former was of Polish descent and spoke Polish very well. Massey also spoke Polish like a native speaker having attended school in Warsaw, and had an intimate knowledge of the Polish capital and its ways. Before coming to the section's Intelligence he had been responsible for overseeing the packing of containers dropped into Poland, their delivery to and final check at the airfield. Young, slim and tall, well mannered, helpful and conscientious he was well liked

[63] Ibidem, p. 644; TNA, HS9/1186/5, PF of Major Michael John Thompson Pickles.

[64] TNA, HS9/1599/1, PF for Capt. R. G. Colt-Williams.

at VI Bureau[65]. The Training sub-section was the remit of Captains C.T. Gregor and Capt. J. V. Houseman. The Courier sub-section was in the hands of Section Officer M. A. North and Sgt. S. Kay of the FANY. The former was in charge of all *„matters connected with couriers and mail between Poland and the UK. In addition she looks after the whole of MP section liaison with D/F [escape lines], and is responsible for the card index of personalities".* She left Polish Section in May 1944 when she made known her intention of marrying an officer of the VI Bureau[66]. Mention must be made of the Supply sub-section led by Lt. J. C. D. Pickford RNVR. He had served with Polish Section S.O.E. since November 1943. He was another with strong Polish connections, having been a member of the British Naval Mission in Poland in 1919-1921, subsequently serving as a clerk with the British Legation in Warsaw and then as a clerk with the General Deposit Bank (probably the PKO – General Savings Bank). On recall to the colours in 1939 he was attached as one of the Royal Navy's Liaison Officers with the Polish Navy in Britain[67]. Last but not least was the secretarial and despatch rider sub section composed of FANYs Lt. J. R. Aldis and Ensign K. Dunsford. Col. Protasewicz had nothing but the highest praise for the work and dedication of the ATS staff especially at the pre-op waiting stations[68].

I would venture to put forward the theory that the relations between S.O.E. and the Polish VI Bureau General Staff were one of the most intense of Anglo-Polish allied wartime co-operations. In no other British department was there such a

[65] PISM, KOL.77/file 5, p. 649-650.

[66] TNA, HS9/1112/2, PF for Section Officer M. A. North.

[67] TNA, HS9/1186/3, PF for Lt. J. C. D. Pickford RNVR; I extend my thanks and appreciation to Mark Seaman MBE, historian of the Cabinet Office, who has generously shared his information on the personnel of the Polish Section S.O.E.

[68] PISM, KOL. 77/file 5, p. 653.

preponderance of Polish orientated and Polish aware personnel. This gave a sound basis for wartime co-operation, which at that given level was admirably achieved.

The problem however was that of what was in fact achievable. The intensity of these contacts can be plainly seen in the volume of surviving correspondence and evidence of personal contacts between the various echelons of S.O.E. Directorate through to individual members of Polish Section S.O.E. with the Polish General Staff and Special Bureau in particular. Gubbins was at pains to show his understanding of the Poles needs and his letters with successive chiefs of the Special Bureau clearly reflect this[69].

The volume of Wilkinson's, above all Perkins' and Pickles' correspondence with Special Bureau and theirs with S.O.E. Directorate and Polish Section is a testimony to the concerns, desires, demands and in the end, the inability to meet the requests and ultimately the demands of the oldest member of the anti-German alliance. From summer 1942 at the suggestion of Lt-Col. Wilkinson minuted fortnightly meetings between Special Bureau GS and SOE were held to *„deal exclusively with more important points which may arise, whereas minor details will be settled as heretofore by the normal liaison channels" [70].* In effect this gave

[69] The Archives of the Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945) Study Trust in London (PUMST) reflect this to a high degree. See for example files SK.99-SK.108; also SK.516 War Diary of Section/Department „S" of the VI/Special Bureau General Staff. This fascinating document kept by the department's chief, Captain/Major Jan Jaźwiński is a combination of an official log of events peppered with his increasingly caustic comments not only about the various British departments whether civil or military but also about Polish senior staff officers.

[70] PUMST, SK.102/p. 511, Lt-Col. P. Wilkinson to Lt-Col. M. Protasewicz, 6th July 1942.

S.O.E. a constant, regular source of official information about Polish intentions without providing the latter with practical assistance.

This was all done in the name of what could be done to disrupt German Lines of Communications in their operations against the USSR, now an ever more important partner in the anti German Alliance. And in the end this was the nub of the problem. Until June 1941 Britain saw Poland as their one, enthusiastic and effective if weak ally. Both the British Government and the British military were ready to pay more than just lip service to the needs of Poland. In the end she did provide an effective fighting force not only in occupied Europe but in exile with a regular experienced military force in the form of Air Force squadrons, army brigades and divisions, naval forces and a merchant fleet, which together provided definable assistance to the allied cause. With the entry of the USSR and later the USA into the war as allied powers, Poland's status drastically fell, until eventually she became a political inconvenience and embarrassment to the British Government. As the war progressed, increasing lip service was paid to the Poles, enough to keep them on side, without providing effective assistance in the areas which as a member of the Alliance Poland sought[71].

The effectiveness of relations inevitably fluctuated depending on the personalities of a given period. We have seen the main British personalities and their stability and resilience in their wartime postings. During the same period the head of the Polish Special Bureau changed four times. It goes without saying that the closest relations were had with the first head, Col. Smoleński who was well known to all at SOE from before the war as Chief of the II – Intelligence Bureau General Staff. His successor as Chief of the VI Bureau in December 1941 was Lt-Col. Tadeusz

[71] Andrzej Suchcitz, *Poland's Contribution to the Allied Victory in the Second World War,* London 1995 (3rd edition 2011), p. 4-13.

Rudnicki. It soon became apparent that he not only managed to get the ire of his junior subordinates but also of S.O.E. as a result of his inconsistency, and what was seen by both sides as vacillation and an eagerness to bypass agreed and established channels. The result was the delay in important decisions and loss of potential operations. Thankfully he was replaced in spring 1942 by Col. Michał Protasewicz. Relations improved notably, though Protasewicz showed himself to be a determined, practical individual, re-establishing relations with Polish Section SOE on a professional basis. He put forward the demands that were provided by GHQ Home Army without inflating them. Despite difficult moments he maintained allied composure but was ready to press his points if necessary. When he was replaced by Lt-Col.Marian Utnik in July 1944, relations remained close but Poland's position was on an increasingly downward slide. SOEs star was also faltering. From the ambitious plans of 1940/1941 little remained. It was becoming more of a question – left of course unsaid – what could be saved without antagonising the USSR, the main allied power on the European Continent, effectively rolling back the German war machine. The answer was simple: very little.

In the first years of the war both S.O.E. and the Polish General Staff were on a convergent course. For both the immediate priority as far as operations in Poland were concerned was the maximum disruption of the German war effort through sabotage and diversionary actions. Though it must be stressed that only after the underground army was both ready in terms of organisation and equipment. The long term aim of both bodies was for the preparation of a general uprising to coincide with regular operations on the continent. This held good, for as long as the British Chiefs of Staff and subsequently the Combined Chiefs of Staff, took such an eventuality as a possibility, however unenthusiastically. For the Polish General Staff "*to have the plan for Polish forces within the Empire closely*

connected with the plan for armed action in Poland" was of fundamental importance[72]. At the same time strenuous efforts were being made to establish regular flights to Poland to supply the underground army. As we know these efforts after many twists and turns bore fruit in the establishment of a Special Duties Polish Flight. The battle to obtain six aircraft for this purpose even with the additional flights made by RAF and other allied Air Force personnel could hardly begin to satisfy the equipment needs of the Home Army. The main stumbling block was the Air Ministry and Bomber Command in particular. S.O.E. requests were subject to prevarication and excuses. In January 1942 in a report by the Joint Planning Staff it was stated that "*the equipping of the Secret Army and sabotage groups must be done fully or not at all. To carry out the plan, therefore, a great deal of air transport is required".* Estimates of the equipment needed was made on the basis of Polish calculations based on the equipping of 1000 seven man sabotage groups and 84 battalions of the Secret Army. To supply only the sabotage groups (e.g. 7000 sub machine guns, 7000 automatic pistols, 60,000 grenades, 84 lb of plastic explosives but to name the most important) it was estimated that some 5000 containers would have to be dropped, that is 714 containers a month. Bearing in mind that one aircraft could take four containers 178 flights per month would be needed. Each month had a 10 day operational slot. It would require 60 aircraft. When the needs of equipping the 84 battalions of the Secret Army were added it would require 185 bombers in total. This was based on minimal delays in operations and without making allowance for losses[73]. Whilst this was operationally totally unrealistic it does put the 6 aircraft eventually

[72] PUMST, A. 49/doc. 7, Maj-Gen. T. Klimecki Polish CGS to Brig. Gubbins, 2 May 1941.

[73] TNA, HS4/160, MX1 (Capt. Patrick Howarth?) To MX (Lt-Col. Peter Wilkinson), SOE's Plan for Co-operation with the Polish Secret Army, 2 January 1942, p. 1.

made available to the Poles in perspective. The end tally was as follows. In the period November 1941 and February 1945 Polish special duty crews carried out 692 flights, 324 to Poland and 368 to other countries, delivering 1,576,800 tons of supplies of which barely 293 tons i.e. 18.5% of supplies dropped by the Poles went to Poland. The remainder was flown to the underground armies of the other occupied allied nations[74].

It must be noted that co-operation between S.O.E. and Special Bureau at a lower practical level was far more harmonious, effective and bilateral. S.O.E. requests for specific sabotage operations as well as specific information, e.g. constant weather reports in Poland gave positive results. Moreover Signals Directorate at Polish General Staff was able to satisfy in part, the needs of S.O.E. in wireless equipment, made in the Polish Military Workshops in Stanmore. These S.O.E. needed for their operations in other occupied territories. As Gubbins wrote to Col. Cepa Chief of Signals at PGS, requesting five of the small agent's W/T sets, though "*they have not the range of certain sets produced by us, they are extremely compact and most suitable for the purpose for which I require them".* In another letter he wrote "*I am extremely grateful to you for this generous proposal, as I have the highest opinion of your sets and fully realise the difficulties involved in their production. Please accept my sincere thanks for coming forward so splendidly to my assistance"*[75].

[74] PUMST, A.133/doc.1, Loty specjalne. Wysiłek załóg polskich za czas listopad 1941 do luty 1945 (Special flights. The effort of Polish crews for the period November 1941 to February 1945).

[75] PISM, KOL.242/file 292, Lt-Col. Władysław Gaweł Papers, Brig. C. Gubbins to Col. Heliodor Cepa, 23 March 1942 and 8 June 1942.

With the increasing difficulties in obtaining the necessary support from SOE General Sikorski and then Gen. Sosnkowski the Polish C-in-Cs, attempted to have operational matters concerning Poland moved from S.O.E. to the Joint Planning Staff. This however was not acceptable to the British and Alan Brooke the CIGS made it clear that "*operational matters and the co-ordination of planning, affecting military activities within occupied countries is one of S.O.E.s specific tasks.... I should be very reluctant to interfere with the responsibilities which have been laid upon S.O.E. in this respect, which they are undoubtedly best fitted to discharge"*[76]. Thus no joy for the Poles here either. The Poles made their dissatisfaction clear, to little avail. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had rejected the Polish plan for the large scale equipping of the Home Army. Supplies were to be allotted so as to maximise sabotage and diversionary activity, with the main aim of disrupting German Lines of Communication to the Eastern Front. No additional aircraft were to be made available[77].

It is thus not surprising that the person who at Special Bureau had been responsible for organising air drops and communication with Poland for the last three years wrote up a top secret report for the Polish General Staff only.

In it Maj. Jaźwiński summed up three years of co-operation with Polish Section SOE. It does not make pleasant reading. Of approximately 430 tons of equipment promised only some 60 tons were dropped between 1941 and October 1943. Of 430 flights promised 150 had been carried out by that date, of which 100 were of

[76] PUMST, A. 49/doc. 26 Gen. B. Regulski Polish Military Attache in London to Gen. T. Klimecki Polish Chief ofGeneral Staff, 22 May 1942; A. 49/doc. 34 Gen. Sir Alan Brooke CIGS to Gen. K. Sosnkowski Polish C-in-C, 13 October 1943.

[77] TNA, HS4/185, Support of Resistance in Poland, 18 October 1943 and Poland. Plans for intensification of sabotage and maximum guerrilla activity, 18 December 1943.

300 promised for the 1943/1944 season. Jaźwiński emphasised that SOE was consequential in its use of Polish crews for flights to other countries, blocking direct talks between the Polish authorities and the Air Ministry citing need for appropriate channels of communication. In his summing up of this six page document Jaźwiński writes: "*The nearly three years of co-operation with SOE allows with all certainty to state that S.O.E. is: a) p o w e r l e s (insufficient clout in respect of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, it was not treated seriously by the Air Ministry and disliked by the Intelligence Service, and b) is an instrument of political conflict of the Foreign Office (hence the inordinate interest in the internal political affairs of the occupied countries).... thus the supply of equipment for the Home Army an operation which is strictly military is the object of political infighting."* He went on to state that the support for an uprising in Poland can only be won at the level of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and by the removal of S.O.E. as an intermediary[78]. Harsh words indeed. However they more than reflect the underlying problems of the two allies. The Poles were carrying out their primary duty of doing everything to throw off the yoke of occupation by whatever means were necessary and in accordance with allied treaty assurances. However, militarily meaningful and logical was the operational planning of the Home Army High Command it failed to realize two things. Firstly the operational difficulties if not in some cases impossibilities, which they placed on allied capabilities for wholesale supplying of the requested equipment and support. Secondly they did not take into account the politics and long term aims of the western allies and the changes therein as the Soviet steamroller began to advance westwards. It must be said that Home Army High Command were not served well by their General

[78] PUMST, A. 101/doc. 21, Note on the particulars of the carrying out by S.O.E. of co-operation with the [Polish] General Staff in the area of the realisation of air supplies for the Home Army, 14 October 1943.

