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THE POLISH GOVERNMENT DELEGATION. THE MAIN PART OF THE POLISH UNDERGROUND STATE

The text is an attempt to summarize the organizational achievements as well as various activities of the civil structure of the Polish Underground State from 1939-1945. Conspiracy governmental administration, which was exceptionally effective in the occupation, represented, apart from the underground armed forces of the Home Army, the strength and uniqueness of the Polish underground on the scale of the struggling Europe. The secret governmental administration (Delegation of Government to the Country) focused both on the central and the local level on propaganda, information, intelligence, education, self-help, civil protection, but also on the planning of post-war reforms and structural changes of a social and economic nature. This article discusses the process of forming a national government delegation at central level under the direction of successive plenipotentiaries of the government. The structure of the government's secret agenda has also been described, showing its departments and secreted units. Similarly, the area network, i.e. the regional (provincial) delegations have been presented. In addition, the issue of cooperation between the civilian conspiracy and the most important element of the war-ground state, namely the military conspiracy - the Home Army, was signaled. The text ends with reference to the "Storm" action of summer 1944 and the dissolution of the Polish military and civilian underground in the first half of 1945.

Keywords: The Polish Underground State, The Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile, The Government Delegation for the Republic of Poland, The Home Army.

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Poland was the first European state to stand up to Nazi Germany which attacked her together with Soviet Russia in September 1939. In accordance with agreements concluded between the aggressor powers in August 23 and September 28, Poland was divided into two occupied zones, along the so called Ribbentrop-Molotov line (which meant the 4th partition of Poland). Though the shock caused by the defeat was considerable, the entire Polish nation wanted to carry on the fight against the aggressors. The Polish resistance at first arose spontaneously under various names, all over the occupied country.

Both the Germans and the Soviets treated occupied Poland's cultural tradition with exceptional brutality. They tried to choke and paralyse its rich resources, destroy its nationally conscious and unyielding intelligentsia. 'Sonderaktion Krakau' on 6th November 1939 symbolised the infliction of German terror on the Polish academic world, but the Soviets also had their version of 'intelligenzaktion'. In response, a cultural self-defence emerged. Alongside the underground military and political resistance, a struggle for cultural legacy began.

The long tradition of struggles for independence was conducive to their creation. Polish military resistance coalesced round a secret organisation named 'Service for Victory'. During 1939-1940 civilian underground authorities were set up in Poland. In 1940 military and civilian authorities, together with the political parties cooperating with them, constituted the Polish Underground State. The Underground State is the Polish speciality of occupied Europe. The Polish Underground State which functioned under the German occupation in the Second World War was an unique phenomenon in the whole history of European resistance movements. During the Second World War the Polish Underground State was based on a collection of political and military organisations striving for independence. These were formed throughout Polish territories, then under German and Soviet occupation.

Already in the autumn of 1939 measures were taken to appoint an underground central administrative authority that would be a continuation of the pre-war state administration. The Statute of 'Service for Victory' in Poland referred to the necessity of creating 'a provisional national authority on home territory'. Likewise General Wladyslaw Sikorski's cabinet endeavoured to establish a governmental executive organ in occupied Poland. At the start of 1940 it was decided that a home territories civilian commissioner would be granted ministerial prerogatives and hold the position of the Government-in-Exile's delegate (plenipotentiary).

Expectancy of the imminent defeat of the occupying powers and a repetition of the Great War 1914-1918 scenario hastened the construction of a government administration ready to take over control of a liberated and 'unclaimed Polish land'. The tasks of such an organisation were to include: cooperating with the Government-in-Exile (allied to France and since 1940 only Great Britain) and the 'Union for Armed Warfare' (later the 'Home Army'); participating in the planning of a general rising; consolidating the Polish community and directing its resistance to the German-Soviet occupation. The defeat of France put the idea of such a rising on the back burner, and it was to remain there until the Second Front was opened. The situation seemed auspicious in June 1941, when the Germans swept deep into Russia thereby also bringing the territories of Poland under one occupant only.

The project of forming a home delegature came into being in France in February 1940. Two months later the Polish Underground State set about establishing its own administration of justice system. On 16 June 1940 Col. Jan Skorobahaty-Jakubowski, the

Provisional Delegate of the Government-in-Exile, arrived in Warsaw. Soon afterwards a Joint Government Delegation was appointed, comprising representatives of the 'big four' political parties – the Polish Socialist Party, National Party, Peasants' Party and Labour Movement – and the Commander-in-Chief of the 'Union for the Armed Warfare'. In September 1940, however, members of this Joint Government Delegation decided that 'only one representative should be responsible for the Government's work'.

