

KUMOSIŃSKA / KLESZCZ

OPERATION

"FREESTON"

A belated Allied mission



INSTYTUT PAMIĘCI
NARODOWEJ

Oddział w Łodzi

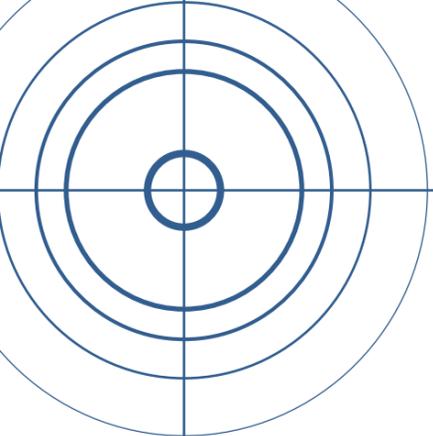


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MALPI GAJ

THE MONKEY GROVE
THE PARACHUTISTS' TRAINING CAMP

DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, POLISH SOLDIERS WERE TRAINED IN SUCH AREAS AS THE UNITED KINGDOM TO BE AIRLIFTED TO GERMAN-OCCUPIED POLAND.

if you are looking for death, please come in for a while

AT THE CAMP CREATED IN 1941 BY COL. STANISŁAW SOSABOWSKI IN THE LUNDIN LINKS PARK AND LARGO HOUSE ESTATE IN LEVEN, SCOTLAND, POLISH SOLDIERS TRAINED, SPECIFICALLY THOSE ASSIGNED TO THE 1ST INDEPENDENT PARACHUTE BRIGADE, INCLUDING 61 OF THE LATER THE SILENT UNSEEN(*).

NEXT!

GO!

RINGWAY NEAR MANCHESTER, PARACHUTE TRAINING SCHOOL.

UHH!

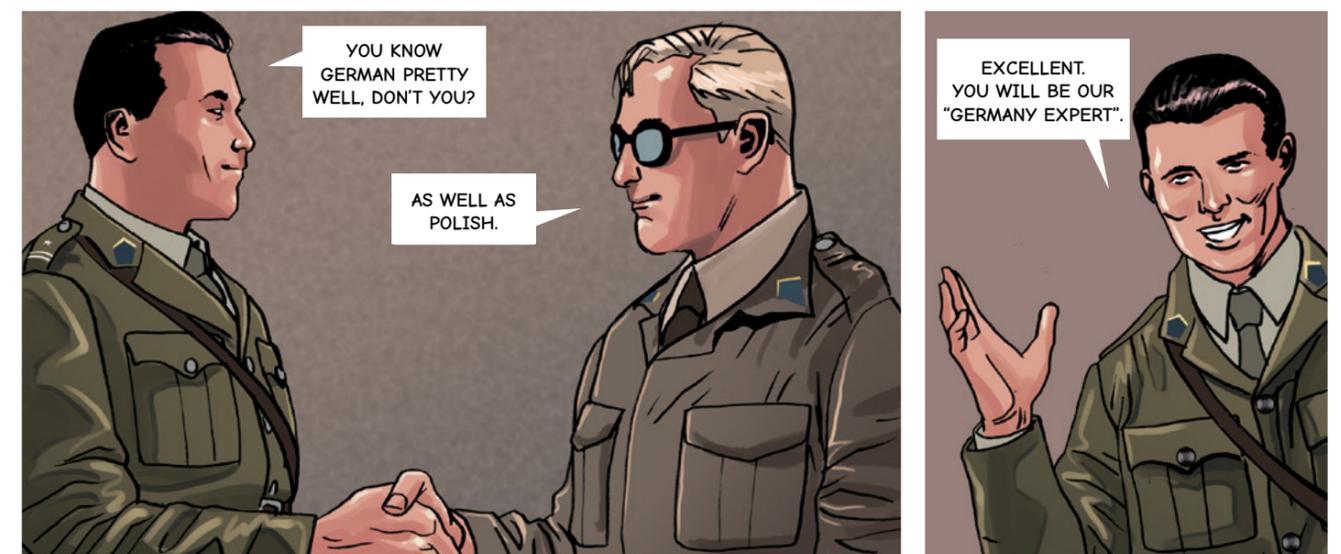
AFTER THE INITIAL PARACHUTE TRAINING AT LARGO HOUSE AND TRAINING AT STS 51 RINGWAY, TEST JUMPS WERE MADE.

(*) Polish special forces soldiers who were elite paratroopers trained in covert operations, sabotage and intelligence-gathering.





(*) Maj./Col. Józef Hartman "Sławek", "Tata", known as the father of the Silent Unseen. Before the war, he was an adjutant to President Ignacy Mościcki. From July 1941, he was a commander of the covert-operations course in STS 38 at Briggen. From September 1942, he was a Polish commander of STS 43 at Audley End. From September 1943, he headed the Training Division of the Supreme Commander's Staff. In 1944, he was a deputy head of the 6th (Special) Division of the Supreme Commander.



(*) SOE, Special Operations Executive – British top-secret government organisation formed in July 1940, waging irregular warfare against Germany and supporting resistance movements in occupied Europe.

ONE OF THE SECRET POLISH-BRITISH SILENT UNSEEN TRAINING SCHOOLS (STS 43) OPERATED AT AUDLEY END NEAR CAMBRIDGE IN THE UK. THE COVERT-OPERATIONS COURSE AND THE BRIEFING COURSE THAT WERE CONDUCTED HERE WERE COMPLETED BY, RESPECTIVELY, 630 AND 606 CANDIDATES FOR SERVICE IN OCCUPIED POLAND IN THE RANKS OF THE HOME ARMY.



TWO YEARS LATER.

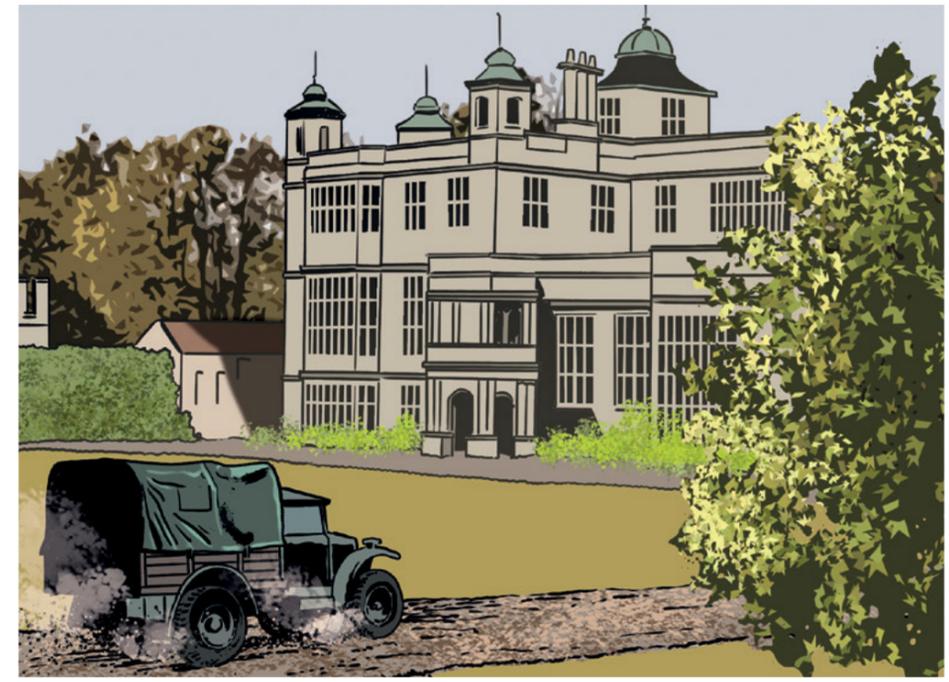
APRIL 1944



I'M STUCK HERE. SO MUCH PREPARATION FOR THE DROP AND STILL NOTHING IS GOING ON. I EVEN HAD TIME TO GET MARRIED.