Staff and ultimately Government in London which failed to inform Warsaw bluntly and directly of the situation, and of the refusal of the Allies to provide the necessary support. At the same time, neither S.O.E. nor their masters were ready to admit to the Poles, that they could count on so much support and no more, thus leading the Poles to continue to believe in the possibility of improving support of all types. It seems that it was a case of too many ostriches hiding their heads in the sand to avoid unpleasant rifts.

With the invasion of Continental Europe in June 1944 the first tentative moves for the future winding down of S.O.E. were undertaken. Gen.Gubbins issued instructions for drawing up of a central list of foreign S.O.E. agents with the view of providing possible support in the post war period. Because the Polish Section was not directly employing Polish agents they were initially not considered for the scheme. That is apart from two who were employed by S.O.E. rather than Special Bureau, Andrew Kowerski and Krystyna Skarbek *"as deserving some post war support"* though it was thought, unlikely that they would put forward any claims[79].

However with the war coming to a close and the certainty that East Central Europe would come under Soviet control, S.O.E.s position changed as regards its Polish Section. The winding down process gathered apace following the Yalta Conference. In Italy Force 139 was closed down with Polish operational stores being redistributed. It is interesting to note that its commander Lt-Col. Threlfall estimated that some 570 three ton lorries would be needed to move just those stores. The liquidation of Polish operations here were left to Maj. Klauber[80].

[79] TNA, HS4/291, Lt-Col. H. Perkins to Sir Owen O'Malley British ambassador to Poland, 15 June 1944 requesting detailed information on the two SOE agents whom the latter knew them in Hungary.

[80] PUMST, A.63/doc. 29, Minutes of a meeting held on 15th January 1945 to consider measures to be taken for the liquidation of S.O.E. and VI Bureau work in Italy.

By the end of the war S.O.E. actually voiced the opinion that however finite, the possibility of war with the USSR could not be ruled out. For that reason Polish agents of Special Bureau became once more of interest. In fact a separate paper on the future of S.O.E. Polish Section was drawn up. Among the many points raised of particular interest in its breathtaking arrogance is the possibility of settling ex agents in Italian East Africa or similar location. It was argued that their removal from Europe would minimize their "*disturbing influence on a possible peaceful solution of European differences*". On the other hand having them grouped in one area they would be readily available should the necessity arise. Of course the financial aspect was not forgotten and it was noted that assisting them to become self sufficient would mean they would be a smaller drain on British resources[81].

In mid June 1945 Major Pickles prepared a paper entitled "*Protection of S.O.E. Agents Poles"* in which admitting that S.O.E. held no responsibility for Poles parachuted into Poland made the point that "*[...] we do carry responsibility in that the Polish military and governmental authorities have always worked under the orders of Combined Chiefs of Staff and they were carrying out our policy. Without exception everyone of them is at present placed in the situation where they are not only approbius to that Government, which is ruling in Poland, but they are in definite danger of their lives. Unfortunately the same could be said to apply to almost every man who has served in the Polish Forces, who have been under the control of the London Government [...]"* and whether the *"European elements in such a Government will be sufficiently powerful to protect agents from the*

[81] TNA, HS4/291, Future of SOE Polish Section, 24 May 1945.

attention of the Russian controlled side of the Government"[82]*.* Prophetic words indeed.

And a final thought. The S.O.E. Directorate and it's Polish Section were staffed in the main by the same people throughout the war, unlike that of the VI Bureau[83]. With the occurring changes in the latter the strong personal ties of the early war years diminished, making it easier to implement changing British policies towards Poland. In the end S.O.E. and it's Polish Section were essentially a conduit for the carrying out at practical level of those very policies. Whilst the broad aims of both the Polish Section S.O.E. and that of the Special Bureau Polish General Staff were at one, i.e. the defeat of Germany, the specific aims of the two bodies, each but a small cog in their own national military organisations, progressed through the war on divergent paths, each with it's own particular role and aim. Without a common political vision of Europe's future and a will to implement that vision by the powers that be, the two Allied cogs were doomed never to converge in the implementation of their original purpose set out in the dark days of 1939 and 1940. Poland's tragedy was that one of the few genuinely supportive organisations, namely S.O.E., was not a policy maker but only a carrier out of policies, policies established above and by military staff who more than not had a jaded view as to the need and effectiveness of resistance forces in occupied Europe.

[82] TNA, HS4/291, Protection of SOE Agents - Poles, 14 June 1945.

[83] Col. Józef Smoleński 1939: Chief of the Intelligence Bureau Polish General Staff, 1940-1941: Chief of the VI Bureau Polish General Staff.

Top left: Maj. Gen. Sir Colin McVean Gubbins (1896-1976), 1940-1943: Head of Operations S.O.E., 1943-1946; Director General SOE, Top Right: Major Harold Perkins (on the left) 1940-1943: Head of Polish Section S.O.E. 1943-1945; Head of East-Central European Section S.O.E. with H. Dalton Minister of Economic Warfare, Bottom left: Col. Józef Smoleński 1939; Chief of the Intelligence Bureau Polish General Staff, 1940-1941: Chief of the VI Bureau Polish General Staff, Bottom right: Lt-Col. Michał Protasewicz 1942-1944; Chief of the Special Bureau Polish General Staff.

Dr Jeffrey Bines

Chapter 3 POLISH SECTION OF S.O.E. - A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE

A connection between the Polish Government and members of British Intelligence's MI (r) section began in July 1939 when a meeting was held in the London War Office to discuss Polish plans for guerrilla style warfare to be carried out should Poland be over-run by Germany. When it looked likely that an invasion was about to take place it was thought prudent to send a Military Mission to Poland to observe proceedings. The beginning of the connections between the Polish Government and those who were to later become members of the S.O.E. begin at the very outbreak of the Second World War with this mission. Colin Gubbins, an officer of MI (r), a branch of British Intelligence, with a small group of fellow officers left Britain for Poland by a circuitous route, via Egypt, Greece and Rumania, and from there, eventually by taxi to Warsaw, arriving on 3rd September. Two days after the Germans had invaded Poland and the day that Britain and France declared war in support of the Poles. In Warsaw Gubbins met Major General Adrian Carton de Wiart, the commander of the Mission, and various people recruited from British civilians already living in Poland one of whom was once a director of a steel works in Czechoslovakia named Harold Perkins[84].

They accompanied the Polish General Staff, observing the defence put up against the aggressor and offering advice if it was asked for[85]. They remained with the Polish General Staff eventually withdrawing with them into Rumania and later joining up with them again in Paris where the Polish General Staff had established their headquarters. Escaped Polish troops had by now joined with, and were

[84] Conversation with Vera Long, Perkins' secretary. It is believed he later was director of a factory in Poland.
[85] Peter Wilkinson 'Foreign Fields', London 1997, p. 82.

fighting alongside the French. Following the fall of France two members of the Military Mission, Peter Wilkinson and Richard Truszkowski. It is believed he later was director of a factory in Poland.

This British Officer of Polish descent, arranged for transportation of Polish troops to England.

Following the evacuation at Dunkirk, some 20,000 Polish soldiers were taken from the area of Bordeaux to Britain. Once in Britain, as an army that was recognised as having more experience in fighting the Germans, they were given priority in re-equipping and rearming. Once in Britain the Poles established their Government in Exile and made it clear that they wanted to run their own affairs. This was a privilege no other foreign Government had, but everyone, including Churchill, was content with the arrangement. Polish Intelligence, under Józef Smoleński, was considered the best in the world, which was recognised by British Intelligence, so Smoleński's second in command Stanisław Gano was put into direct contact with the British Secret Intelligence Service SIS better known as MI6. In Britain plans were drawn up to organise resistance groups in countries already over-run by the enemy. This would be done through a new organisation, The Special Operations Executive, S.O.E. The charter for this new organisation was written by former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in what was one of the last things he did before he died. This organisation, under the Minister for Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, was headed by Frank Nelson, and the Polish section of this organisation was sensibly staffed by many of those who had been members of the Polish mission. The British discovered that the Poles had already an organisation set up to assist their comrades at home, the Sixth Bureau, now under Józef Smoleński, who those in S.O.E. who had been on the Mission to Poland already knew. They were the ideal organisation to liaise with as they suited each other's needs.

The head of the combined **P**olish, H**un**garian and Cze**ch**oslovakian (PUNCH) section was Harold Perkins. With him were other key members of the previous mission including Wilkinson and Truszkowski.

The British considered that there were two ways that they could strike at the enemy, either through bombing or by special operations, S.O.E.'s reason for being. Both, however, required the use of aircraft which at the time, and for a long time afterwards, were in short supply. This was, and remained, a serious problem.

Suitable aircraft types, would require the necessary range and speed to accomplish the trip in darkness; Length of darkness,to provide aircrews the best chance of survival. Flights therefore, had to be carried out during winter months. Astro navigation during the cruise, required starlit nights and map reading in the final stages required a Moon period, A moonlit night would also be needed by the parachutists to effect a safe landing.

Aircraft types available;

Whitley range 1500 miles @ 230 mph

Wellington range 1500 @ 255 mph

Halifax range 1200 @ 310 mph

Stirling range 590 @ 270 mph

Liberator range 2100 @ 290 mph (not available at this stage of the war);

As can be seen most would be enough to get to Poland but would have to land halfway back in Germany. A very wasteful exercise!

Last requirement, of course, suitable weather. S.O.E. had a low priority where allotment of aircraft was concerned especially as they were a secret force that few knew about. Political problems also proved to be a fly in the ointment, and not just British ones. The Sixth Bureau suffered the same frustrations from their own

Government departments, chief of which was their Ministry of the Interior under Minister Kot. (Kot, being the Polish word for cat was given the code name 'Felix' by S.O.E. after the cartoon character). In the meantime Kot ran an effective courier system with his agents travelling often through Spain or Portugal making use of British Companies that had offices in those countries. When one of his couriers went missing crossing the Carpathian mountains with £25,000 not surprisingly it caused a considerable amount of concern. To ensure this sort of thing happened less frequently, Kot's priority was for his couriers to be sent to Poland by air. The Sixth Bureau wanted their agents sent on the same aircraft and with few seats available, it would be some time before this could be sorted out.

Although the British could do little at this time to help the Poles they could, at least, help providing cash. Early in 1941 Dalton pressed hard for regular flights and even for special flights to be created in order to operate dropping parachutists into Poland with supplies and money[86]. The Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, thought the whole idea uneconomical but promised to TRY to provide Dalton with his requirements.

The first agents to be parachuted anywhere in occupied Europe were Poles dropped in Poland. On the night of 15/16th Feb 1941 three men (Stanisław Krzymowski, Józef Zabielski and a courier Czesław Raczkowski) were dropped on Operation ADOLPHUS. The flight was carried out using a Whitley Bomber especially modified and fitted with extra fuel tanks. It was a record breaking flight for this type of aircraft and it was felt they were lucky to get away with it. As a result, it was thought that it should not again be repeated using a Whitley but left until more suitable aircraft were available[87]. At one time a plan named 'TUXEDO' was devised using a bomber, which was not expected to return, the crew having bailed out leaving the A/c to fly on and crash!!

[86] TNA, HS7/184.
[87] TNA, HS7/184.

Aircraft shortage continued and it was not until the following November before the second drop into Poland was achieved. It was a slow start for SOE and the Sixth Bureau. Attempts were continually made to secure transportation for both Sixth Bureau and Kot's men but at this stage all came to very little.

Eager to take the war to the enemy in any way possible, Kot put forward an idea that Poles living in countries other than Poland could be useful to SOE, even if it was only to counteract propaganda. Many Poles lived in South American countries, Argentina for example, North America, and other European countries such as Greece and Ireland. The British forbade any action to be carried out in the United States or Ireland but were happy for action to be taken elsewhere.

Large numbers of Poles lived in France especially in the mining districts around Lille.

Kot envisaged initially passive resistance in France under the code name 'ANGELICA'. S.O.E. put at the Pole's disposal £600,000 as an annual budget. For some reason the Poles failed to understand it was an annual allowance and by the end of the war had only spent £550,000. S.O.E. thought something more active should be encouraged so set up 'ADJUDICATE' for more immediate action. All this came under an S.O.E. section called 'Minorities' or E/UP under Ron Hazell the former British Vice-Consul in Gdynia. Kot did not like the idea of the British using Poles in this way and eventually, so as not to upset the apple cart, 'ADJUDICATE' was pulled out but not before considerable damage had been done by them. Exactly how much 'ADJUDICATE' work has been credited to French resistance is not, and never likely, to be known and 'ADJUDICATE' agents kept turning up for many months after their stand down.

Similar organisations eventually existed under various code name changes, i.e., 'MONICA'/'GURTEEN' and eventually 'BARDSEA', which was similar to the 'Jedbrough groups'. This latter scheme was unsuccessful only because the area in

which ‘BARDSEA' was to operate became rapidly over-run by the allies following the D-DAY invasion.

(There was some opposition from the Americans to ‘BARDSEA’ working in their areas of operations but the British reminded them that they raised no objections to the OSS working in British areas of operation).