The first candidate for the post of the Chief Government Delegate was Cyryl Ratajski, former Minister of Internal Affairs. His nomination, on 3 December 1940, marked the end of a lengthy and complicated stage in the installing of the Government Delegation. Henceforth there functioned in the Polish Underground State – alongside the military organisations as well as the understanding reached among the various political parties and movements – a home representation of the Government-in-Exile. Its existence emphasized the continuity of the government institutions of the Polish Republic as well as the aspiration to regain independence and sovereignty.

The underground parliament was a representation of the most important political parties and groupings (the Political Consultative Committee – the Political Representation at Home) which in the period 1944-45 took the name of the Council of National Unity. In the underground parliament the more important political parties were represented: the Peasants' Party, the Polish Socialist Party, the National Party and smaller groupings.

Summer of 1942 the Government accepted the president's decree regarding the provisional government on Polish territories. Unfortunately, soon afterwards Ratajski had to resign from his post as Chief Government Delegate for health reasons. His successor, Jan Piekalkiewicz of the Peasants' Party, took up office on 17 September 1942. However, on 19 February 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo and subsequently tortured during interrogation and killed. The next Government Plenipotentiary was Jan Stanislaw Jankowski. On 9 January 1944 the Council of National Unity was formed, which functioned as the parliament of the Polish Underground State. The declaration of the Council of National Unity's programme entitled 'What the Polish Nation is fighting for' set out the Polish Republic's main war objectives as well as its social and economic policies for the post-war period. From the spring of 1944 Government Delegate Jankowski was elevated to the position of Vice-Premier. Nominated by the Home Council of Ministers, which reconvened in the summer of that same year, were three deputies of the Government Delegate: Adam Bien, Stanislaw Jasiukowicz and Antoni Pajdak.

The Delegation had a complex structure. Various departments of the Home Delegation, which had powers equivalent to those of government ministries, now functioned with increasing efficiency. The central offices of the Delegation included: the Presidential Department, the Department of Internal Affairs, Justice Department, Employment and Social Welfare Department, Agriculture Department, Treasury Department, Trade and Industry Department, Postal and Telegraph Services Department, the Department for Eliminating the Consequences of War, Transport Department, Press and Information Department, Department of Public Works and Reconstruction, Department of Education and Culture and the Department of National Defence.

In 1942 began the construction of territorial networks. The Polish territories were divided into 16 regions, each under the charge of a local foreman and specially appointed municipal delegations. At the start of 1944 the personnel of the Government Delegation's 'administrative network' included some 15,000 people. Most of these workers were not active in the underground military organisations because of their age. On the other hand,

people's professional qualifications and work experience were also taken into account during recruitment.

The most important tasks for the Government Delegation's were clandestine press, secret education and justice, and civilian action against the German. Other duties included not only preparations for taking over civilian control once the occupation was ended but also protecting cultural and economic property from being looted by the enemy, propaganda and charity work. The Government Delegation's security apparatus was now also functioning efficiently. They included: the main underground police force called the State Security Corps; the Self-Government Guard, which was the underground territorial police and the Citizens' Guard. Special Commissions for the Study and Registration of the Occupant's Crimes in Poland (cryptonym 'Forget-me-nots'), founded at the start of 1944, were set the mission of gathering and examining acts of terror and crimes committed in occupied territories. The Department of Press and Information played a specific role in countering the occupying power's propaganda with truthful news and thus also providing hope and instilling the will to fight. This department also edited 'Rzeczpospolita Polska', the Government Delegation's official newspaper.

On 27 September 1942 the Government Delegation called into being the Konrad Zegota Provisional Committee, whose mission was to provide comprehensive help to the Jewish population. In December this committee became the Council for the Helping of Jews. The Delegation also had its own judicial apparatus functioning in Polish territories, including Special Civil Courts and 'Underground Struggle Judicial Commissions', which made sure that underground codes of conduct were adhered to. These courts had the right to infamise as well as issue death sentences, reprimands or cautions. Around the beginning of 1944 the functioning of the various departments and regions under the Delegation's jurisdiction was considerably strengthened by the merging together of the AK's military administration – 'portfolio'. Thus the Polish Government-in-Exile's underground branch took over what were by then well-disciplined teams of professionals experienced in conspiratorial work.

In 1943 the Polish Underground State entered a new phase. The Commander of the Home Army has been arrested by Gestapo. At Katyn near Smolensk were uncovered the mass grave of Polish officers. The Allies went over to the offensive in Russia, Italy and the Far East. It was no longer a question of whether the war would be won by the Allies, but when it would be won. As the end approached the situation of the Polish government was difficult. Nevertheless General Sikorski the Polish prime minister still believed that, with the help of Churchill and Roosevelt, he would be able to come to terms with Stalin. He continued to believe that the Western Allies would sooner or later bring their influence to bear on the side of Poland.