GOOD TRAINERS ARE NEEDED ON THE GROUND.

I WILL BE THE LAST TO FLY OR THE WAR WILL BE OVER...



LIEUTENANT, LT. COL. PERKINS(*) HAS A PROPOSAL FOR YOU.

YES, SIR!

AND YOU'LL HAVE YOUR "OPERATION"!

THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES WANT TO MAKE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE HOME ARMY COMMAND. WE OFFER YOU PARTICIPATION IN THE FIRST ALLIED MISSION TO POLAND.



(*) Lt. Col. Harold Perkins - head of the Polish Section of the SOE.



THE MISSION'S TASK WILL BE TO CONDUCT POLL INTERVIEWS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN POLAND...

WITH YOUR THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE AS A RADIO OPERATOR, YOU'LL BE A TRANSLATOR AND LIAISON OFFICER. ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THIS ON?

YES, OF COURSE. I HAVE BEEN PREPARING FOR IT FOR A LONG TIME.



THE MISSION CODE NAME IS FRESTON AND THE COMMANDER IS COL. HUDSON(*), A FRIEND AND ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER CHURCHILL...

AFTER OR DURING THE TASK, YOU WILL COME INTO CONTACT WITH THE ALLIED RED ARMY...

I CAN'T FLY WITH A POLISH NAME THEN. I'M AFRAID THE RUSSIANS MAY DISTRUST ME...



YOU HAVE TO DISGUISE YOURSELF. YOU'LL HAVE ENGLISH PAPERS FOR THE DURATION OF THE MISSION AND WILL BECOME A REGULAR OFFICER IN THE BRITISH ARMY. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE CALLED?



...ANTHONY ...CURRIE ...CAPT. ANTHONY NEIL CURRIE. THE MAIDEN NAME OF MY WIFE, A SCOT...



EXCELLENT. SUPPOSE YOUR FATHER WAS SCOTTISH, YOUR MOTHER POLISH, AND YOU SPENT PART OF YOUR SCHOOL YEARS IN POLAND SO THAT YOU ARE FLUENT IN POLISH.

SO... YOU START YOUR PREPARATIONS FOR OPERATION FRESTON IN THE SUMMER.



(*) Col. Duane Tyrell Hudson "Bill" - adviser to the British Prime Minister on eastern affairs. An experienced officer who was previously on a similar mission in Yugoslavia.



MEANWHILE...

AUGUST 1944. AN UPRISING IS UNDERWAY IN WARSAW...



LONDON, ROTHSCHILD PALACE. FROM 1942, THE SEAT OF THE POLISH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE.



KAZIMIERZ SOSNKOWSKI(*)

I AM NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO DO ANYTHING FOR GENERAL SOSABOWSKI'S 1ST INDEPENDENT PARACHUTE BRIGADE TO TAKE PART IN THE UPRISING. ON 13 AUGUST, THE SOLDIERS UNDERTOOK A HUNGER STRIKE IN PROTEST. HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS, PRIME MINISTER?

STANISŁAW MIKOŁAJCZYK(**)

YES... WE HAD TO PUT THE BRIGADE AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE BRITISH. SOSABOWSKI AND HIS UNIT WILL TAKE PART IN OPERATION MARKET GARDEN(***)



THIS IS NOT WHY THIS UNIT WAS ESTABLISHED... AND HOW ABOUT A BRITISH MILITARY MISSION TO THE HOME ARMY? THEY SHOULD BE THERE RIGHT NOW!

THE FOREIGN OFFICE FEARS STALIN'S REACTION!

HAS THE OUTBREAK OF THE WARSAW UPRISING CHANGED ANYTHING?



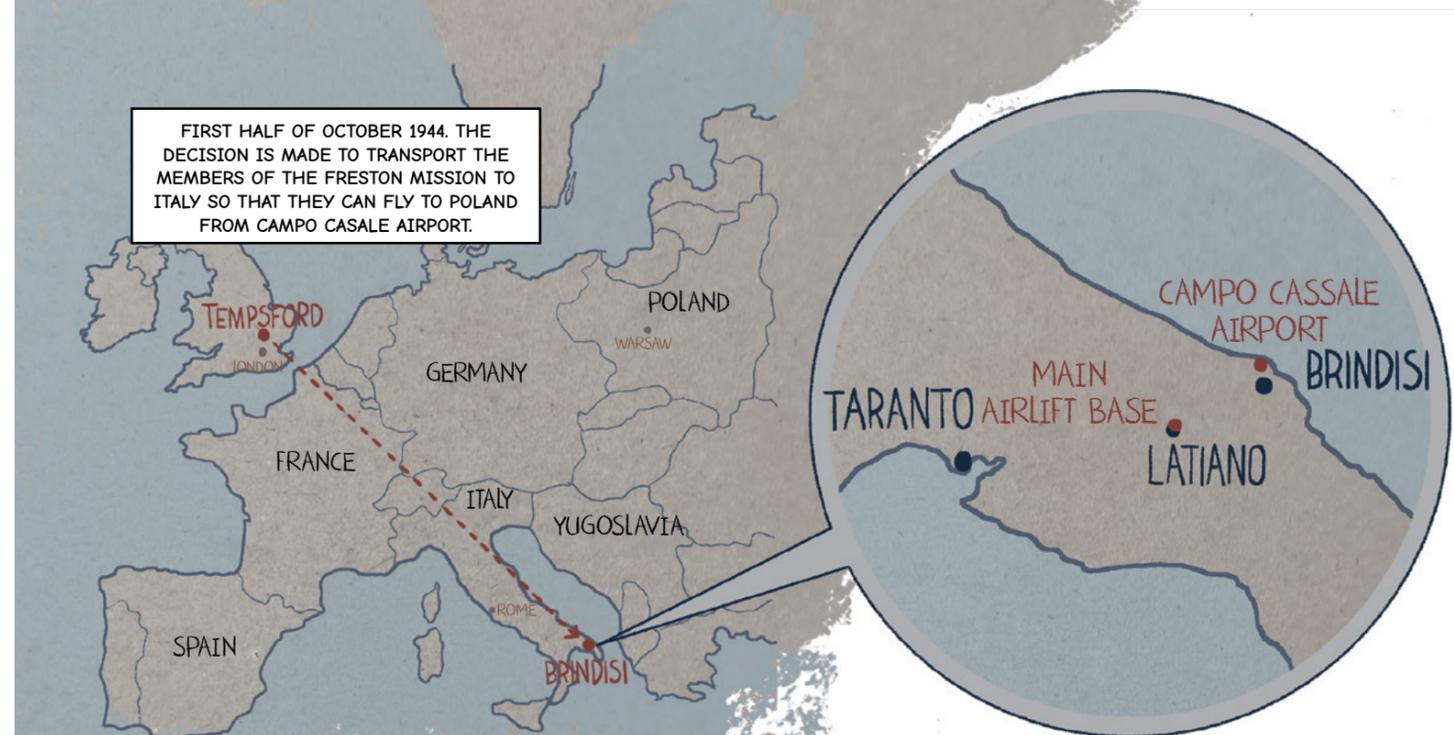
YES, IT HAS. HOWEVER, YOU MUST NAVIGATE IN THE REALM OF POLITICAL REALITY, GENERAL.



WE'RE DOING OUR BEST...