The German invasion of the Soviet Union came as no great surprise to the Poles who expected the Germans to prevail. (So did S.O.E.). Sikorski was prepared to resume diplomatic relations with the Soviets but only providing they repudiated the annexation of Eastern Poland. Gubbins thought as it was over-run by Germans anyway it would have been at least a gesture. [i.e. deported].

Approx half a million Polish civilians were living deported in Russia and a further 200,000 Polish prisoners of war: all would need to be brought out. Sikorski said he would do nothing until reasonable treatment was guaranteed for all the prisoners in Russia.

Nelson thought it unlikely that the Poles and the Russians would ever come to an agreement and this was soon evident. Sikorski's territorial clauses and differences in opinion regarding the Soviet/Polish peace terms brought about a cabinet crisis. Despite this a possible solution looked promising and an Ambassador to Moscow would soon need to be named. The job was eventually given to Kot. Kot’s position in the government was taken by Mikołajczyk who made many changes to his staff the most significant being the replacing of Smoleński with whom the S.O.E. had a good relationship. Smoleński was given a training job, which he considered a disgrace. He was replaced by Tadeusz Rudnicki who proved to be totally unsuitable for the work. The Polish Government crisis combined with other problems meant little help again was forthcoming in 1941, However, three modified Halifax Bombers were now available for use by S.O.E., which should provide faster and safer infiltration of Polish personnel, stores and cash.

Sikorski's talks in Moscow had achieved some success in negotiations with the Russians. Some Poles were being released from Russia into British held areas of the Middle East but only slowly. Anders' Army, soldiers held captive, were also evacuated to these areas, but they were short of officers. We now know what had happened to them.

Weather delays continued causing problems for flights to Poland during the winter of 1941/2 and Rudnicki, possibly from frustration, cancelled all plans for future flights. He immediately followed up his cancellation with an order for more equipment. How he expected this to be delivered having cancelled the flights is not recorded[88]. In February 1942 Hugh Dalton became President of the Board of Trade and his position as Minister for Economic Warfare went to Lord Selborne, a personal friend, and political ally of Churchill, which helped.

Rudnicki's plan to stop operations also seems to have come to an end by this time as flights resumed to Poland. It was not long though before S.O.E. started to register their disapproval of the head of the Sixth Bureau. Frustration with Rudnicki was coming to a head and it was thought that one more straw would break the camel's back. Perkins thought that it was time to administer that straw. By the end of the month he was gone. The new head of the Sixth Bureau being Michał Protasewicz.

A suggestion that Liberator aircraft should be available for S.O.E. flights was not agreed by Sinclair. He would however, put at their disposal another three Halifax bombers bringing the total to five. The Poles wanted these to be for their sole use and crewed by Polish airmen, something the Poles had always wanted, but this was not practical. When a Polish crew were lost on a flight to somewhere other than Poland, S.O.E. asked if Polish crews could be held only for Polish operations. SOE felt, as did the Polish Government, that Polish crews were preferable for

[88] TNA, HS7/184.

operations to Poland. The RAF did not agree especially when they often flew much further distances than necessary in order to look at their home towns!

In May Frank Nelson, who had been suffering from over-work, was replaced by Charles Hambro, previous head of SOE's Scandinavian Section.

Late in the year the Poles were concentrating on their plans for an uprising in Poland also known as the 'Big Scheme'. They supplied S.O.E. with a list of their future requirements, which included C47 type aircraft. (SOE thought that C47's were outdated and that York, St. Louis or Commando aircraft would be more suitable. Interesting that these types barely lasted the war whereas C47's are still flying commercially in some parts of the world to this day). SOE were aware that this 'Big Scheme' had been the Poles' intention all along and had constantly tried to dissuade them from the idea. Knowing how difficult it was for even the smallest amount of stores to be shipped to Poland, the Polish planners should have been aware that such a plan could not succeed. Wilkinson later lamented that S.O.E. had not tried hard enough to persuade the Poles to abandon the scheme.

By the end of 1942 S.O.E. had developed into efficient organisation. Selborne's friendship with Churchill, Anthony Eden and Sinclair would prove helpful in the forthcoming years.

Although Dalton had been a great champion of the Polish cause he lacked the political clout of Selborne. Nelson's replacement by Hambro was necessary but probably made little overall difference. The Americans were beginning to make their presence felt but OSS were so impressed by S.O.E. they said they would not attempt to interfere in Poland.

Finally in March 1943 the British Chiefs of Staff recognised the importance of Poland's Secret Army if only in giving assistance to the advance of the Soviet one. They approved, in principle, the Polish 'Big Scheme' for this reason perhaps

without considering the logistics[89]. SOE hoped it would mean better support for their efforts 7 in future. Perkins stressed to the Air Ministry the increasing importance of the Home Army and the difficulties in transporting couriers and agents. He suggested a bridge operation named "WILDHORN', with an aircraft taking personnel in, landing and bringing others out of Poland[90]. The idea was thought to be a good one with many of this type of operation being carried out in France.

Before long though, there came the unfortunate death of Sikorski and following Sosnkowski's appointment as Commander-in-Chief, it precipitated another Polish Cabinet crisis. Mikołajczyk eventually accepted him on condition he was only involved in military affairs. Further changes in the Polish cabinet meant S.O.E. would have to get used to some new faces. Fortunately, for SOE, Protasewicz remained as head of the Sixth Bureau despite some Poles thinking he was unsuitable.

Genuine and forged money was being supplied to the Sixth Bureau, sourced by SOE and the British Treasury and then passed on either being sold to them at the current rate, passed to them for a nominal sum or simply as a gift. The forgeries would need to be aged to make them look genuine. S.O.E.'s forgery section at Briggens House at Roydon near Harlow, was excellent at forgery but not so good at ageing paper so this work was done by the Poles themselves. A decision made in September, that S.O.E. should work more closely with the Foreign Office caused Hambro to resign and his place taken as head of S.O.E. by Gubbins. For the Poles possibly the best appointment ever made. Efforts were made continuously for more aircraft and flights in support of the Home Army. Now that the allies were in Italy a new base was set up there called 'TORMENT' for future flights to Poland

[89] P. Wilkinson, J. Bright Astley, 'Gubbins and S.O.E.', p. 114.
[90] P. Wilkinson, J. Bright Astley, 'Gubbins and S.O.E.', p. 114.

and a Polish Special Operations Flight was established in Brindisi. Air Command in the Mediterranean was ready in December to accept a Polish Flight, which now consisted of three Halifaxes and three Liberators. It was soon found that, instead of providing the Poles with the ability to carry out more flights, due to bad weather fewer flights were actually carried out. Unexpectedly, better weather conditions were to be found from Britain rather than Italy so naturally the Poles asked for the Northern route, from England, to be re-opened. With the aircraft allotted to them now based in Italy this would be a problem. S.O.E. approached the Air Ministry for a solution but had little success.

An extra aircraft was given to the Poles for one special operation and that was 'WILDHORN'. The aircraft used was a C47 Dakota, which took in two men and brought out another five[91]. Including General Tatar, code name 'Tabor' and a Lt Col Dorotycz- Malewicz code name 'Hańcza'. Both were empowered to give full information on the Home Army, so they were soon to be well known to S.O.E., who worked with them extensively.

Soon better weather meant that flights were again getting through with a success rate of around 50%. Plans were laid for an increase in drops, if possible, during all months in 1944 except one; Selborne asked "Would this be June, Invasion month?"

With the invasion of Europe drawing near the Poles were asked for all their messages to Poland be censored. (Something both the Poles and S.O.E. fought against but which SIS had always wanted). The Poles had been running a very successful operation at Stanmore making radio sets. These they supplied, not only to themselves, but also to the British, which were far better than sets that could be acquired elsewhere. It was therefore, with some reluctance that S.O.E. were obliged to ask for censorship to be carried out. At first there was some

[91] TNA, HS4/434.

reluctance but when the reason why was explained to the Sixth Bureau they readily agreed. Following the invasion the British Chiefs of Staff said they would no longer offer advice on activity within Poland as Poland now came under the Russian sphere of action. Naturally this was not received well but Perkins put forwards the argument that Eisenhower would not have tolerated the Russians interfering behind his lines in France had the situation been different[92]. Henry Threlfall, S.O.E.'s top man in Italy, asked if a new directive would be required but was told by London to carry on as before. (This sounds like a decision made by Perkins who was always happy to cut out "red tape" and get on with the job). Before the end of June a third 'WILDHORN' operated into Poland and brought out parts of a German V-2 rocket, which had been captured by the Home Army.

By the middle of July the Polish Flight now had another eighteen aircraft allotted to it. They would soon be needed. On 30th July Tabor told Gubbins that the Polish Government had given the General Officer Commanding Warsaw full powers to act as he thought fit.

Gubbins took this to mean that the thing S.O.E. had warned the Poles not to undertake was about to happen. Bór-Komorowski had a reason for starting the rising when he did but with only five days supply of food and ammunition he knew it could not last without help from outside. Obviously, the British were not capable of supplying quickly enough what was needed, so he expected the Soviets to help out. In the first two weeks of August S.O.E. made 62 attempted drops in support of Warsaw of which 30 were successful. Perkins was campaigning for everything to be supplied from guns and ammunition for the soldiers to condensed milk for babies to be dropped. We now know that the Russians stood by deliberately waiting for Warsaw to fall. Even Russian liaison officers, in Warsaw at the time, could not understand why the Red Army had stopped their advance as they saw

[92] TNA, HS4/153.

no reason to sit and wait. A massive supply flight by the Americans was carried out unfortunately a few days late.

Following the fall of Warsaw and the subsequent advance of the Red Army, many in the RAF thought that supplies to Poland would only be used against the Soviets and a reluctance to provide more flights built up. It was thought unreasonable to expect pilots from South Africa to carry out risky operations when the Soviets could do them easier and with considerably less risk. Although flights planned for Poland still had a lower priority than bombing runs elsewhere, there no longer seemed to be a shortage of aircraft. The Polish Flight's numbers had been increased considerably; and other air force groups ordered, when possible and 'subject to bombing requirements', to help out.

In November a further twelve Liberators were added to the Polish flight but any losses would not be replaced[93]. Selbourne requested from Sinclair more flights, reminding him that Churchill's promise of the previous February for more flights still had not been fulfilled, mainly due to bad weather. S.O.E. again pushed to reopen the Northern route. All were aware that winter was coming and supplies would be needed more than ever. Since the start of the Warsaw rising the Soviets said they would fire on any aircraft seen over their lines which made flights even more perilous on the Southern routes than before. Disagreement over an issue raised at a recent meeting in Moscow, caused Mikołajczyk to resign and he was replaced by Arciszewski, who was very anti-Soviet. This caused yet another ban on flights to Poland including a much requested, desperately needed and long awaited Operation Freston, currently standing by in Italy. Eventually, and after much political wrangling, this went ahead.

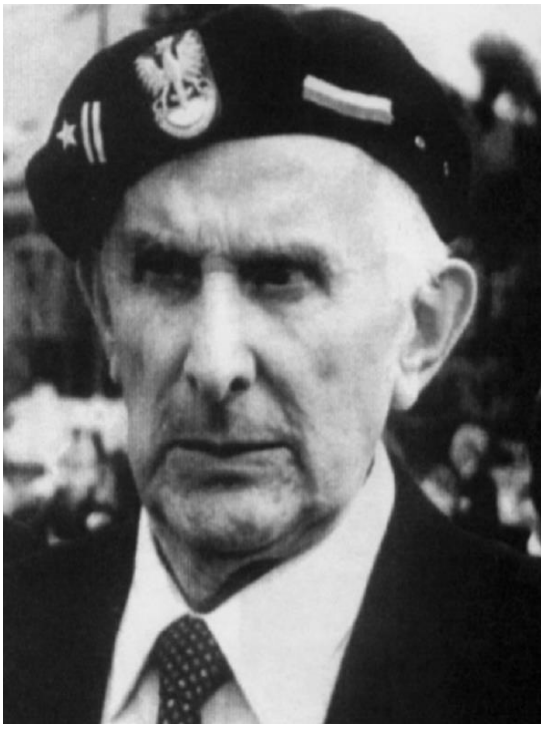
Early in 1945 the Polish Home Army was stood down and the Sixth Bureau started to wind up their affairs[94]. S.O.E. did the same.

[93] TNA, HS4/184.
[94] TNA, HS4/140.

A claim has since been made that said that as far as Poland was concerned the S.O.E. did much harm and little good[95]. I think this extremely unfair. If S.O.E. did not support Poland then who did? Certainly not the Soviets. Although S.O.E. launched only one mission of their own into Poland, Operation Freston, what S.O.E. did do was train and deliver to Poland 344 agents of the Polish Government of which 317 were destined for the Home Army, the remainder couriers. With them went $34,823,163, 1,775 Gold Sovereigns, 19,089,500 German Marks, 40,569,800 Polish Zloty and 10,000 Spanish Pesetas and 600.9 tons of equipment. The cost of these operations was 70 aircraft lost (41 of them in support of the Warsaw Rising), 30 aircraft manned by Poles, losing 28 crews; 38 aircraft lost by Britain and South Africa at a loss of 33 crews; And two American aircraft with one crew lost. A total of 437 crews lost to deliver 600 tons of supplies and 344 agents. The cost to the enemy is, of course, unknown both in Poland itself and in France where the Polish 'Minorities' operated. It is doubtful that any other organisation would have done more for Poland than S.O.E. who, it must be remembered, had other countries to support and equip. Some 17,000 tons of equipment went to France and about the same to Yugoslavia; these though, were easy to supply, distance not being the problem. If Poland had not been so far away perhaps the same would have been delivered there.