The government issued the resistance with new directives to guide its activities during the approaching German defeat. The government stated that it might at some future date order the resistance to stage 'an insurrection' against the Germans, or alternatively to promote an 'intensified sabotage diversion' operation according to the strategic and political situation. The aim of the rising was to free Poland from the Germans and assume political power on behalf of the government, of which an important condition would be Anglo-American help.

In October 1943 the government issued the resistance with new directives to guide its activities during the approaching German defeat. In accordance with the government's instructions the policy to be adopted towards the advancing Soviet forces was

complicated. The directives laid down the principle that, if Soviet-Polish relations were still not restored at the time of the Soviet entry into Poland, the Home Army should act only behind the German lines and remain underground in the areas under Soviet control until further orders from the underground. The decision to conceal the Home Army was a dangerous proposition because, in all probability, it would have led to an open clash with the Soviet security forces with tragic consequences. The instruction contained a contradiction of which its authors appeared unaware. The 'intensified sabotage-diversion' was intended to be a political demonstration, but if the Soviet Union entered Poland, it would have to be carried out as a clandestine action, with units, which had been involved in fighting the Germans going underground again. The government was demanding that the Home Army first perform an active role and then disappear, a course which invited the hostility of both the German and Soviet forces.

In accordance with the government's instructions the policy to be adopted towards the advancing Soviet forces was complicated. General Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, received these unrealistic orders with dissatisfaction and decided to ignore them. He ordered his men engaged in action with the Germans to reveal themselves to the Soviet forces and 'manifest the existence of Poland'. He believed that otherwise all the Home Army operations against the Germans would be credited to the communists.

The Home Army was to stage 'an intensified diversionary operation', which received the code name of 'Tempest'. The state of the German forces was to determine which of these alternatives was to be adopted. In 1943 the Government and the Commander in Chief and the Commander of the Polish Home Army considered the plan for a general uprising against the German Forces in the final phase of the war, with special consideration given to the probable Soviet military position and political intentions. The Home Army was to stage either 'general and simultaneous insurrection' or 'an intensified diversionary operation', which received the code name of 'Tempest'. In February 1944 Bor-Komorowski's decision to reveal the Home Army to the Soviet forces was approved by the government. The state of the German forces was to determine which of these alternatives was to be adopted. The insurrection was to be undertaken at the moment of German collapse, whereas 'Tempest' was to be launched during a German general retreat from Poland. 'Tempest' was to begin in the east and move westwards as military operations moved into Poland. The essence of the 'Tempest' plan was a number of consecutive uprisings initiated in each area as the German retreat began, rather than a synchronized operation beginning in all areas simultaneously. The Home Army was to conduct its operations independently of the Red Army in view of the suspension of diplomatic relations. The success of 'Tempest' depended above all on timing. Premature engagement with the German forces unassisted by the Red Army could turn Polish attacks into disaster. The Home Army had to wait for the last hours of the German retreat.

Operation 'Tempest' was a series of anti-Nazi local uprisings. Operation Tempest was aimed at seizing control of cities and areas occupied by the Germans while they were preparing their defenses against the Red Army. The government believed that the Home Army operations would result either in securing political power for itself in Poland, or the intervention of the Western Powers on its behalf, and would defend the cause of Poland against the USSR. This view contained a strong element of wishful thinking.

The Government Delegation came with operation 'Tempest' in the summer of 1944, when all the organisations within the Polish Underground state were to spring into action

and come out into the open. It was assumed that once Germany was defeated, the AK commanders, 'together with the now revealed Representative of the Administrative Authority', would take on the role of hosts to Soviet troops on Polish territory. The Government Delegation's special tasks included: controlling the political situation, activating administrative offices at all levels and reconstructing Polish social order. Soviet policy, however, forced the Polish Underground to change its agenda. At the start of July 1944 the Warsaw HQ forbade the Delegation's (local) *powiat* units to reveal themselves 'unless a Polish-Soviet agreement is reached before the arrival of Soviet troops.' All the executive branches of the Government administration, especially the police and intelligence gathering units, were to remain in hiding.

In summer of 1944 the German occupation turned out to be the start of a new occupation – this time by the Soviets. Despite the Delegation and AK's efforts, operation 'Tempest' could not succeed. It was foiled by Soviet terror. The functioning of the Polish Underground State was halted at the most critical moment. The decline of the Government Delegation corresponded to the mood of the Polish community in general. By the spring of 1945 the conduct of the USSR, 'our allies' ally', had led to mounting fear among the Poles. At the same time there was some hope that the restoration of a democratic state could be achieved.