TIME IS PRESSING AND THE SITUATION IS BECOMING DRAMATIC... SINCE MARCH, THE HOME ARMY COMMANDER HAS BEEN PUSHING HARD FOR AN ALLIED COMMISSION TO BE SENT TO WITNESS AND COUNTERACT THE SOVIETS' ACTIONS.



FIRST HALF OF OCTOBER 1944. THE DECISION IS MADE TO TRANSPORT THE MEMBERS OF THE FRESTON MISSION TO ITALY SO THAT THEY CAN FLY TO POLAND FROM CAMPO CASALE AIRPORT.



WAITING FOR DEPARTURE TO POLAND. VILLA "LA SILVA" NEAR PASANO, 57 KM FROM BRINDISI, ACCOMMODATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE MISSION.

I KEEP WONDERING WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF OUR TASKS IN POLAND.

PETER SOLLY-FLOOD

WE KEEP OBSERVING. WE KEEP SOE INFORMED ABOUT EVERYTHING CONCERNING ANTI-GERMAN ACTIVITIES. AS THE EASTERN FRONT ADVANCES, WE FACILITATE THE FIRST CONTACTS OF THE HOME ARMY WITH THE RUSSIANS.



THIS MISSION WAS SOUGHT IN SUPPORT OF THE HOME ARMY...

WE WERE NOT SENT FOR A SINGLE PURPOSE; IT'S ALSO ABOUT FACILITATING CONTACTS BETWEEN ALL ANTI-GERMAN FORCES...

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SHOULD HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE RUSSIAN THREAT IN THE FIRST PLACE; I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT IT.

(*) Gen. Kazimierz Sosnkowski - Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces from July 1943 to September 1944.
(**) Stanisław Mikolajczyk - Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile from the death of Władysław Sikorski in the crash over Gibraltar (4 July 1943) until 24 November 1944.
(***) Operation Market Garden - one of the largest allied operations during World War II, carried out by airborne forces in September 1944 in the territory of occupied Holland.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE POLES ARE SO PREJUDICED AGAINST OUR POWERFUL ALLY. IT'S UNREASONABLE NATIONALISM...

IT'S NOT PREJUDICE BUT AWARENESS OF RISK. THE BRITISH ARE OBSESSED ABOUT STALIN.



THESE WORDS ARE INAPPROPRIATE! MAYBE THE THING IS THAT POLAND IS LOOKING FOR PROBLEMS...?



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION...



LONDON WANTS TO KNOW HOW RELATIONS ARE SHAPING UP IN POLAND; THIS KNOWLEDGE WILL BE NEEDED DURING KEY TALKS AMONG THE COALITION PARTNERS.

COL. DUANE T. HUDSON "BILL"



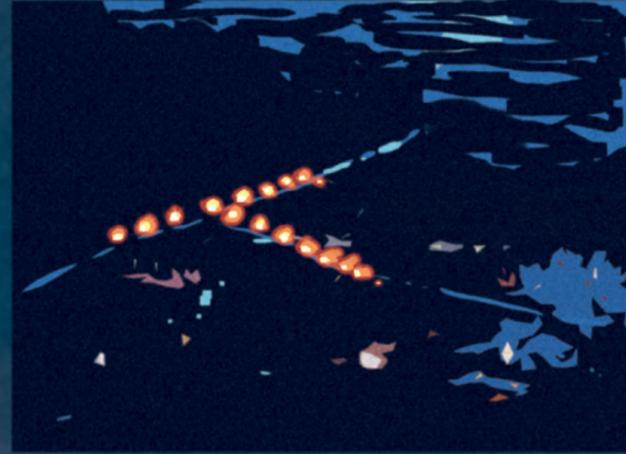
DUE TO WEATHER CONDITIONS AND LIMITED VISIBILITY, THE AIRDROP OF MISSION MEMBERS TO POLAND DID NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL THE FOURTH ATTEMPT, ON TUESDAY, 26 DECEMBER 1944, A FEW MINUTES AFTER 9 PM.



RADOMSKO
WARTA
PILICA
THIRD REICH
GENERAL GOVERNMENT
CZĘSTOCHOWA
ZŁOTY POTOK
ZARKI
OUTPOST "OGÓREK"



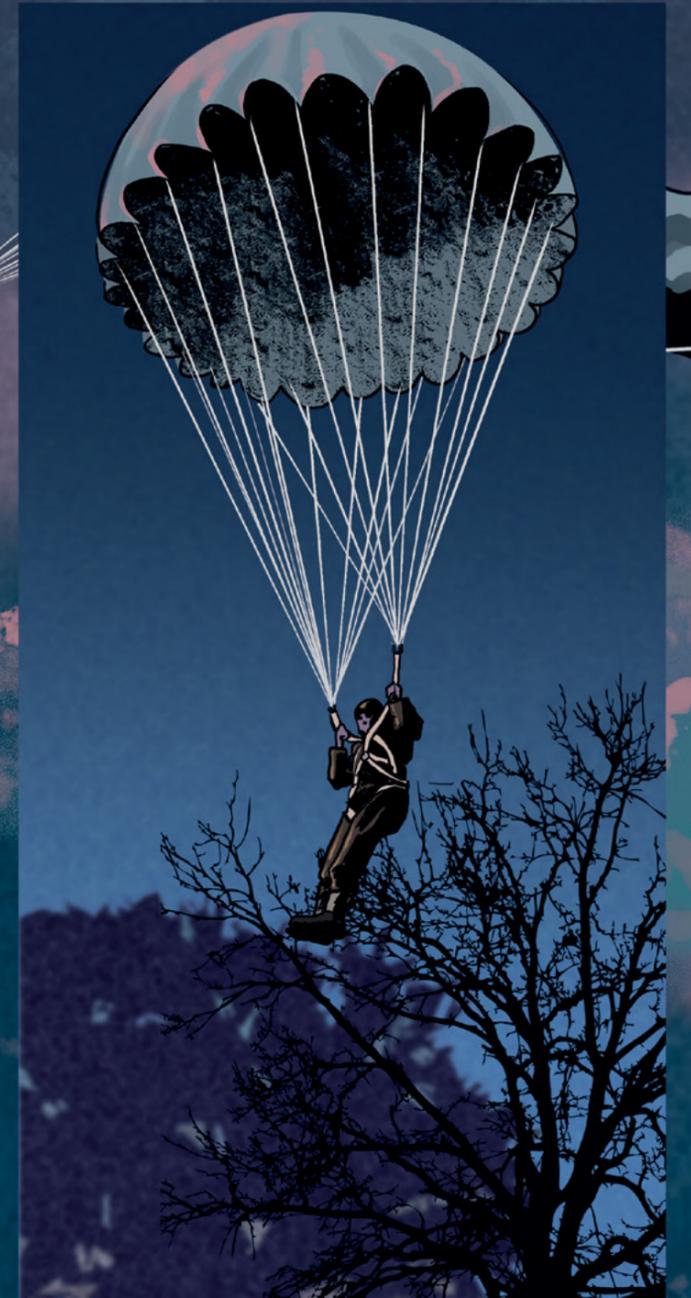
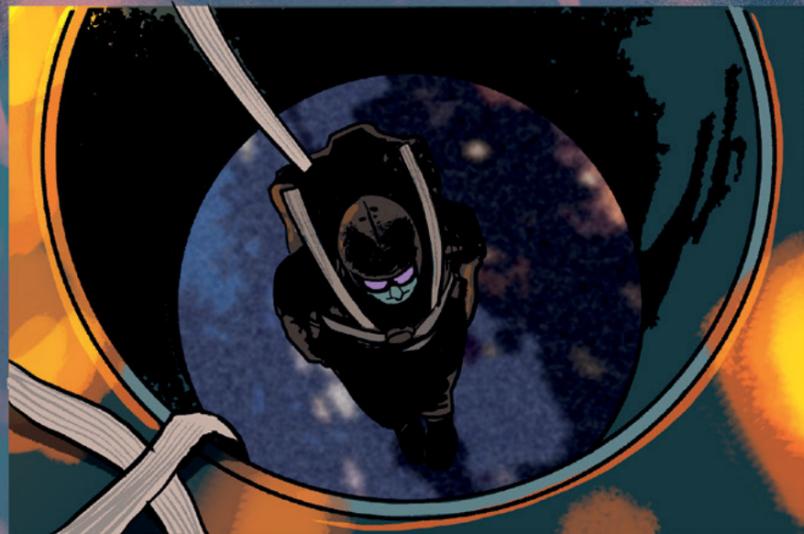
FIELDS OF BYSTRZANOWICE VILLAGE,
30 KM SOUTH-EAST OF CZĘSTOCHOWA,
AIRSTRIP IN THE RECEIVING STATION
"OGÓREK-303" (JANÓW-ŻARKI)