It is perhaps, sobering to think that today exist aircraft that can deliver 600 tons in a single day and at a speed most German wartime fighters would have found impossible to intercept. With the war at an end former agents were approached with a view to work in the forthcoming 'Cold War'; as far as I can determine all refused, not wishing to work against their own people even communist ones. What remained of S.O.E. was quietly absorbed into SIS.

[95] E.D.R. Harrison, 'The Historical Journal' nr. 43 (2000), p. 1071.



Top left: Cichociemny Colonel Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki „Antoni”, „Makary”, Top right: Cichociemny Captain Władysław Ważny „Tygrys”, Bottom left: Cichociemny Captain Stefan Ignaszak „Drozd”, Bottom right: Colonel Stefan Ignaszak „Drozd” as an active veteran.

Dr Bogdan Rowiński

Chapter 4 THREE OF THE "SILIENT AND UNSEEN" PARACHUTED INTO OCCUPIED EUROPE

Today we are acknowledging the heroism and dedication of a special group of Polish WWII veterans called the Cichociemni who undoubtedly helped to change the outcome of the WWII. Our first example is about someone who is regarded as one of the most important members of the Cichociemni who discovered and pinpointed the exact locations of the V-1 and V-2 rockets located in Northern France.

1. Captain Władysław Ważny, "Tygrys" [96]

The valuable information was passed onto the RAF, which enabled them to bomb and destroy the launch sites and directly reduce the number of V-1 and V-2 rockets from reaching and destroying London.

Władysłw Ważny, code name "Tygrys" (Tiger), was born on the 3rd February 1908 in Ruda Różaniecka. His early years were spent in Poland where he completed his education to qualify as a school teacher. In 1931-1932 he served in the 39th Infantry Regiment in Jarosław and was promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

In August 1939 he was mobilized to join the 39th Lwów Infantry Rifle Regiment. A month later the Germans and Russians invaded Poland and following the Campaign he escaped by crossing the Polish-Romanian border where he was arrested and interned.

[96] PISM, A. XII. 52/4, Operations "Darlton","Darenth" and "Dateworth".

Escaping and avoiding the German Army he was able to cross to Italy and France and then he walked across the Pyrenees into Spain, eventually arriving in Gibraltar from where on the 4th October 1943 he travelled to Great Britain.

On arriving in Great Britain he joined the S.O.E. Commando Training Centre in Camusdarach, Scotland and then the RAF Ringway Training Centre, Cheshire.

After successfully completing his S.O.E. specialist training Ważny became Deputy Commander of the Northern Region under Major Maciej Grabowski code name "EUGENIE" and head of a reconnaissance network called "Monika W".

On 4th March 1944, following a meeting with General Kukiel he was parachuted into France together with two other Cichociemni: Józef Grzybowski code name "LALKA" and Edward Bomba code name "TORREADOR". The operation called "DARENTH" began in Courcelles-les-Lens, Pas de Calais, Northern France on 3-4 March 1944.

Under his code name "Tygrys", Ważny developed a trusted network of resistance members. One of his most important accomplices, his deputy, was a sailor from Stark , in the Sudettenland, who was working in the German Navy and spoke fluent German. His name was Władysław Bobrowski a Naval Officer Cadet.

"Tygrys" now possessed a remarkable network of secret agents that amounted to 400 persons. In June 1944 an underground resistance radio station "Owidiusz" sent a message to SOE HQ, that the Germans were preparing to launch an imminent attack on Great Britain using a *lethal weapon*. The S.O.E. team immediately started their investigations.

The information collected by the "Tygrys" network of agents was analyzed, checked, encoded and forwarded to the Regional Commander Major Grabowski.

The major point of interest for the “Tygrys” network was the mobile V-1 rocket launch sites. The Allied Command, had previously tried to counteract the threat of the V-1 rocket and now embarked on a new operation code named “OPERATION CROSSBOW”.

Great Britain activated its massive air defence system of barrage balloons together with fighter planes and heavy bombers who were awaiting orders to bomb these rocket sites. Following the RAF reconnaissance information it became clear that some of the locations were dummy sites thus greater emphasis was placed on the Cichociemni to pinpoint the genuine rocket sites.

On the 11th June 1944 “Tygrys” sent an urgent message to S.O.E. HQ in London warning of an imminent attack but on 13th June London was hit by a V-1 rocket from a launch site that he had already reported. Of greater significance on the same day, Ważny reported the total number of launch sites in Northern France, which were immediately and successfully bombed by the RAF.

Such was the effective contribution of the “Tygrys” network. Thanks to him and within a couple of weeks of sending his initial report a further 182 radio transmissions were made pinpointing the exact locations of the rocket launch sites. As a result the RAF destroyed 162 of them.

During this time Ważny identified an additional 59 rocket launch sites and sent a detailed plan of one of the sites to London. Independently to this, the “Tygrys” network destroyed, in Douai , two rocket launch ramps, a rocket loading crane, located a factory producing aircraft engines in Albert which was subsequently bombed by the RAF. The “Tygrys” network destroyed a goods train carrying 200 aircraft engines and cut through live electric underground cables supplying power to these launch sites.

One of the most important achievements of his network was finding and identifying a new production base for the V-3 rocket situated in the Mimoyeoques region near the English Channel.

The effectiveness of “Tygrys’s” network caused the Germans to intensify their efforts in trying to destroy his network. The Germans mobilized over 40 magnetic – radio detection vehicles to track down the transmitters used by the “Tygrys” group. On the 19th August 1944 in the town of Montigny-en-Ostrevent the Gestapo surrounded a house where Ważny and Stanisław Łukowiak were meeting and a gun battle ensued where “Tygrys” was shot and subsequently died.

He was 36 years old. He was buried at the Montigyny–en–Ostrevant church and was posthumously promoted to the rank of Captain and awarded the Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur. In 1954 a road in Montigyny was named after him ‘rue de Captaine Ważny’ in honour of his bravery and heroism. Each year the town commemorates his name and memory. For his outstanding bravery he was awarded the Polish Order of Virtuti Militari 5th class, and the French Order of Legion of Honour 5th class, Croix de Guerre 1939-1945 and Resistance Medal.

2. **Captain Stefan Ignaszak " Nordyk", " Drozd"** [97]

The next Cichociemny of great importance in the critical detection of the V-1 & V-2 rocket sites is Cichociemny was STEFAN IGNASZAK. Stefan Ignaszak, code names " Nordyk" and " Drozd", also used several other code names, was born 30th November 1911 in Bornig near Dortmund, Germany.

After Poland had regained her independence the Ignaszak family returned to the their motherland, in 1919. From August 1931 to June 1932 he attended the

[97] PUMST, KOL 23/75, Capt. S. Ignaszak file; Krzysztof Tochman, Słownik Biograficzny Cichociemnych, vol. I, Oleśnica 1994, pp.46-48.

Reserve Cavalry Officer Cadets School in Grudziądz, then he trained in the 17th Wielkopolskich Lancers Regiment, followed by law studies at Poznań University.

During the September Campaign of 1939 he commanded a platoon in the Reserve Depot of the 14th Infantry Division. Following ongoing battles he was fortunate enough not to be captured by the enemy and was able to make his way to France and then Great Britain, where he served in the 10th Mounted Rifles Regiment and completed an intelligence course. He was sworn in at Audley End on the 29th December 1942 and was then a member of the Cichociemni. On the 13/14th March 1943 he was parachuted into Poland, south of Koniecpol. The Flight Operation was code named "Window". It helped him as an intelligence officer and being fluent in German, to find out about the production of the V-1 and V-2 rockets, where the research centre was, and where the manufacturing factory was based at Peenemunde.

The first reports of the flying rockets that Ignaszak gained were from the "Bałtyk 303" network cell. This underground cell was led by an Austrian-Augustyn Tragger whose son, Roman Tragger had served in the Wehrmacht and completed a wireless operators course. It was he who passed on the information that on Uznam island near Peenemunde research and tests were being carried out on a *new weapon*. He provided precise sketches of the rocket and its planned targets. Stefan Ignaszak immediately reported this to the Biuro of Studies code named "Lombard" in Warsaw. All this information was analysed and sent to London in early spring 1943. At first this report was received with disbelief and scepticism. However, further reports by Ignaszek to convince the Intelligence Service were taken seriously and were confirmed by the RAF reconnaissance photos.

On the night of 17/18 July 1943 600 RAF Bombers lead by Group Captain John H

Searby bombed Peenemunde. The attack was carried out from a height of 800 meters, destroying a whole district, the Ketschera Factory, a railway line, church and the Trassenheide district. Following this attack a decision was made to divide the Peenemunde site into three districts. The plan was approved by Hitler. Ignaszak's intelligence reports and the RAF bombing raid meant that the production of the rockets was greatly delayed up to the second half of 1944. One incident of great importance was when an unexploded rocket fell near the shore of the Bug river.

Locals and the AK underground army hid the rocket from the Germans and from this moment a turn of events occurred whereby the action MOST 3 (Bridge 3) was able to load the rocket parts onto a Dakota on the night of 25/26 July 1944 and return to Brindisi.
After the end of the war Stefan Ignaszak was arrested by the UB, the Polish Communists State Security Service, accused of spying and sentenced to death.

The sentence was commuted by President Bolesław Bierut. Instead he was given a five year prison sentence. He died on 8th January 2005 in Poznań.
He held the rank of captain to which he was promoted in 1944. He was also awarded the Order of Virtuti Militari 5th Class, Cross of Valour, Silver Cross of Merit with Swords and the Warsaw Rising Cross.

3. Col Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki *„Hański", „Antoni", „Heller", „Makary"* [98]

Colonel Kazimierz Iranek - Osmecki code names „Hański", „Antoni", „Heller", „Makary", was born on the 5th September 1897 in a small village just outside of Rzeszów, into a family of engineering surveyors. He completed his high school

[98] PUMST, KOL. 23/78, Col. K. Iranek-Osmecki file; PUMST, KOL. 2/2, Col. Iranek-Osmecki's lectures on Cichociemni given between 1952-1973; Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, Powołanie i przeznaczenie. Wspomnienia oficera Komendy Głównej AK 1940-1944, p. Warsaw, 1998, p. 200 -285.

education and graduated with a secondary school diploma from Rzeszów. From 1913 he was a member of his local Rifleman Association a patriotic para military organization. During WWI, he fought alongside Brigadier Piłsudski's Polish Legions.

He fought in the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1919 - 1920. Amongst several of his wartime duties, he was an active operational officer in the 2nd Infantry Brigade. Thereafter he completed his further Officer Training course. In 1926 he was promoted to the rank of Captain. During 1929-1931 he studied at the Staff Military Academy, on completion of which he was awarded the diploma of a general staff officer and thereafter became a military lecturer at the Academy.
In the 1939 Campapign, as a Lieutenant Colonel, he performed the duties of an Officer for Special Duties of Quartermaster-in-Chief.
On 17th September he crossed the Polish-Romanian border and made his way to Bucharest. From October onwards he became deputy Chief of Intelligence Station “R” in Romania.

In February 1940 recalled to France where he was appointed as Chief of Operations for HQ of the ZWZ (Polish Underground Armed Forces Organisation) in France. After the capitulation of France he made his way to the UK, where he was assigned to the VIth Bureau of the General Staff, as Head of the Information and Intelligence Section. On the 6th November 1940 he flew into Poland as an emissary to the Chief of Staff of the ZWZ. On the 21st December 1940 he met up with General Grot Rowecki - to whom he conveyed "The Secret Directive No 6". This document contained a detailed portrayal of the current situation in Poland and instructions on how to carry on active resistance against the Germans. His current code name at that time was "Antoni". He returned to London on 14th April 1941. He was recalled to the AK Home Army High Command on the night of

13th/14th March 1943, whereby he was dropped into Poland during operation "Stock" near a rendezvous point at „Koza”, near Celestynów, just outside of Warsaw.

Promoted to the rank of full Colonel from April 1943, he became Chief of the IVth Bureau of the Home Army GHQ , still using the code name "Antoni". Late in 1943 he became Chief of the II Bureau (Intelligence). Under his jurisdiction, he reorganized the II Bureau of the Home Army High Command, which had suffered quite a few setbacks due to the treason of Ludwik Kalkstein. Under Iranek-Osmecki’s tenure the production and technological know how, used to produce the V-1 rocket were successfully deciphered and documented.
In November of 1943 the II Bureau of the Home Army High Command of the Home Army led by Col. Iranek Osmecki, received a message from Southern Poland, that close to a village called Blizna Pustkowie, it had been observed that the Germans where secretly and intensively building a strange weapon - something like an *aerial torpedo*.

In January of 1944 in the village of Blizna, the first rockets produced by the Mittelwerke GmBH "Dora" factories in Harz Mountains, were sighted. During the construction of these weapons, over 11,000 prisoners of different nationalities, were used as slave labour. In order to search out the new V1 and V2 launch sites, Col Iranek Osmecki utilized the AK Home Army bases in Kolbuszowa and also in Rzeszów (Inspectorate "Rzemiosło"), as well as trusted scientists from the Wartime Studies Institute of the Polish Home Army based in Warsaw. The reconnaissance missions trawling through the forests of Blizna, smelt the strong alcohol fumes, at the destruction and impact sites of these rockets.