The Government Home Delegation was an underground state organisation of great significance. It had consolidated resistance to the occupant and influenced the stance of the Polish people. It functioned despite the terrible conditions of wartime occupation, thus earning the respect of the Poles and spreading fear among the Germans. The Chief Delegate (who was also a Vice-Premier), regional delegates and local delegates were all rightful representatives of the pre-war Polish Republic. Naturally, it never acquired the fame of the Polish Home Army. Its conspiratorial work was less well known, the bureaucratic nature of its mission was less appealing to the public imagination and it simply lacked the qualities that would make it as legendary as the Home Army. Without the Government Delegation, however, there would have been no Polish Underground State. Its existence was only possible thanks to the great effort made by all of the Delegation's departments. At central, regional and local levels they carried out work that was clerical, and therefore tedious, but an essential part of the plan to restore a sovereign state. Their unremitting effort to maintain continuity in Polish statehood and regain independence bears testimony to what was for these conspirators an incontrovertible value.

Although Polish Underground State patronage was not a major policy priority in the years 1939-1945, it was practised on a daily basis together with spontaneous private sponsorships of scientific, literary and artistic works. In wartime conditions this primarily meant providing broad material support for academics, writers, artists and their families. A separate activity of Underground State patronage was to provide conditions in which these people could continue their work. Efforts were made to save from looting or destruction works of art in state and private collections, museums, libraries and archives.

The Polish Underground State, as the continuator of the Republic of Poland, automatically became an active patron of Polish culture, science and art. Actions to protect Polish culture were left to various homeland cells of the Government Delegation. An exceptional role was played by the Department of Culture and Art, which was put in charge of: literature, the theatre, libraries, archives, monuments, museums, music and fine

arts. A special team efficiently realized the Underground State's patronage of literature and theatre.

Wartime patronage, both from within occupied Poland and by émigré circles, was treated very seriously. The significance of protecting national culture was universally recognized. Although the lives of many artists and academics as indeed many works of art could not be saved from destruction, nowhere else in occupied Europe was underground-state and private patronage so comprehensive and effective. The Polish Underground State was free from any ideological bias and protection of items deemed to be of particular value was never motivated by political sympathies. This was a society's struggle to defend its national bonds of memory, culture and tradition.

In the face of the resumed Soviet offensive of 19 January 1945, the AK was dissolved. The civil authorities of the Polish Underground State followed suit in July 1945. The Underground State formally ceased to exist on 1st July 1945 by resolution of the National Unity Council. The experiences of the political conspiracy activists allowed the democratic principles to survive the era of communist regime. Likewise now the leaders of Polish political formations benefit from the priceless heritage of the past.

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DELEGATURA RZĄDU NA KRAJ. GŁÓWNA KOMÓRKA POLSKIEGO PAŃSTWA PODZIEMNEGO

Tekst jest próbą podsumowania dorobku organizacyjnego, a także różnorodnej aktywności cywilnej struktury Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego z okresu 1939-1945. Konspiracyjna administracja rządowa, która wyjątkowo skutecznie funkcjonowała w warunkach okupacji, stanowiła – obok podziemnej siły zbrojnej Armii Krajowej – o sile i wyjątkowości polskiego podziemia w skali całej walczącej Europy. Dokonania tajnej administracji rządowej (Delegatury Rządu na Kraj), zarówno na szczeblu centralnym jak i terenowym skupiały się na pracy propagandowej, informacyjnej, wywiadowczej, edukacyjnej, samopomocowej, ochronie ludności cywilnej, ale również na planowaniu niezbędnych po wojnie reform i zmian strukturalnych o charakterze społecznym i gospodarczym. W artykule omówiono proces formowania krajowej delegatury rządowej na szczeblu centralnym pod kierownictwem kolejnych pełnomocników rządu. Przedstawiono również strukturę tajnej agendy rządu emigracyjnego ukazując jej departamenty i wydzielone komórki. W podobnym zakresie zaprezentowano siatkę terenową, to jest delegatury okręgowe (województwie). Ponadto zasygnalizowano problematykę współpracy pomiędzy konspiracją cywilną, a najważniejszym elementem wojennego państwa podziemnego, to jest konspiracją wojskową – Armią Krajową. Tekst kończy odniesienie do akcji „Burza” z lata 1944 r. oraz rozwiązania polskiego podziemia militarnego i cywilnego w pierwszym półroczu 1945 r.

Słowa kluczowe: Polskie Państwo Podziemne, Rząd RP na emigracji, Delegatura Rządu, Armia Krajowa.

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