I CAN SEE THE
LIGHTS, WE HAVE
A SIGNAL!

ACTION STATIONS!

GO!





MICHAŁ!

NO RESPONSE. I MUST HAVE PARACHUTED A SECOND TOO EARLY...

SOME VILLAGERS ARE APPROACHING...



WHERE ARE WE?

BYSTRZANOWICE VILLAGE IS NOT FAR FROM HERE



HALF AN HOUR LATER.

THERE YOU ARE, PROFESSOR(*)! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

...I'M FINE. HOW ABOUT THE OTHERS?

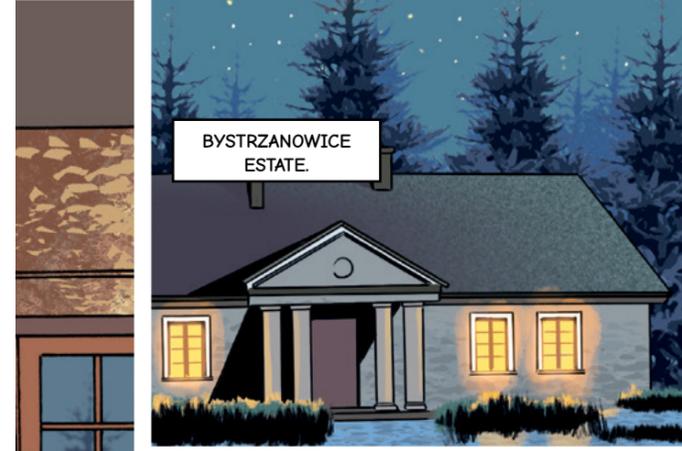


OKAY, THE LANDING WENT PERFECTLY. ONLY BILL AND KEMP BRUISED THEMSELVES A BIT ON THE FROZEN GROUND...

A WARM WELCOME! I AM LT. TWARDY I'LL BE COVERING YOU.

LT. STANISŁAW WENCEL "TWARDY"

(*) "Professor" - an alias given to Pospieszalski by members of the Freston Mission.



BYSTRZANOWICE ESTATE.



A TRUE POLISH PARTY...

THESE DAMN FROZEN SANDWICHES... I UNNECESSARILY STUFFED MYSELF WITH THEM ON THE PLANE FOR DAYS...

IT DOESN'T LOOK VERY CONSPIRATORIAL. WHERE ARE THE GERMANS?

THERE ARE 50 GENDARMES IN ZŁOTY POTOK, 5 KM AWAY, AND ABOUT 80 SS MEN IN ŻARKI.



YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF THEM HERE?



THEY WON'T COME AT NIGHT.



IT LOOKS LIKE NIGHT-TIME UNDER OCCUPATION IS POLISH...



UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSION HEADED NORTH AND REACHED THE VICINITY OF WŁYNICE VILLAGE.



LATER.

THE FIELD CONDITIONS FOR GUERRILLA WARFARE IN POLAND ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. I KNOW A BIT ABOUT IT. IT'S THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF MOUNTAINOUS YUGOSLAVIA.



LT. "WARTA" (*). REPORTING THAT THE TROOP IS READY TO GO.

YOUR ENGLISH IS VERY NICE; A BIT BOOKISH BUT CORRECT.



"JERZY". I AM CHIEF OF OPERATIONS FOR THE HOME ARMY DISTRICT IN RADOMSKO; WE ARE TAKING OVER THE PROTECTION OF THE MISSION.

I'LL BE SUPPORTING YOU AS A LIAISON OFFICER. A TROOP OF "WARTA", MY DEPUTY WILL COVER YOU.

2LT. SZYMON ZAREMBA "JERZY"

AND THIS IS MY SISTER ZOFIA, THE OWNER OF THE ESTATE. MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE, GENTLEMEN.



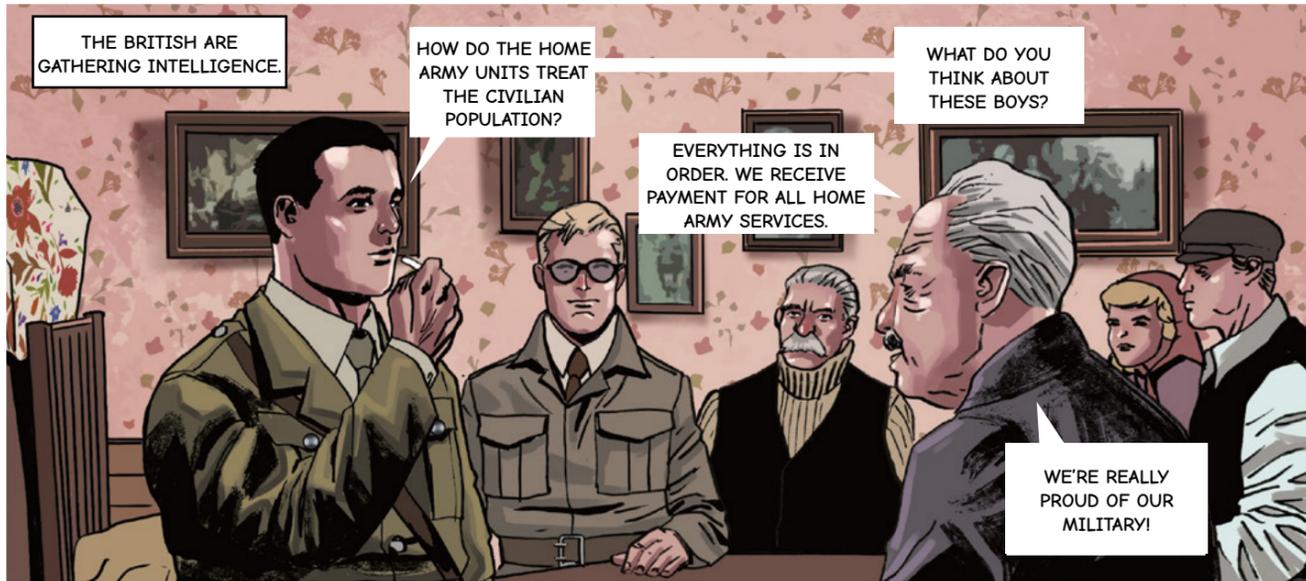
THEY ARE IMPRESSIVE!

PETER KEMP

JÓZEF KOTECKI "WARTA"

WHEN WE TOOK OFF, WE WERE GREETED BY A POLISH COMPANY OF REGULAR TROOPS; WHEN WE LANDED, WE WERE GREETED BY A POLISH GUERRILLA COMPANY... I SEE NO DIFFERENCE.