Step by step they collected all the necessary fragments of the these exploded rockets, such as their fuel tanks and concealed them in the forests, away from the prying Germans. The AK reconnaissance units also noticed the strange behavior of the Germans, who immdiately wanted to recompensate the local villagers, in order to retrieve the vital parts of the fragmented rockets. The rockets fired from Blizna started to have an ever greater radius of impact. One such rocket landed without exploding in the village of Sarnaki near Siedlce.

Polish partisans from the 8th Company of the 22nd Regiment of the Home Army managed to retrieve one such rocket from the Bug river and thereafter transport it on the back of three trucks for detailed analysis in Warsaw. Leading Polish scientific minds worked on deciphering the contents and workings of this missile. Namely they were: Prof Janusz Groszkowski, J. Chmielewski, Adam Kocjan, Prof Zawadzki and Prof Marceli Struszyński.
It was then that they discovered that the rocket fuel used was Perhydrol - 85% H202. Likewise it was also discovered that the missile had a unique ground to air steering system. A secret message was immediately sent to London - transcript No 366/ 1176 from the 24th June 1944, outlining their amazing findings.

The village of Zdarzec (near Tarnów, Southern Poland) was chosen as the flight rendezvous pick-up-point. In order to ensure the safety of Operation Wildhorn III, 187 soldiers, 18 NCO's and 5 officers were used to guard the missile. In the vicinity a strong encampment of German Military Police were present as well as where the reconaissance planes were situated. At the end of 2nd June Lieut. Stefan Musiałek - Łowicki in command of the 16 infantry battalion of the Home Army, received the order to prepare the air landing strip called "Motyl". On the 25th July 1944 in Brindisi a Dakota transport plane KG477 "V" from 267 RAF Squadron

took off from the airstrip. Its crew consisted of F/L S.G. Culliford , F/O Kazimierz Szrajer F/O JP Wiliams and r/o F/S J Appelby. The Dakota was escorted by a Liberator B24 KG -827 „U" F/L under Bolesław Koprowski. To Poland the Dakota took on board 4 Cichociemni paratroopers. Jan Nowak Jeziorański code name "Zych", Kazimierz Bilski "Rum", Leszek Starzyński „Malewa" and Bogusław Wolnik „Mięta". At 00.23 the Dakota landed on the "Motyl" airstrip and after an hour it had climbed into the air to return to Campo Casle in Brindisi at 5.45 am.

It was an incredible success for the Polish Underground Movement and also a personal success for Col. Iranek Omecki. He thereafter fought in the Warsaw Uprising. He was bestowed the honour of being by General Bór Komorowski's side during the surrender negotiations with General von dem Bach Zalewski. The Act of Capitulation was signed in Ożarów. Thereafter for the forst time he refused promotion to the rank of General. From 1944 to 1945 he was a POW in Germany.

After the war he remained in the West and took part in the regimental and regional branch meetings of the old Cichociemni soldiers ("The Silent and Unseen"). He died on 22nd of May 1984 in London.

His awards and decorations included the Orders of Virtuti Militari 4th and 5th class, the Cross of Valour (6 bars), the Order of the Re-birth of Poland 3rd Class (Commander's Cross), Gold Cross of Merit with Swords, Gold and Silver Cross of Merit.

Colonel Mike Russell

Chapter 5 KRYSTYNA SKARBEK (CHRISTINE GRANVILLE)

Maria Krystyna Janina Skarbek was born in Warsaw on 1st May, 1908, the second child of Count Jerzy Skarbek and Stephania Goldfelder, the daughter of a wealthy Jewish banker. Ironically, given what she was to achieve in later years, she was a fragile child and her parents feared that she would not survive. Two weeks after her birth, she was hurredly baptized by a local priest. She was baptized on a second occasion in 1913 when her parents had moved to Beczkowice.

Though the Skarbek family had a great and noble history, Count Skarbek was not a wealthy man, having depended upon his father-in-law's dowry to cover his debts and permit him to live a very lavish lifestyle.

From the outset, Krystyna was something of a tomboy, devoted to her father and she spent a great deal of time horse riding on the family estate, blissfully unaware of the true nature of the family finances.

It was at the family stables that Krystyna met Andrzej Kowerski, the son of a friend of her father's. She was 10 years old and they would play together whilst the Count and his friend would discuss the momentous events following World War One and the rebirth of Poland after so many years of oppression.

The 1920s became the decade when Warsaw was described as the 'Paris of the East'. Count Skarbek attempted to reinstate himself amongst the aristocracy but his finances were so poor that the family had to give up the country estate and move to Warsaw.

Krystyna, at a Convent School, would have normally become a society girl, but none of such trappings attracted her. She was 22 when her father died. The Goldfeder financial empire had all but collapsed and there was barely enough money to support the widowed Countess Stephania.

Krystyna could not bear to be a burden on anyone, let alone her mother. She took a job as a secretary at a Fiat garage. The office was directly over the workshop and she soon became ill due to the fumes. At first, doctors thought she had tuberculosis, the same illness that had killed her father.

Now, this is all background about this remarkable young lady but serves to show how she became such an asset to the resistance.

The Fiat company accepted liability; she received compensation and her doctor strongly advised that she spend some time in recovery with as much fresh air as possible.

Krystyna headed for the popular winter resort of Zakopane, high in the Tatra mountains and close to the Slovakian border. Despite her aristocratic upbringing, Krystyna was no snob; she enjoyed living with simple, unpretentious people and very soon she was accepted into the very close knit Zakopane community.

Here she became very skilled on skis, and her time hiking in the Tatra mountains gave her a deep knowledge of the terrain.

One day she lost control on the slopes and was saved by a man who stepped into her path and stopped her uncontrolled descent. He was a brilliant, moody eccentric author called Jerzy Giżycki who had run away from home at the age of 14.

They married on 2 November 1938, soon after which Giżycki accepted a diplomatic posting to Ethiopia where he was to be Poland's Consul until Germany invaded Poland in September 1939.

The couple sailed for London almost immediately. Krystyna was determined to contribute something to defeat the common enemy. She pulled on every string that she could, looking up contacts she had made in her 20s in Warsaw. First, she looked up Frederick Voigt a well connected political journalist and BBC commentator. He then introduced her to a Foreign Office Advisor, Robert Vansittart. He then passed her on to George Taylor, Head of the Balkan Section of Section D, an offshoot of the Secret Intelligence Services (SIS) – MI6. Taylor recorded his first impressions:

"She is a very smart looking girl, simply dressed and aristocratic. She is a flaming Polish patriot. She made an excellent impression and I really believe we have a prize!"

Section D had been set up to find new ways of sabotaging Germany's war efforts. These included spreading anti-Nazi propaganda across occupied Europe. Lines of communication between Hungary and Poland were now badly needed as German propaganda now controlled all news, effectively cutting Poland off from the outside world.

Taylor could be an impatient man, but it didn't take long for him to see Krystyna's potential. She had already considered every detail of her plan: posing as a journalist based in Budapest, she would cross Slovakia and ski over the Polish border to Zakopane, where she could rely on help from her friends there. Once she'd opened a courier channel, she could begin to deliver propaganda material for the Polish networks to distribute, and bring out whatever intelligence they had for London. All she asked for was the chance to prove herself.

Taylor endorsed her proposal and she flew out on 21 December 1939. For all Christine's enthusiasm and determination to succeed, this would be a difficult and dangerous mission. Hungary was a neutral country, but its government had recently accepted Slovakian territory offered by the Nazis and was more likely to cooperate with Germany than the Allies. Moreover Sir Owen O' Malley, the British minister in Budapest, took a dim view of Section D's cloak and dagger work and refused to have anything to do with it.

On arrival in Budapest Krystyna was met by Hubert Harrison, who handled Section D's Polish contacts while posing as Balkan correspondent for the *News Chronicle*; and Józef Radziminski, a former Polish intelligence agent who would act as her assistant. Using the cover name of "Madame Marchand", she quickly found a flat and immediately began making plans for first trip to Poland. Stubbornly ignoring all advice she left in February, when temperatures had dropped to -30°C and snow in the mountains was several metres deep, but she managed to persuade Polish Olympic skier Jan Marusarz, now working for the Polish consulate, to act as her guide. Enlisting the help of some old friends in Zakopane, Krystyna then set off to begin her real work, criss-crossing the country by train, horse or on foot, gathering information and making new resistance contacts.

Witnessing the daily hardships her countrymen faced under the new German occupation was shocking, but Krystyna was also encouraged to meet those willing to fight back. Underground newspapers and intelligence networks were springing up everywhere, including one known as the Witkowski organisation or "the Musketeers", which would prove to be an invaluable source.

After returning to Budapest she submitted a long report to London, and she continued to link up with Polish resistance. Andrzej Kowerski, a fellow Pole, was also from landowning stock and had joined the Polish motorised brigade in 1939.

Kowerski and Krystyna began working more closely together and soon made a formidable team.

She crossed into Poland again in June 1940 and visited members of her family in Warsaw, including her mother. Afraid for her safety, Krystyna begged her to leave the country but she was determined to stay and carry on her work teaching French to young children. With her courier obligations growing she made another journey a week later, but this time her usual good luck failed. After crossing the Polish border she and her companion were caught by Slovakian guards, who threatened to hand them over to the Gestapo. Unflustered, Krystyna refused to disclose anything during several hours of interrogation, and eventually persuaded her captors to take the money she was carrying and let both of them go. A cool head and quick thinking had saved them but they were now known to the Slovak police, making any further trips very dangerous. Along with carrying out odd propaganda jobs for Section D's news agency, Krystyna and Kowerski began gathering intelligence on river and train traffic travelling between Germany and Romania, and tracking the movements of frontier guards on the Yugoslav and Slovakian borders. Krystyna was running out of money, communications with London were difficult and their work was becoming more dangerous every day.

Kowerski hardly had time to sleep, but steeled himself to drive thousands of kilometres in his trusty Opel saloon car to smuggle Polish airmen – now desperately needed to replace pilots lost during the Battle of Britain – into Yugoslavia. He had also become well known to the Hungarian police and their Gestapo counterparts, who stepped up surveillance of his movements. Krystyna continued to push herself hard as well, and after a fourth trip into Poland in mid-November she became seriously ill with flu.

The inevitable police raid came in the early hours of 24 January 1941. After several

fruitless hours of interrogation the Gestapo were anxious to use more brutal methods of questioning, but Krystyna was able to interrupt the investigation by playing on her recent illness. Biting her tongue hard, she gave the impression that she was coughing up blood and might be suffering from TB. At a prison hospital she underwent a chest X-ray, which horrified her doctor: with no idea about her previous lung scarring from exhaust fumes, he concluded that she was seriously ill and arranged for her and Kowerski's release.

Although still under surveillance, both of them were able to slip away and sneak into the British legation to ask for help in leaving Hungary. They were issued with new passports, but they first would need British names to go with them. The British Ambassador's daughter Kate suggested Krystyna become "Christine Granville" and Kowerski decided on "Andrew Kennedy": although made up on the spur of the moment, both would keep these names for the rest of their lives. Christine was hidden in the boot of the legation's Chrysler as it crossed over the Yugoslav border, then she joined Andrew in his battered Opel to continue their journey to Belgrade. Over the coming days they had to endure horrendous driving conditions and suspicious border guards but they eventually reached Istanbul in neutral Turkey, where the British consulate welcomed them.

Christine and Andrew endured a long and dusty excursion through Syria and Jerusalem to report to S.O.E.'s Cairo headquarters in May 1941 (Section D's work had been overtaken by S.O.E. in 1940). They hadn't expected a heroes' welcome, but they were mystified by the icy reception they received. There was a simple reason for it: the Polish government-in-exile in London had just ordered all ties with "amateur" networks like the Musketeers to be cut, claiming they had been penetrated by German intelligence.

This meant that S.O.E. could not send either Christine or Andrew back to the

Balkans, and Polish section officer Peter Wilkinson had the unenviable job of breaking the news. Wilkinson was blunt to the point of rudeness (something he later regretted) then took the precaution of putting both of them under surveillance, which Andrew soon found out about. Christine handed over microfilms she'd brought from Hungary as evidence of the importance of her sources, which clearly showed the build up of German forces in advance of the imminent invasion of Russia, but they too were ignored. Having put their lives on the line for their country, they were now suspected of being Gestapo spies.

Taylor and SOE's Balkan staff felt uncomfortable about the situation but they were committed to working with the Polish government, and it would not budge from its ruling.

Christine was at a loose end in Cairo. She and Andrew were kept on the SOE payroll but she soon found herself with little to do apart from lounging in the sun at the Gezira Sporting Club and socialising with her new friends at SOE's HQ. She turned down the offer to become a cipher clerk – it seemed too much like office work – but took a wireless operator course, thinking it would be useful skill if another mission came her way. Meanwhile Andrew parted company and became a parachute instructor for SOE recruits After completing her wireless training Christine also gained her parachute "wings" at the RAF base in Haifa.

At the end of March 1944 Patrick Howarth, one of her closer friends in S.O.E.'s Polish section, proposed that she be sent back to Hungary as a wireless operator.

In fact it was only after D-Day that a vacancy arose, this time in S.O.E.'s AMF section, which sent agents into southern France from Algiers: courier Cecily Lefort had been arrested some months earlier in Montélimar, and her chief needed a replacement urgently. Like many of her class in Poland Christine spoke near perfect French and having wireless skills too made her a natural choice. She was

briefed at AMF's “Massingham” base and given false identity papers in the name of Jacqueline Armand. Her codename would be *Pauline*.