(*) Lt. Józef Kotecki "Warta" - commander of the 2nd Company of the 1st Battalion of the 27th Home Army Infantry Regiment, subordinate of Capt. Stanisław Sojczyński "Warszyca". Cover Commander of the Freston Mission.



THE BRITISH ARE GATHERING INTELLIGENCE.

HOW DO THE HOME UNITS TREAT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THESE BOYS?

EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER. WE RECEIVE PAYMENT FOR ALL HOME ARMY SERVICES.

WE'RE REALLY PROUD OF OUR MILITARY!



HOW DO YOU LIVE HERE?

WE HAVE MANAGED TO KEEP THE FISH FARM GOING FOR THE TIME BEING.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM?

COMPULSORY DELIVERIES ARE INCREASING. THE GERMANS ARE LOOTING UNSCRUPULOUSLY.



THE DISCIPLINE AND EFFICIENCY WITH WHICH YOU ALTERNATE ACTIVE-DUTY SOLDIERS WITH THOSE ON TEMPORARY LEAVE ARE IMPRESSIVE. WHAT KIND OF ORGANISATION DO YOU HAVE FOR COMBAT OPERATIONS?

WHAT IS THE MOOD OF THE POPULATION?

NOW, AFTER THE UPRISING AND DURING WINTER, WE HAVE VERY LIMITED POSSIBILITIES. THE HEADQUARTERS IS BEING ORGANISED ANEW IN CZĘSTOCHOWA.

EVERYONE IS WAITING FOR YOU...



WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE POLES, UNDERGROUND AND CIVILIANS, TOWARDS RUSSIA?

CHARACTERISED BY RESERVE.

HOW IS THE UNDERGROUND FIGHTING AGAINST THE EXPLOITATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE?

ANY AND ALL MEANS. WE ELIMINATE THE MOST ZEALOUS GERMANS, ESPECIALLY THE GESTAPO OFFICERS. WE ORGANISE DIVERSIONARY ACTIONS, SABOTAGE...



...ARE YOU IN CONTACT WITH THE HOME ARMY UNIT?

...SOMETIMES. OFFERING A BIT OF INFORMATION. OCCASIONALLY PARTICIPATING IN AN ACTION.

THIS CREATES A DANGEROUS SITUATION FOR YOU. WHY ARE YOU WORKING FOR THE GERMANS?

THIS IS NOT OF OUR OWN VOLITION. THIS WORK IS A MUST FOR THE GERMAN ECONOMY. IF YOU REFUSE TO WORK, AND FOR MANY OTHER REASONS, THE GERMANS SEND YOU TO A CAMP.



THERE IS PROBABLY A LOT OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG POLES ABOUT HOW TO TREAT THE OCCUPIER...

ON THE CONTRARY! THE NATION WAS NEVER SO UNITED AS DURING THE WAR. THERE ARE US AND THEM. WE ARE THE POLES AND THEY ARE THE GERMANS.



EVENING OF NEW YEAR'S EVE,
31 DECEMBER 1944. DEMBOWSKI
MANOR HOUSE IN KATARZYNA(*),
20 KM AWAY FROM RADOMSKO.

LET'S DRINK TO
THE HEALTH OF
STALIN, ROOSEVELT,
AND CHURCHILL!

...?...?!
HOW DARE
THEY..?!



HOW SHOULD MY TOAST,
SO SILENTLY RECEIVED,
BE UNDERSTOOD?

WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED
TO OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE
VICINITY OF VILNIUS IN
POLESIE, NEAR LWÓW. AND WE
KNOW WHAT MAY HAPPEN TO
US WHEN THEY GET HERE.



HOW CAN THEY SAY
THAT? THESE ARE OUR
ALLIES!

IF THE POLES REACT
THIS WAY TO THE
VERY NAME OF STALIN,
IT'S NO WONDER
THAT THE RUSSIANS
TREAT THEM BADLY...

(* Katarzyna - currently Katarzynów, Kobile Wielkie commune.

NEW YEAR'S MORNING,
1 JANUARY 1945.
KATARZYNA HAMLET





GERMANS!
RAISE THE
ALARM!



WE MUSTN'T ALLOW
OURSELVES TO BE
SURROUNDED OR DRAGGED
INTO THE FIGHT!



GERMAN TANKS ARE
APPROACHING THE
MANOR!

HOW IS THAT
POSSIBLE...?

... WE NEED TIME... OUR
LUGGAGE... WE SHOULD
DESTROY THE RADIO STATION
AND THE CIPHERS, BURN
THE DOCUMENTS...



I WILL GIVE YOU TWO MEN.
THEY WILL LEAD YOU OUT.
WE WILL STOP THEM.
LET'S HURRY UP!



GENTLEMEN,
TO THE
FOREST!



EVERYONE HAS
REPORTED OFF!

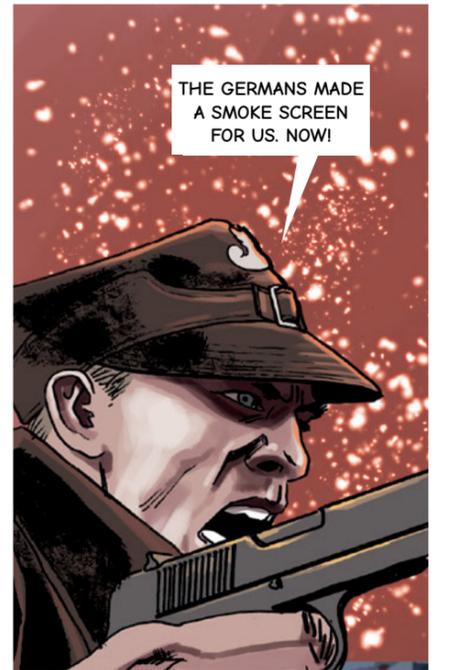
SECONDS
SAVED US...



OUR HONOUR DOES NOT ALLOW US TO
LEAVE THE BRITISH. WE MUST SAVE THEM.
YOU TAKE THE FIRE ON YOURSELVES
AND PRETEND TO ATTACK WITH LARGER
FORCES FROM THE FOREST SIDE.



FIRST COMPANY... GO AHEAD... HURRAH!!!



THE GERMANS MADE A SMOKE SCREEN FOR US. NOW!



SOLDIERS OF "WARTA" ARE GETTING MEMBERS OF THE MISSION OUT OF THE GERMAN ENCIRCLEMENT.



"NEVADA" IS HURT!

HE'S DEAD. BRING HIM. WE ARE WITHDRAWING!

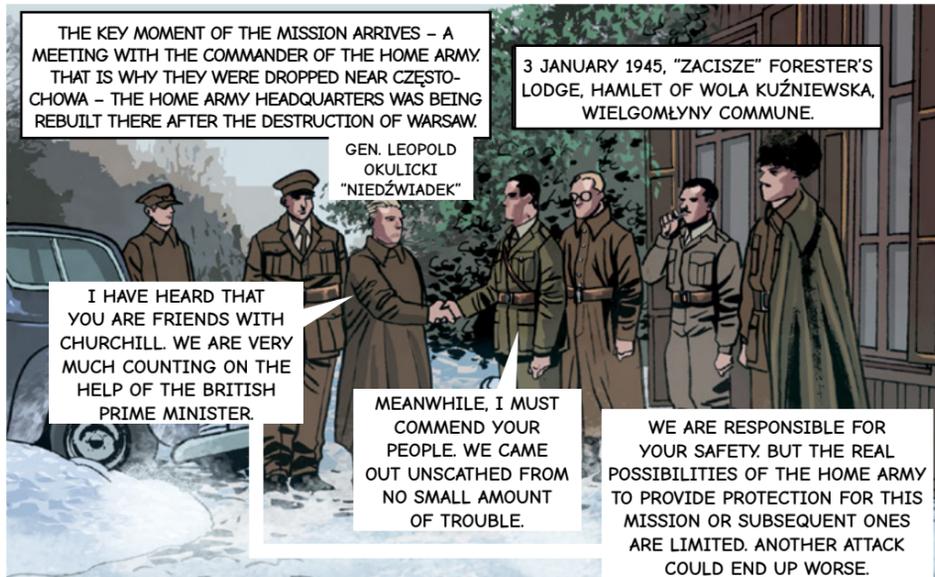


WE HAVE LOST ONE 20-WATT.

AND THE LUGGAGE.



IT'S A MIRACLE THAT WE CAME OUT UNSCATHED.



THE KEY MOMENT OF THE MISSION ARRIVES – A MEETING WITH THE COMMANDER OF THE HOME ARMY. THAT IS WHY THEY WERE DROPPED NEAR CZĘSTOCHOWA – THE HOME ARMY HEADQUARTERS WAS BEING REBUILT THERE AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF WARSAW.

GEN. LEOPOLD OKULICKI "NIEDŹWIĄDEK"

I HAVE HEARD THAT YOU ARE FRIENDS WITH CHURCHILL. WE ARE VERY MUCH COUNTING ON THE HELP OF THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER.

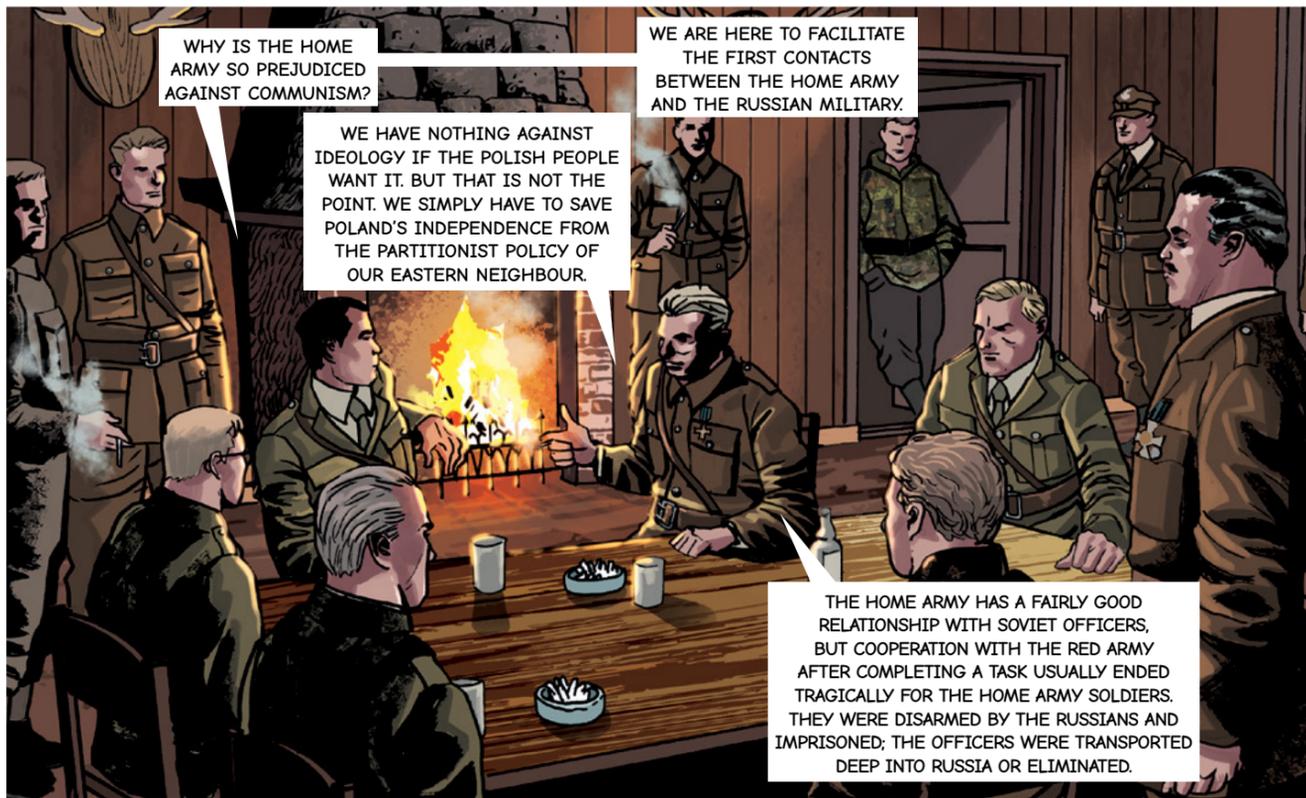
MEANWHILE, I MUST COMMEND YOUR PEOPLE. WE CAME OUT UNSCATHED FROM NO SMALL AMOUNT OF TROUBLE.

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SAFETY. BUT THE REAL POSSIBILITIES OF THE HOME ARMY TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR THIS MISSION OR SUBSEQUENT ONES ARE LIMITED. ANOTHER ATTACK COULD END UP WORSE.

3 JANUARY 1945, "ZACISZE" FORESTER'S LODGE, HAMLET OF WOLA KUŹNIEWSKA, WIELGOMĘLNY COMMUNE.



YES, IT'S DIFFICULT IN THIS SITUATION... PLEASE PUT KRYSZYNA(*) AND MAJ. KENNEDY(**) AT MY DISPOSAL



WHY IS THE HOME ARMY SO PREJUDICED AGAINST COMMUNISM?

WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST IDEOLOGY IF THE POLISH PEOPLE WANT IT. BUT THAT IS NOT THE POINT. WE SIMPLY HAVE TO SAVE POLAND'S INDEPENDENCE FROM THE PARTITIONIST POLICY OF OUR EASTERN NEIGHBOUR.

WE ARE HERE TO FACILITATE THE FIRST CONTACTS BETWEEN THE HOME ARMY AND THE RUSSIAN MILITARY.

THE HOME ARMY HAS A FAIRLY GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH SOVIET OFFICERS, BUT COOPERATION WITH THE RED ARMY AFTER COMPLETING A TASK USUALLY ENDED TRAGICALLY FOR THE HOME ARMY SOLDIERS. THEY WERE DISARMED BY THE RUSSIANS AND IMPRISONED; THE OFFICERS WERE TRANSPORTED DEEP INTO RUSSIA OR ELIMINATED.



SO YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ACT TOGETHER AGAINST THE GERMANS?

IN THE COMING SOVIET OFFENSIVE, THE HOME ARMY UNITS WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SOVIET FORCES, BUT OPEN COOPERATION AND DECONSPIRATION ISN'T AN OPTION.

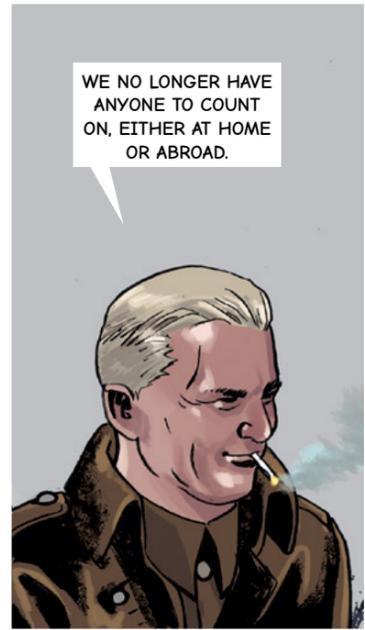


AS SOON AS RUSSIAN TROOPS TAKE OVER THE AREA, THE HOME ARMY UNITS WILL SIMPLY BE DISBANDED.