She parachuted near Vassieux in the Vercors region in the early hours of 7 July. The landing left her bruised and had smashed off the butt of her revolver, but that was no great loss. Four days later she met her new boss, Francis Cammaerts, a 28 year-old schoolmaster and former conscientious objector.

After a tour meeting hundreds of Cammaerts’ supporters, they moved to the Vercors plateau, a vast expanse of forests, gorges and caves surrounded by huge mountains and limestone cliffs, where French guerrillas – known as “maquis” – were suffering relentless bombing attacks from German aircraft.

A day later Christine was off to the Italian border. Groups of Poles reluctantly pressed into German service were garrisoned at frontier posts overlooking the winding Alpine passes, and her job would be to persuade them to change sides and hand over their arms. One of her victories was the fort at Col de Larche, a 2000 foot high stronghold surrounded by dense forests. Although bloodied and bruised after a day’s climb to reach the garrison, she convinced its 200 Poles to disable their mountain guns and desert their posts. She also enabled several newly arrived special forces teams make contact with Italian partisans and prevent German advances by blowing up the roads and bridges around Briançon.

Such episodes soon gained “Miss Pauline” respect among her male counterparts, but the next would make her a legend. After bringing over another Polish group to the maquis, news arrived that Francis, his lieutenant Xan Fielding and a French officer had been arrested . With maquis commanders reluctant to attempt a rescue, she immediately cycled 40 kilometres to the Gestapo HQ and presented herself to Albert Schenck, a French liaison officer working with the Germans. She had nothing to bargain with, so began a bluff, declaring herself a British agent and

the niece of Field Marshal Montgomery, she warned that an Allied invasion from the south was imminent, and the likes of Schenck would be “handed over to the mob” unless they cooperated with her. She succeeded in her mission!

Returning to Cairo Krystyna took a job at Middle East headquarters, and after some discussion S.O.E. agreed to continue paying her until December 1945, just before it was due to disband itself. Alone and with no work prospects, she now faced an uncertain future.

Christine discovered that her mother had died in prison after being arrested by the Nazis, and with Poland under Russian occupation she knew she could not return home. Now stateless, she had no trouble finding referees to support her application for naturalisation but the Home Office ignored her extraordinary service record and she only became a British citizen in December 1946. Some of her émigré friends were worried about Christine’s precarious situation and encouraged her to join Andrew, now living in Germany, but despite their unique and unbreakable bond she declined.

Sometimes her pride and independence seemed to sabotage any chance of finding financial security: she gave no reason for refusing to accept a house left to her in a friend’s will, and turned down the chance of a government post because it was offered in respect of her S.O.E. career. Instead she drifted through a string of menial jobs, including switchboard operator and as a Harrods shop assistant.

Determined to travel and break out of her rut in London, Christine took a job as a stewardess on a New Zealand cruise liner in May 1951 and joined its maiden voyage from Southampton to Wellington. One of the staff rules demanded that staff wear their wartime decorations, which made Christine an object of curiosity and caused a certain amount of jealousy. However one crew member George Muldowney was willing to stand by her. For someone who hated domestic chores

– she would always stay in hotels to avoid housework and having to cook – Christine must have found life onboard trying.

At Andrew's invitation Christine planned to fly to Belgium on Monday 16 June, it would give her a break before her next hostess job.

Although other women agents such as Violette Szabo and Odette Sansom grabbed post-war headlines and became the subjects of biographies and films, Christine's story had remained largely unknown to the public. Consequently she attracted far more respect and acknowledgement in death than she ever experienced during her lifetime. She fell victim to Muldowney's infatuation, being stabbed to death by him on 15 June 1952, when leaving her hotel room in Lexham Gardens near Cromwell Road[99].

Her funeral, two weeks after her death, was attended by two hundred mourners, including Andrew Kowerski, Francis Cammaerts and former SOE head Colin Gubbins. The grave is unremarkable except for the shield of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa above the headstone and a smaller plaque bearing Andrew's name, laid after his death in 1988. Respecting his wishes, his ashes were laid to rest at the foot of her grave.

In 2013, along with many others, I was privileged to attend a rededication service at Krystyna's graveside, newly restored by the Polish Heritage Society UK.

So, in conclusion, what can we learn from this extraordinary story? Her greatest achievement was, arguably, relaying information back to London alerting the Allies that Germany was about to launch Operation Babarossa, the invasion of Russia. She was a driven woman, passionate about the liberation of Poland. She met the S.O.E. requirements because of her tenacity, courage, ingenuity and self-

[99] Shelbourne Hotel, 1 Lexham Gardens, London W8

belief. She had also inherited her father's Roman Catholic faith; she carried a small picture of the Black Madonna with her on all her missions. She was an opportunist; she lived every day as if it was her last.

Her military decorations speak for themselves:

She proved the value of women in clandestine operations, paving the way for many, many more to follow.

A tragic figure, ultimately? Well, perhaps. Her untimely and quite gruesome death was not befitting a woman who had single handedly helped the war effort to the extent she did.

I have a slightly different view. The real tragedy of Krystna Skarbek was the fact that she never returned to the country she had fought so hard for, nor taken that flight to Belgium on the Monday to meet Andrew once more. She was deprived of her true inheritance but the very fact that we are here to appreciate how she earned her place in S.O.E. history, four days before the 63rd anniversary of her death, the spirit of Krystyna Skarbek lives on.

As with most members of the S.O.E., research into their activities is rarely easy; it is not the secret nature of their clandestine operations but more their inate retiscence to talk about their experiences.

Further reading:

Madeleine Masson, Christine, *"A search for Christine Granville"*, 1975.

Xan Fielding (Major Alexander Fielding DSO), *"Hide and Sick. The Story of War Time Agent"*, 1954.

M.R.D. Foot, *"SOE 1940-1946"*, 1984

Peter Wilkinson, Joan Bright Astley, *"Gubbins & SOE"*, 1993

Ian Valentine, *"Station 43"*, 2004

Sir Colin Gubbins, *"Irregular Warfare"*, 1983

Top left: Andrzej Kowerski (Andrew Kennedy) with Krystyna Skarbek (Christine Granville), Top right: Krystyna Skarbek OBE GM Croix de Guerre 1 May 1908 – 15 June 1952, Bottom picture: The unveiling ceremony of the newly restored grave of Krystyna Skarbek and Andrzej Kowerski by the Polish Heritage Society UK. She was buried in St Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Kensal Green in north-west London. The ashes of her closest wartime colleague, Andrzej Kowerski-Kennedy, were later buried alongside her.

Dr Jeffrey Bines

Chapter 6 OPERATION FRESTON

With the Soviets making rapid advances against the Germans it was necessary to have first hand information about the fluidity of movements in Poland and the reaction of the Polish resistance i.e. Home Army, to these advances. It was thought that the best way to achieve this would be the sending of a British Military Mission. In December 1943 a suggestion was made by Gubbins to Mikolajczyk for such a mission to be sent to Poland.

In February 1944 an official request was sent by Mikołajczyk to Churchill for a Mission to be sent to act as liaison between the British authorities concerned (SOE), the Polish Government and Commander of Polish troops in Poland i.e. the Home Army. Naturally, this could not be done at the drop of a hat. Approval would need to be sought from the Chiefs of Staff who would weigh up the pros and cons of such a mission. By the end of the month though, S.O.E. had decided they would operate the mission themselves regardless of what the Chiefs of Staff decide.

Perkins considered that such a mission might gather information that would be useful in countering future Soviet allegations and claims and it would, perhaps, help convince the Poles that it was not British policy to sell out to the Soviets and that an independent Poland was in everyone's interest.

Anthony Eden, Britain's Foreign Minister, was worried though. Whilst the Chiefs of Staff considered that the Polish Home Army was most effective in harassing the Germans in the rear of their lines, the Polish plan was for an 'apocalyptic coup' and he felt that until better understanding could be reached between the Poles and Soviets a mission launched now could be an 'embarrassment'. Selbourne was

forced to agree saying *"There is so little will to collaborate between the Poles and the Russians, a mission of this sort might well get kicks from both sides and credit from neither"*; but by August, S.O.E. were still planning for the mission to go ahead.

On 18th August Perkins sent a message to Gubbins 'pleading' for the mission to go ahead. At the same time he requested the release of Lt Antoni Pospieszalski, an instructor at the Polish training station, STS 43 Audley End to enable him to become the first member of the mission. Promoted Captain, Antoni Pospieszalski would travel as a British officer under the 'nom de guerre' Tony Currie, his wife's maiden name. Eventually other members of the mission were decided upon. It would be led by Colonel Duane Tyrell Hudson, an officer who had served in the Balkans, Major Alun Morgan, an intelligence officer, Peter Kemp who had served with Franco in the Spanish Civil War, Major Peter Solly-Flood, who like Morgan was an intelligence officer and had been released from the Foreign office for the mission, and finally Sergeant Major Donald Galbraith of the Royal Corps of Signals. Also going in with the mission would be another Polish officer, Group Captain Rudkowski; through him the team were to make contact with the commander of the Home Army General Okulicki.

It soon came to the notice of the Sixth Bureau and the British Foreign Office that members of the Home Army were being dis-armed and some even shot by the Soviets. Suddenly, the Foreign Office considered it essential that the mission be dispatched as soon as possible. They informed the Embassy in Moscow to tell the Russians that a mission was going and to give the Soviets the names of the mission's members.

On arrival in Italy at SOE's 'TORMENT' base, due to a mix-up they found no-one to meet them. They eventually managed to arrange transport for themselves in the form of a three ton truck. After losing their way they eventually arrived in the dark at the village of La Selva, where they were to stay in one of the beehive shaped villas known as trulli.

Whilst there, Galbraith asked for more parachute training as he had only carried out one jump and the rest of the team gathered equipment they would need for their trip. Without this equipment they were unable to leave immediately for Poland, but Rudkowski said as he didn't need to take anything he left on the first available flight. Once in Poland Rudkowski signalled to say he had found alternative landing sites for the mission and said they should, therefore wait until further arrangements had been made. Unfortunately the next moon period was two weeks away. They then discovered that the operation could not be carried out until new approval for the sites was gained from General Kopański, the Polish Chief of Staff in London. Eventually they were given the go ahead; it was by now late October. The mission was hastily dispatched but the following morning the mission returned unsuccessful. Six days after the mission should have been in Poland the Foreign Office asked the British Ambassador to Moscow if he had passed on the named of the mission members to the Russians. The reply came back "Not yet, am doing so"!

Suddenly the Foreign Office was in a panic trying to get Freston launched into Poland. It seemed that someone named Ward had decided to leave Warsaw. Ward was an RAF corporal and escaped prisoner of war. He had joined up with the Home Army and had sent reports to the Foreign Office, probably because they

had no-one of their own (SIS) in Poland. Perkins thought this immensely funny as the F.O. had thus far been responsible for so many delays.

On 18th November another attempt was made unsuccessfully to land Freston. This was due to the RAF not giving enough notice to the team. (In fact they hadn't left the ground). To make matters worse on 26th a message came through *'Hold Freston pending clarification of general situation'*. Followed by another message 'Freston Stopped'. This was due to disagreement in the Polish Government causing Mikołajczyk's resignation.

Mikołajczyk was replaced by Kwapiński who didn't last long, then replaced by Arciszewski. Anthony Eden thought that a mission going in now (with a very anti-Soviet Arciszewski having taken over), might look suspicious. This ban was considered by S.O.E. to have been made 'purely as a manifestation of disapproval'.

Churchill assured Mikołajczyk that his resignation would in no way affect support for Poland. Eden wanted Freston to go ahead but with only Polish personnel. Churchill suggested he, Eden and Selborne should get together to decide the question. Meantime Freston sat in their trullo being taught Polish by Tony Currie. On 13th December Eden gave his support for the mission to go ahead despite his worries about a very anti-Soviet Polish Government in London.

On 24th December a flight left carrying Freston. At the last minute before the flight took-off a message was received saying if Freston is on tonight, Morgan is not to go. The Foreign Office wanted him; the reason unknown. Morgan wanted to go and said he now worked for the Ministry of Labour not the Foreign Office so he left with the others. The following morning the flight returned with all on board. Solly-Flood was named as second in command replacing Morgan. That night the team, without Morgan, ate a cold Christmas dinner on the edge of the airfield and at approx 1600 hrs took off for their drop zone near Żarki. Five hours

later they were dropped from a very low height, all except Currie sustaining slight injuries.

First they moved to a farmhouse about one kilometre away that was full of refugees from Warsaw. Then another three kilometres to the house of an old man and woman who were evidently expecting them. The next morning they met two Russian officers in civilian clothes who said they preferred living and working with the AK as they provided better information. They also suggested that the Freston team wore civilian clothes. They stayed in the village until dark and then moved in a hay cart with a lieutenant code named 'Twardy', another two kilometres to the edge of a forest where they stayed in a cottage with a member of the Forestry Service. They remained for two days and were able to send messages back to London. Here they were also joined by a an AK officer known to them as 'Lt. Roman'.

Stopping at peasant houses for refreshments they travelled under the guise of being escaped prisoners of war. For this reason they had ignored the Russians advise to wear civilian clothes and kept their uniforms. Eventually arriving at an estate farmhouse, where they hoped to stay, they were greeted by the manager who told them that every day Cossacks came to collect hay and a number of the estate workers were members of AL (People's Army) who couldn't be trusted not to give them away. So they moved on another seven kilometres to Włynica and the home of Madame Rubachowa, a very beautiful woman.