(*) "Krystyna" – countess Maria Krystyna Skarbek-Giżycka, associated with British intelligence, Churchill's favourite spy.
(**) "Andrew Kennedy" – Maj. Andrzej Kowerski, a Polish officer working for the SOE, an associate of "Krystyna", planned to be a member of one of the next (unaccomplished) British missions to Poland.



YOU KNOW, LIEUTENANT, I AM DISAPPOINTED.



WE NO LONGER HAVE ANYONE TO COUNT ON, EITHER AT HOME OR ABROAD.



GENERAL MY WOUND IS BOTHERING ME. PLEASE RELIEVE ME OF MY DUTIES IN THE DEFENCE UNIT.

FINE... THE UNIT WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY "KRUK"(*).



WHAT IF THEY'RE RIGHT...?

... THE HORROR OF THE SITUATION IN WHICH THE POLES FIND THEMSELVES IS STARTING TO GET TO ME.



LONDON PREVIOUSLY REPORTED TO MOSCOW A SIX-PERSON MISSION; FIVE FLEW BECAUSE ALUN MORGAN FELL ILL.



I AM WILLING TO TAKE A POLISH OFFICER TO LONDON IN HIS PLACE AS AN EYEWITNESS TO EVENTS IN POLAND.

(*) Lt. Karol Kutnicki "Kruk" – commander of the 1st Company of the 1st Battalion of the 27th Home Army Infantry Regiment, subordinate of Capt. Stanisław Sojczyński "Warszyca".



ALRIGHT. "JERZY" (*) WILL GO WITH YOU IF HE AGREES.



10 DAYS LATER.

THE DISTANT RUMBLING OF A FIRE BARRAGE IN THE EAST. THE SOVIET FRONT CROSSES THE PILICA RIVER.

LT. SZYMON ZAREMBA "JERZY"



I WILL STAY WITH YOU UNTIL THE END, BUT ARE YOU ABLE TO GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF MY BOYS IF THE BOLSHIEVKS COME?

WE KNOW WHAT THE SOVIETS DID TO HOME ARMY SOLDIERS IN LUBELSKIE.

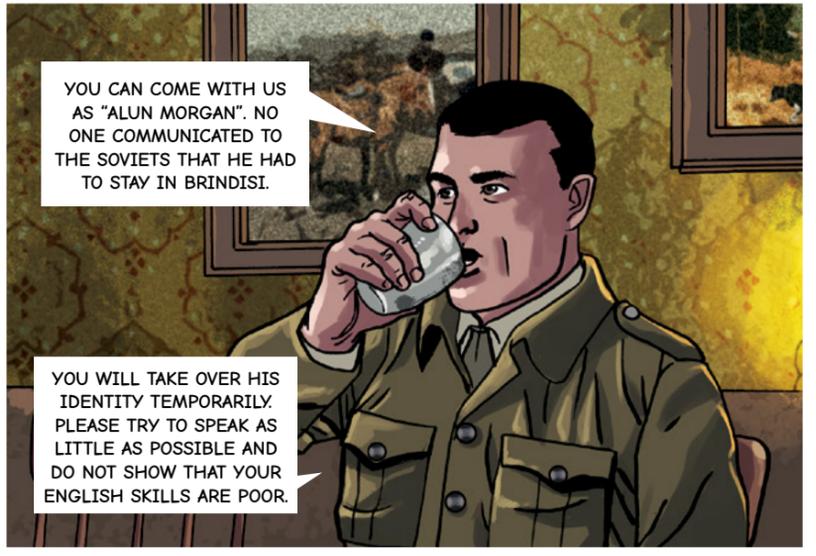
WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

COL. PUANE HUDSON "BILL"

I CAN'T GIVE YOU A GUARANTEE.



I CAN'T RISK THEIR LIVES THEN; I HAVE TO DISBAND THEM.



YOU CAN COME WITH US AS "ALUN MORGAN". NO ONE COMMUNICATED TO THE SOVIETS THAT HE HAD TO STAY IN BRINDISI.

YOU WILL TAKE OVER HIS IDENTITY TEMPORARILY. PLEASE TRY TO SPEAK AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE AND DO NOT SHOW THAT YOUR ENGLISH SKILLS ARE POOR.

(*) Szymon Zaremba "Jerzy" never returned to Poland. He later became President of the Polish Social and Cultural Centre and the Polish Cultural Foundation in London and one of the most distinctive figures of the Polish emigration.



17 JANUARY 1945

YOU WILL GO WITH SOLLY-FLOOD AND "JERZY" TO ŻYTNO FOR ANOTHER A-5 CAMERA; THERE'S NO LONGER ANY REASON TO HIDE IT.

PERHAPS YOU WILL FIND OUT SOMETHING MORE ABOUT THE WHEREABOUTS OF "NIEDŹWIADEK". OUR TASK NOW IS TO HELP ESTABLISH CONTACT BETWEEN THE POLISH AND RUSSIAN COMMANDERS.



DO YOU HEAR? THERE'S SOMEONE HANGING AROUND IN THE BUSHES...

PERHAPS SOME RETREATING HOME ARMY UNIT...?

I'LL GO SEE.



WE'LL GO WITH YOU.



THEY'RE GERMANS!! ...THEY HID HERE FROM THE SOVIETS...



THEY ARE PROBABLY MORE SCARED THAN WE ARE... WE WILL WITHDRAW. THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY PROBLEMS...



ŻYTNO, SURROUNDINGS OF THE LANDED ESTATE OF STEFAN SIEMIŃSKI. MEMBERS OF THE MISSION COME INTO CONTACT WITH A SOVIET COLUMN.

WE ARE NOT GOING TO RUN AWAY. WE WILL REMAIN CALM. COMING INTO CONTACT WITH THE SOVIET ARMY WAS FORESEEABLE AND IS WITHIN OUR INSTRUCTIONS.



STOP!



АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ОФИЦЕР



WHERE IS YOUR COMMANDER?

АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ОФИЦЕР



YOUR DOCUMENTS!

WE ARE MEMBERS OF AN ALLIED OBSERVER MISSION. ONCE COMPLETED, WE'RE TO REPORT TO THE BRITISH MILITARY MISSION IN MOSCOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

MY NAME IS ANTHONY CURRIE. I WOULD LIKE TO...