They were given comfortable rooms but something of a panic ensued when two Germans were apparently coming down the drive. They turned out to be two AK members dressed as Germans who thought it a good joke. The next day they met the chief of Gendarmerie for the Radomsko area and a Major (Polkowski) who had been in charge of the 25th Infantry Regt. before it had been demobilised. He still had about 40 men with him commanded by Lt. Józef Kopeck, code name "Warta',

and Freston joined the group, taking their leave of Twardy and Roman. At dusk they moved four kilometres east to Katarzyna.

Here they were comfortably lodged in a chalet looking building, decorated in the Victorian style, the home of Madame Dembowska. They were able again to send messages but after about 15 minutes a Fieseler Storch aircraft flew low overhead and Solly-Flood worried in case the pilot had spotted their aerial.

During the evening they joined their escort in one of the outbuildings to see in the New Year. Songs were sung and shouts of “Down with the Curzon Line”, “We want Wilno and Lwów”, “Long live Mikołajczyk” and “To hell with the Lublin Committee” echoed in the night. At midnight the Polish National Anthem was sung and shots were, unwisely, fired in the air.

The New Year began with a rude awakening. German tanks approached, firing as they went. Machine gun bullets struck the barn and ‘Warta’ gave the Freston team instructions for escaping. His men, about 25 of them, held off four tanks, half trucks and lorries containing about 60 Germans before breaking off the engagement and leaving burning buildings behind them. One of the number named ‘Janusz’ had been killed.

They arrived in Dudki and met the local battalion commander. In conversation, he told them he had little interest in the Government in Exile but considered the replacing of Mikołajczyk was a bad move and the establishment of a very anti-Soviet Arciszewski would mean little chance of a future solution. They later returned to Katarzyna, collected equipment and buried ‘Janusz’ with full military honours. They then set off for Mały Jacków where they spent the rest of the morning. German gendarmerie in the neighbouring village caused them to move into the forest but later they returned to the village and met the commander of

the Częstochowa Inspectorate. At dinner Freston learned more of the opinions of the Polish people.

During the evening they travelled another three kilometres to a large house where they were greeted at the door by a small thick set man who said "I am the General", it was Okulicki. Inside they found Rudkowski and a few other officers. Okulicki said he had no objections to communism providing it was not controlled by the Russians. He was very aware of problems in supplying Poland and made it clear that no hard feelings were felt due to the Poles' 'disappointment'. The meeting went on well into the night ending with a buffet.
Rudkowski pointed to some bottles and asked if the team preferred vodka or bimber? The following morning saw Galbraith promoted to Company Sergeant Major, an achievement for one so young, and Solly-Flood to Lt. Colonel. It would have meant little as the team moved to Redzini, where an old man and his wife moved into their kitchen in order for Freston to occupy the two remaining rooms. Here they met several young men and women, one of whom had been a nurse in Warsaw during the uprising. They also met a farmer (name Siemieński) who gave information about a small resistance group he was involved with. Here also two AK officers were attached to the mission, code named 'Alm' and 'Jerzy' . In the evening Warta and Jerzy told them that the Germans were planning a round-up for the following morning so they should move on to Jacków. On arrival in Jacków they stayed with a very poor family. Before leaving Hudson gave the people some gold sovereigns but they appeared confused as to what to do with them.

The next move put them on an estate run by Poles but owned by Germans with a large mansion once owned by a black marketeer. Hudson spoke to those attending and proposed a toast to Churchill, Roosevelt, Mikołajczyk and Stalin.

The mention of Stalin's name brought a shout of 'NO' and cries of protest. Hudson was visibly shaken and surprise from all of the Freston team except Currie who later told Hudson a thing or two about Soviet feelings amongst the Poles. When Solly-Flood later spoke to Currie all Currie said was "I told you so".

During the next few days the German airforce was active in the area trying to stop the Soviet advance. When Soviet tanks were reported nearby Jerzy arrived with an invitation to Włynica for an evening party at his sister's house. When they arrived they were surprised to discover that Jerzy's sister was the beautiful woman they had met there earlier. Again the house was full of people with lots of food, vodka and champagne. Amid the music and dancing Freston met two AK officers one of whom was a deputy inspector of the Częstochowa inspectorate. He explained he was there in accordance with standing orders and his unit was to disband and lie low awaiting the Russians. He asked if Freston was prepared to take out with them an envoy. Hudson agreed but made it clear he would not make false statements to the Soviets about him. The envoy would either be Jerzy or Alm, real names Szymon Zaremba and Józef Kasza-Kowalski, who argued for two hours who should go. As Kowalski was recently engaged to be married it was decided that Zaremba would go despite wanting to stay in Poland. Hudson decided they would soon seek out the Russians and make themselves known to them. If any AK wanted to go with them they could although Freeston was not able to guarantee their safety. Hudson said he would pass on their names once back in London.

At about mid-night the party broke up. Madame Rubachowa headed north, true to her prophecy, to find her husband. Freston moved back to Katarzyna with Warta for the remainder of the night. The next day Kemp observed a constant stream of transport and gun fire was heard in the near distance. Around 70% of

the transport had been supplied under lend/lease from the Americans. Hudson said that he considered the work of his escort was done but Warta said his orders were to assure Freston of safety and as there were still Germans and Vlasov's Cossacks in the area he would stay a little longer.

Hudson decided to make contact with the Russians the following day but when he heard that Okulicki might be just south of his position he sent Solly-Flood, Currie and Zaremba to find him. They travelled in a cart through a forested area and when Zaremba spotted movement in the trees the three went to investigate. They were surprised to be confronted by about 200 German SS troops hiding from the Russians. Solly-Flood considered that they had no fight left in them and was proved correct as the team was not impeded or fired upon. They continued past the Germans eventually reaching a road which they joined travelling east.

When the three reached their destination they found it over-run by a Russian tank brigade. Solly-Flood and Currie left Zarmba by the cart and it was explained to the Russians that they were British Officers. Currie said in Russian that they want to speak to the Commanding General. They were told that the Russians had no information about them from high Command. Solly-Flood told the Russians of the others currently in Katarzyna.

They were questioned by a Lt General and a Colonel of the NKVD the latter asking them why they were spying on the Red Army, and asking who were the commanders of the AK?

Solly-Flood said that as far as he knew the Home Army had been disbanded and he resented the spying accusation. For some unknown reason Zaremba had been excluded from all interrogation, possibly because he had remained outside.

In the meantime Hudson saw Russian soldiers and beckoned them over to him, spoke to them in Russian and showed them his identity papers. All seemed

content at first. The following day a truck containing an escort and Tony Currie picked Hudson's team up and took them to Russian HQ in Żytno. Currie told Hudson not to expect handshakes vodka and caviar. Following questioning, during which the Russians gave every indication of not believing them, they were reunited with Solly-Flood and Zaremba. As the Russians did not know anything about Zaremba, and as the team knew the Soviets had been given the names of all on the British Mission, they decided to tell the Russians that he was Alun Morgan. It was as well that the Russians didn't question his identity as a supposed British officer as he spoke no English and had no papers. They were eventually taken to Częstochowa were they were imprisoned in the old Gestapo jail where they remained for 24 hours, fed with gruel and rye bread. They were insulted and not allowed to use the toilet when they wanted.

Zaremba complained that for 5 years under the Germans he had not suffered from lice but within 5 hours under the Russians he did.

Hudson continued to demand that their plight was reported to their commanding General, Koniev and wanted paper in order to write to him to complain of the poor treatment they were receiving as allies. The Major in charge of them seemed impressed that Hudson knew the General's name and they were soon moved to better quarters and given better food. The Major tried to be more friendly but Hudson ignored him except to demand to speak to an officer of his own rank. Eventually this came to pass and he saw a Russian colonel named Semonov and left him in no doubt about his opinion of the way Freston had been treated. Hudson gained the impression that the Russians had been operating under orders but the Colonel was afraid to admit it. While exercising in the yard one day a British POW spoke to Hudson. A Russian Lt saw them speaking and tried to push the POW away. Hudson saw red and grabbed the Russian by the collar and "shook

him like a terrier shakes a rat', others came to the Russian's assistance but Hudson released him and demanded again to speak to the Colonel.
In the meantime in London, Perkins was informed that Moscow sent word that Freston was in the hands of the Red Army and that they were safe.
Six days after the news reached London Hudson was told Freston would soon be leaving by air for Moscow. They flew at low level with two en-route stops arriving eventually at Kiev where they boarded a train arriving in Moscow on 17th February. The Soviet Major traveling with them arranged transport and, following a short stop at Lubyanka prison, which caused Currie's heart to stop briefly, they arrived at the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs. Here they slumped into comfortable chairs and the Major said goodbye.

After some delay a British officer came into the room saying "So glad to see you chaps, I hope I haven't kept you too long". He called out their names and all replied "Yes" (in unison). Kemp asked if they would be passed back to the Russians. The officer replied "Of course not, why should you". and he told them their weapons had been returned. A car then took them to a British Headquarters in Moscow and Hudson asked when they were informed that Freston was in the hands of the Russians. The Officer replied that they knew three days earlier. The Russians told them the team had just found them in Poland and that they were flying them directly back to Moscow. "I hope you had a good trip". They were put in the care of a receptionist named Natasha and were able to bathe and change their dirty uniforms. Messages passed to and from London and Hudson worried in case the Russians found out that Zaremba was a Pole. Perkins signalled back to the HQ, "Tell them this man was an assistant and interpreter to the mission. When we informed you that the real Morgan didn't proceed to the field did you pass this on to the Russians? If so be careful about his cover". Apart from one occasion when

the Russians tried to pluck Zaremba off the street, but failed when he drew his pistol, Freston enjoyed themselves with the night life in Moscow, for which they had to pay once back in England. On their return to England the Freston team was dined at the Polish General Staff's headquarters, the Rubens Hotel. Eventually they went their separate ways and the Polish Government in Exile faded into political obscurity. Unable to obtain an exit permit from Russia, Zaremba finally came to England in the company of the British Ambassador where he remained.

Freston did not achieve what it set out to do, partly because it was so late being deployed. It did however give the British Government an insight into Soviet ways that were not previously known and certainly not appreciated by the British. Only the Poles really knew this. It did perhaps make the British realise that the Polish Government in Exile was not as popular in Poland as had first been thought. It was very important to the Home Army but failed to make a similar impression on the population as a whole. The reason Freston was held up for so long is probably because the Russians didn't want them to pass on what they had learned until the conference at Yalta had concluded but which would have probably made little difference to the outcome.

Sources: The National Archive, London Ref. HS4/247/8/9/250.

Jeffrey Bines, Operation Freston, The British Military Mission to Poland, 1944, Saffron Walden 1999.

With thanks for personal recollections to: Antoni Pospieszalski aka Tony Currie;
Szymon Zaremba aka Lt Jerzy, Vera Long - Assistant to Harold Perkins.

Dr. Andrzej Suchcitz PhD., FRHist.S. Educated at Divine Mercy College Fawley Court, Forest Hill Comprehensive, he studied history at the University of London (School of Slavonic and East European Studies). Since 1983 Assistant Keeper and since 1989 Keeper of Archives of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum and the Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945) Study Trust. He has written extensively on Polish political and military history of the 20th century. Andrzej is the author, co-author, editor and co-editor of nearly 300 books and articles in Polish and English. He was a member of the Anglo-Polish Historical Committee concerning wartime co-operation between the two intelligence services. His English language publications include *"Poland's contribution to the Allied Victory in the Second world War"* (1995, 1996, 2011), co-editing and contributing chapters to: E.R.Sword, *"The Diaries and Despatches of a Military Attache in Warsaw 1939-1939*" (London 2001); *"General Władysław Sikorski, Poland's wartime leader"* (London2007*); "General Władysław Anders. Soldier and Leader of the Free Poles in Exile"* (London- 2008).

Dr. Paul Latawski is a Senior Lecturer in the Defence and International Affairs Department, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He is a Senior Associate in the Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom and an Associate Fellow in the European Security Programme at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (RUSI), London. He completed his Ph.D. at Indiana University USA. His principal research interests include security sector reform in post conflict peace building and state-building and the problems associated with both historical and contemporary coalition military operations. He has also written on NATO enlargement, Polish defence transformation, sub-regional co-operation, nationalism and Balkan conflict.

Dr. Jeffrey Bines is a retired airline pilot who became interested in the Polsh section of SOE following his investigation into their activities at Audley End House, the section's wartime training station. He subsequently published an account of the British Miitary Mission to Poland in 1944 *"Operation Freston".* Whilst continuing his researches, he was invited to carry out post graduate studies by the Polish History Department of the University of Stirling where he was awarded a PhD, his thesis being the "*British Perspective of the Polish S.O.E.'s Country Section"*.

He is Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Gun Makers in the City of London. He was awarded the Polish Gold Cross of Merit in 2001.

Dr. Bogdan Rowinski, graduated from the University of Warsaw. Son of General Anders Polish Second Corps, Soldier and former Soviet prisoner from Workuta. He is dedicated to commemorating and remembering the effort of Polish Forces during WWII. Founder and President of the Foundation of the Silent & Unseen Home Army Parachutists. Professional career at J. Walter Thompson, McCann-Erickson, General Motors and Ströer. He has recently worked as Marketing Advisor to the Vice Chancellor of the School of Economics in Warsaw.

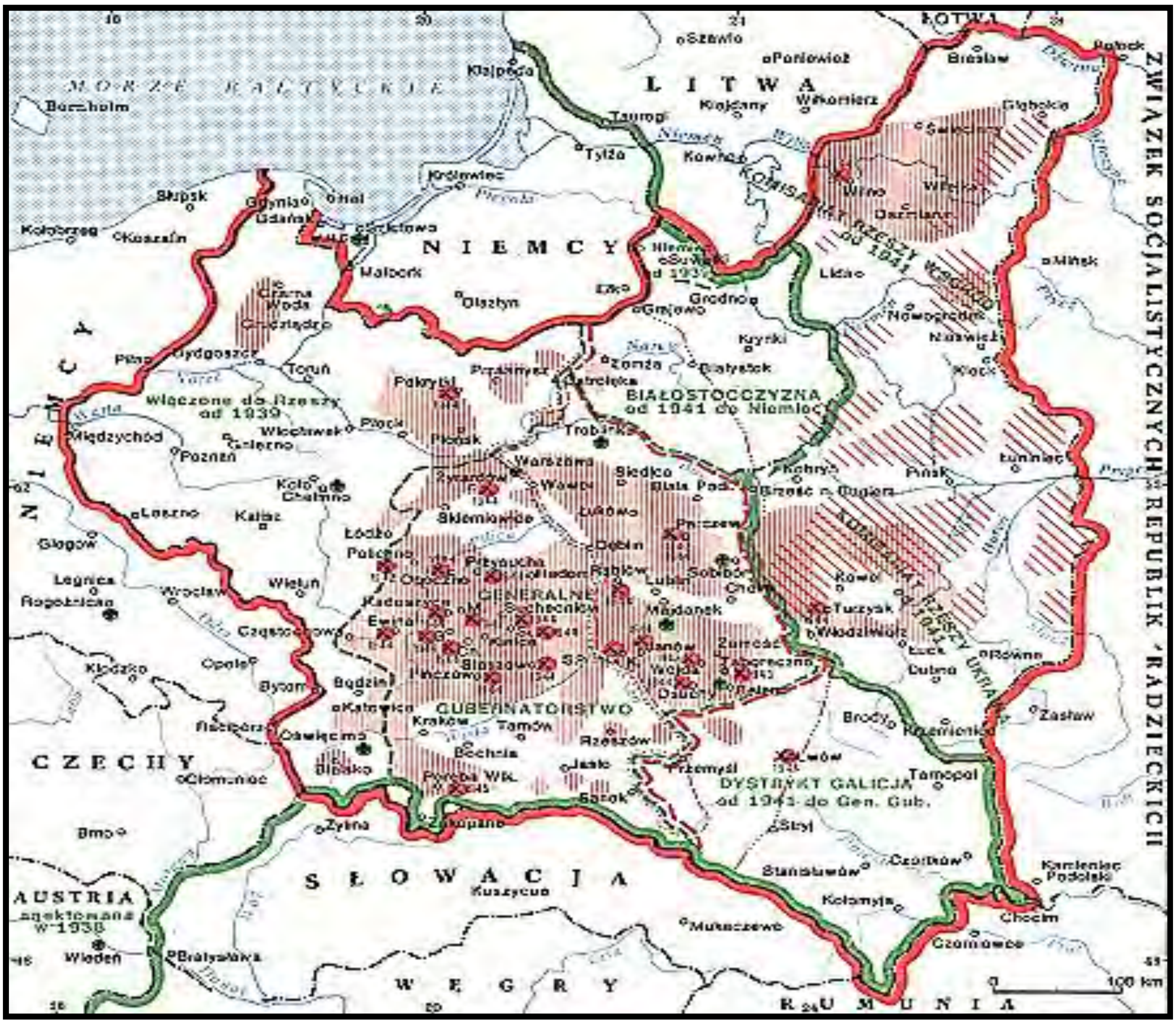
Col. Michael Russell MA MBA FCILT MCGI graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1978. He has spent the majority of his 35 year career serving with British Airborne Forces when at Regimental Duty. He has served in Northern Ireland, Central Africa, Kosovo and Iraq. He is a Trustee of the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Museum and has a keen interest in military history. He was the Commander, Aldershot Garrison, traditionally known as the 'Home of the British Army'. Col. Michael Russell continues working as a Trustee of the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Museum, also former Commander of MOD's Defence Logistic School. In 2013 Col Russell was invited to write a biography of Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski, the Polish Airborne Brigade commander at Arnhem.

Dr. Marek Stella-Sawicki MBE KM served as a Chairman of the Polish Armed Forces War Memorial Project in National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire 2008-09, Chairman of Fryderyk Chopin Memorial Committee at Southbank Centre 2010-11, Chairman Polish Heritage Society UK 2010, Video Press Falklands Appeal in 1982. Association Polonaise des Chevaliers de Malte UK, Chairman 2012, Knight of Grace and Devotion SMOM 2008, Polish Army Gold Medal 2010, Officer's Cross Polonia Restituta 2010, Officer's Cross Pro Merito Melitensi 2011, UK Airborne Forces Association Medal Utrinque Paratus-Ad Unum Omnes 2013. He obtained his Ph.D from King's College, London 1974 -1978. Awarded MBE on Her Majesty Birthday's Honours List 2012. Military History at University of Buckingham 2013. He is visiting Professor at UCL since 2007. In 2013 he produced a documentary film on the Polish story of the Battle of Arnhem, covering the fate of Major General Stanisław Sosabowski CBE and the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade at Arnhem and Driel, Sept. 1944, featuring interviews with Brigade Major Tony Hibbert MBE, MC and Sir Brian Urquhart KCMG MBE head of Intelligence at Arnhem.

Eugenia Maresh BSc is a committee member and Chairwoman of the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust (1939-1945) in London. Mrs. Maresh is the author of: *"Katyn 1940: The Documentary Evidence of the West's Betrayal"* published in June, 2010. The mass murder of 22,000 Poles by the Soviet NKVD at Katyn is one of the most shocking events of the Second World War and its political implications are still being felt today. Information surrounding Katyn came to light with Russian *perestroika*, which made it possible to disclose a key document indicating the circumstances of the massacre. The bitter dispute is ongoing between the Russian and Polish governments, to declassify the rest of the documents and concede to the genocide perpetrated by the Soviets. She was also a member of the Anglo-Polish Historical Committee.

Mr. Chris Januszewski is the committee member of Polsh Heritge Society UK. In 2013 he helped to organise the very complex logistics of the 1st two day Conference on the Polish Military Leadership at the RCDS (Royal College of Defence Studies) in conjunction with BCMH (British Commission for Military History). This 2 day event was an outstanding success, from which the two 2016 conferences are effectively derived. The first one is the Polish Section of SOE or the Cichociemni event in June 2016 and later on in the year, on 15th October, The Falaise Gap and General Stanislaw Maczek conference is to be held at the Embassy of the Polish Republic in London. Chris is the proud son of a 1939 Polish Cavalry Officer who takes a family historic traditions very seriously. Without his commitment and time freely given, PHS UK conferences would not be the same.

General John Drewienkiewicz (General DZ) CB was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1966 and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in 1968, captain in 1972 major in 1978, lieutenant colonel in 1984 and colonel in 1988. Promotion to brigadier came on 31 December 1989, with seniority from 30 June 1989. Drewienkiewicz attained general officer rank with promotion to acting major general on 15 December 1994 and was appointed Engineer in Chief (Army). He was granted the substantive rank of major general on 25 April 1995 with seniority from 1 July 1994. He was appointed to the NATO role of Director of Support at Joint Force Command Brunssum on 28 July 1995 and to the honorary role of Colonel Commandant, Corps of Royal Engineers in 1997. In 1998 he served as military assistant to the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and was appointed Companion of the Order of the Bath.



Geography of the Occupation of Poland: 1939 -1944. German annexation of Polish territory into the Reich of 92,000 sq km with a population of 10.1 million. 923,000 Poles were expelled into the General Government *Generalgouvernement* (General Government), with the Polish territory of 142,000 sq km and a population of 16 million. Annexed by the Soviet Union was 202,069 sq km with a population of over 13 million. Soviet NKVD mass deportations of 1.2 to 1.5 million Poles followed.

Top picture: Audley End House also know as Station 43 with the memorial urn placed in the West Park in 1983, dedicated to the officers and men of the Polish Section of S.O.E. which trained there during WWII. Bottom picture**:** Station 43 veterans and their families at Audley End in 1998 (the fourth person from the right is Dr Jeremy Bines and the last on the right is Captain Alan (Alfons) Maćkowiak who was not only an S.O.E./*Cichociemny* but also served in the para's in the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade at Arnhem in September 1944.

Top picture: Polish S.O.E. operatives and the future AK soldiers in Poland, disembarking at the front entrance of Audley End House. Bottom picture: The rooms in Audley End House served many purposes: training, forging documents, making disguises and for administration and accommodation.

Top left: Commander Jan Piwnik “Ponury” – an iconic Polish Underground picture. Jan Piwnik was a Polish World War II soldier, *a S.O.E./Cichociemny* and a notable leader of the Home Army in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains. He used the code names: “Ponury” and “Donat”. Top right and bottom pictures show the “*in between”* combat time, showing Polish Underground scenes from the few and rather rare happier moments.

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Operation Freston - Somewhere in Poland

We wish to thank Dr Jeffrey Bines for supplying the reproduction of the illustration by Gary M. Bines, used here as an illustration to the Chapter 6 - Operation Freston.

Appendix 1

Radio communications between GHQ London and the AK (Home Army) network

From the summer of 1940 until the end of 1942, the Polish GHQ communications between Poland and London UK (Polish II Bureau Military Intelligence and Polish VI Bureau) were based on direct communications with the Home Army in Poland using the dedicated radio network operated from the Stanmore area. From 1943, individual radio stations in the Stanmore area were consolidated into a communications centre at Barnes Lodge near Kings Langley. The cryptology sections were also moved to Boxmore near Felden. Radio communications with Poland were linked into flights to Poland, initially from the UK and later from southern Italy. In addition to Barnes Lodge, an additional radio centre was set up in Conington near Cambridge and another unit in Latiano, Italy. All these military units co-operated and maintained contact with Poland and London. There were other channels of communications with Poland operated by individual Polish ministries, in addition to the BBC transmissions to Poland. The clandestine network of radio stations in Poland were called *"Wandas"* communicating with Barnes Lodge and the *"Mewa"* station in Italy. The individual transmitting sessions were approx. 60 minutes long. The frequencies used were approved and controlled by the British and the strict control of the quartz crystals used was in place for broadcasting stability and frequency accuracy. During the Warsaw Rising, from August to the end of September 1944, the Warsaw based *"Błyskawica"* or *"Lightning"* Station was in daily use by the HQ of the Home Army (AK) and also for clandestine transmission and programmes of the improvised Polish Radio. One of the best-known speakers of *"Błyskawica"* in Warsaw was Zbigniew Jasiński, code name *"Rudy"* a soldier-poet of the AK and the author of the famous poem of the Warsaw Rising: *"We demand Ammunition".* In the summer of 1944 there were 12 *"Wandas"* operating in the Warsaw area and connected to the district HQ's of the Home Army. Additionally, there were more than 45 *"Wandas"* in the field located elsewhere in Poland. There were many Polish Signals officers and NCO's despatched to Poland, trained in the UK. Losses amongst these men were very high. After the Warsaw Rising, radio communications to Poland continued at the regional Home Army HQ's but reduced significantly with the arrival of the Soviet Red Army at the beginning of 1945. The possession of any radio equipment, including the *"normal"* pre-war radio receivers was forbidden under German occupation.

Appendix 2

"Pipsztok (Peepshtock)" Polish designed & built Transmitter/Receiver Type AP5

When the Second World War broke out, the British Army Royal Signals were ill equipped. The very small *"Peepshtock"* Transmitter - Receiver was developed before the war by Tadeusz Heftman at AVA company in Warsaw, Poland. By 1942 the British War Office Procurement Directorate happily adopted *"Peepshtock"* or *"Pipsztok"* in Polish - models: AP2, 3, 4 and finaly AP5 and the total production numbers reached nearly 1000 sets built in the UK, of which 600 sets were destined for MI6 and S.O.E., whilst 400 for Polish use. By 1943 it was confirmed that the *"Peepshtock"* operating frequency range of 2-8 MHz for a reliable communication with Poland was insufficient and a new proposed frequency band of 2-16 MHz was adopted, with the optimum frequency for this type of radio communications being confirmed as 12 MHz. The other less known reason for this Tx/Rx design popularity, was the fact, that when these sets were dropped by parachute, much less equipment was damaged on impact when compared with other units of the same period, due to their very robust design and a physical construction.

The Morse key was integral to the TX/RX design, however the use of an external Morse key was still possible. The Tx (Transmitter) antenna power output was on average 10 Watts. The external source of electricity was: Mains 120-220 Volts AC. The dimensions of the set were: 280 x 210 x 95 mm and the unit weight was 5.0 Kg. The complement of five valves was as follows: RF-6K8, IF-6SJ7, AF-6SC7, 6L6 and 5Z4 (rectifier). *Source: Zbigniew S. Siemaszko, „Peepshtock", Zeszyty Historyczne No. 98, Paris, France, 1991.*

In addition to the *"Peepshtock"* AP series, the Stanmore based Polish Military Radio Workshops produced a BP series TX/RX of much larger power ie. 30 Watts. All the mentioned radio equipment types were in very high demand for MI6 and S.O.E. use. Stanmore also produced a miniature TX capable of approx. 3 watts operating at 3.5-9 MHz frequency. Out of the *"Peepshtock"* quantity of 214 units dispatched to Poland in the 2nd half of 1944, losses in transit amounted to 44 TX/RX (20.56 %).