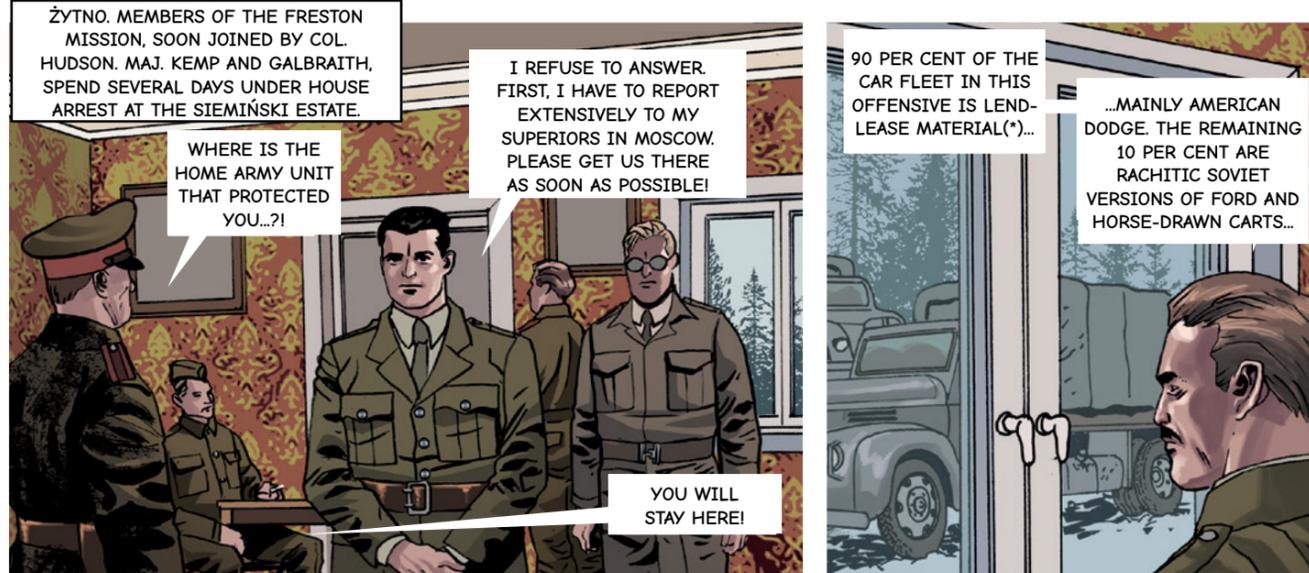
IT'S NOT YOURS!

WHERE IS THE HOME ARMY UNIT THAT HELPED YOU? WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF IT?

WE WILL NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF OUR COMMANDER, COLONEL HUDSON.

YOU ARE SPIES...

DISARM THEM!



ŻYTNÓ. MEMBERS OF THE FRESTON MISSION, SOON JOINED BY COL. HUDSON. MAJ. KEMP AND GALBRAITH, SPEND SEVERAL DAYS UNDER HOUSE ARREST AT THE SIEMIŃSKI ESTATE.

WHERE IS THE HOME ARMY UNIT THAT PROTECTED YOU...?!

I REFUSE TO ANSWER. FIRST, I HAVE TO REPORT EXTENSIVELY TO MY SUPERIORS IN MOSCOW. PLEASE GET US THERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

YOU WILL STAY HERE!

90 PER CENT OF THE CAR FLEET IN THIS OFFENSIVE IS LEND-LEASE MATERIAL(*)...

...MAINLY AMERICAN DODGE. THE REMAINING 10 PER CENT ARE RACHITIC SOVIET VERSIONS OF FORD AND HORSE-DRAWN CARTS...

(*) Lend-Lease Act - an agreement signed after the Third Reich attacked the USSR in June 1941. Under the agreement, the United States began to provide military and food aid to its soviet ally.



END OF JANUARY 1945

RADOMSKO, JĘDRZEJÓW, CZĘSTOCHOWA

WHERE DO THEY KEEP DRIVING US TO?

MAYBE WE CAN FINALLY FLY TO MOSCOW FROM HERE?

LOOKS LIKE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH US.



INSTEAD OF THE AIRPORT, THE MISSION MEMBERS ENDED UP IN A CRAMPED CELL IN A POST-GESTAPO PRISON.

HOW IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE THAT WE ENDED UP IN SUCH A PLACE???

I WAS EXPECTING THIS TO A LARGE EXTENT...

THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! HOW CAN AN ALLIED ARMY BE TREATED LIKE THIS...?!



PETER... WHAT DID I TELL YOU...?

I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW...

MY FORMER VIEWS ON THE ESSENCE OF POLISH-SOVIET RELATIONS NOW SEEM RIDICULOUS TO ME...

LET'S HOPE THEY DON'T DO A "LITTLE KATYŃ"...



MORNING

FOOD!

...WHAT?!!

THIS IS NOT HOW BRITISH OFFICERS SHOULD BE TREATED!!



I DEMAND TO SEE AN OFFICER OF EQUAL RANK TO ME OR HIGHER! IT'S AN UNFORGIVABLE MISTAKE!

I WILL WRITE TO MARSHAL KONEV; I WILL LIST ALL THE WRONGS WE HAVE SUFFERED!



"BILL" ADDRESSES THEM AS IF THEY WERE HIS SUBORDINATES...



YOU CAN HAVE A MEETING... I WILL DO ANYTHING FOR YOU. THIS IS A PLACE FOR FREEDOM AND LIBERTY... YOU WILL DEFINITELY FLY TO MOSCOW, YOU JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT...



THANKS TO PERSISTENT DEMANDS AND EFFORTS BY THE BRITISH EMBASSY, THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE MISSION WERE HELD BECAME MORE BEARABLE. ON 11 FEBRUARY 1945, THEY WERE FINALLY ALLOWED TO BOARD A PLANE.

IT WAS ON THIS DAY THAT THE YALTA CONFERENCE ENDED. THE LEADERS OF THE SUPERPOWERS DECIDED ON THE SHAPE OF THE POST-WAR WORLD, INCLUDING THE FATE OF POLAND.

KŁONNICE, A MUDDY AIRFIELD NEAR CZĘSTOCHOWA



17 FEBRUARY 1945, MOSCOW

DUANE HUDSON, PETER SOLLY-FLOOD, PETER KEMP, ALUN MORGAN, ANTHONY CURRIE, DONALD GALBRAITH.

WELCOME TO THE BRITISH MILITARY MISSION IN MOSCOW.



THE MISSION WILL BE POSTING AN IMPORTANT REPORT SOON...



CHURCHILL HAS JUST RETURNED FROM THE "BIG THREE" TALKS AT YALTA. IT SEEMS THAT YOUR REPORT WILL NOT CHANGE ANYTHING.



...???



THEY HELD US DELIBERATELY.. ALL IN VAIN.. WE WERE LATE..



MOSCOW, BRITISH MILITARY MISSION

THIS IS ACTUALLY THE END OF OUR MISSION...

YOU WILL HELP ME TO DRAW UP THE FINAL REPORT. I AM VERY IMPRESSED BY THE HOME ARMY AND THE POLISH UNDERGROUND STATE. THIS REPORT WILL DOCUMENT THIS.

BUT HOW WILL THIS REPORT HELP US? THIS MISSION WAS A FAILURE, "BILL"...



CHURCHILL WON'T EVEN TAKE IT IN HIS HANDS NOW...

WE SEEM TO HAVE BEEN VERY LUCKY..



...THIS IS THANKS TO YOUR CONFIDENCE.



...I THINK I HAVE FINALLY UNDERSTOOD THE REACTION OF THE POLES TO MY TOAST IN KATARZYNÓW.

THE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE MISSION RETURNED TO LONDON AT THE END OF MARCH 1945. SZYMON ZAREMBA HAD TO STAY IN MOSCOW FOR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS.



SKREEEE



DURING THIS TIME, THE NKVD MADE SEVERAL ATTEMPTS ON HIS LIFE. FINALLY, HE TOO - ALONG WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR - MADE HIS WAY TO LONDON.

8 MAY 1945. NOT EVERYONE FOUND THE END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE EQUALLY JOYFUL. HOME ARMY SOLDIERS, WHOSE HOPES FOR FREEDOM PROVED FALLACIOUS, WERE TAKEN TO THE EAST BY TRAIN.



GEN. LEOPOLD OKULICKI, THE LAST COMMANDER OF THE HOME ARMY, WAS ALSO TAKEN PRISONER BY THE SOVIETS.

ON 21 JUNE 1945, IN MOSCOW, HE WAS SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS IN PRISON IN A TRUMPED-UP TRIAL OF SIXTEEN LEADERS OF THE POLISH UNDERGROUND STATE WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED DECEITFULLY DURING TALKS INITIATED BY THE SOVIETS.

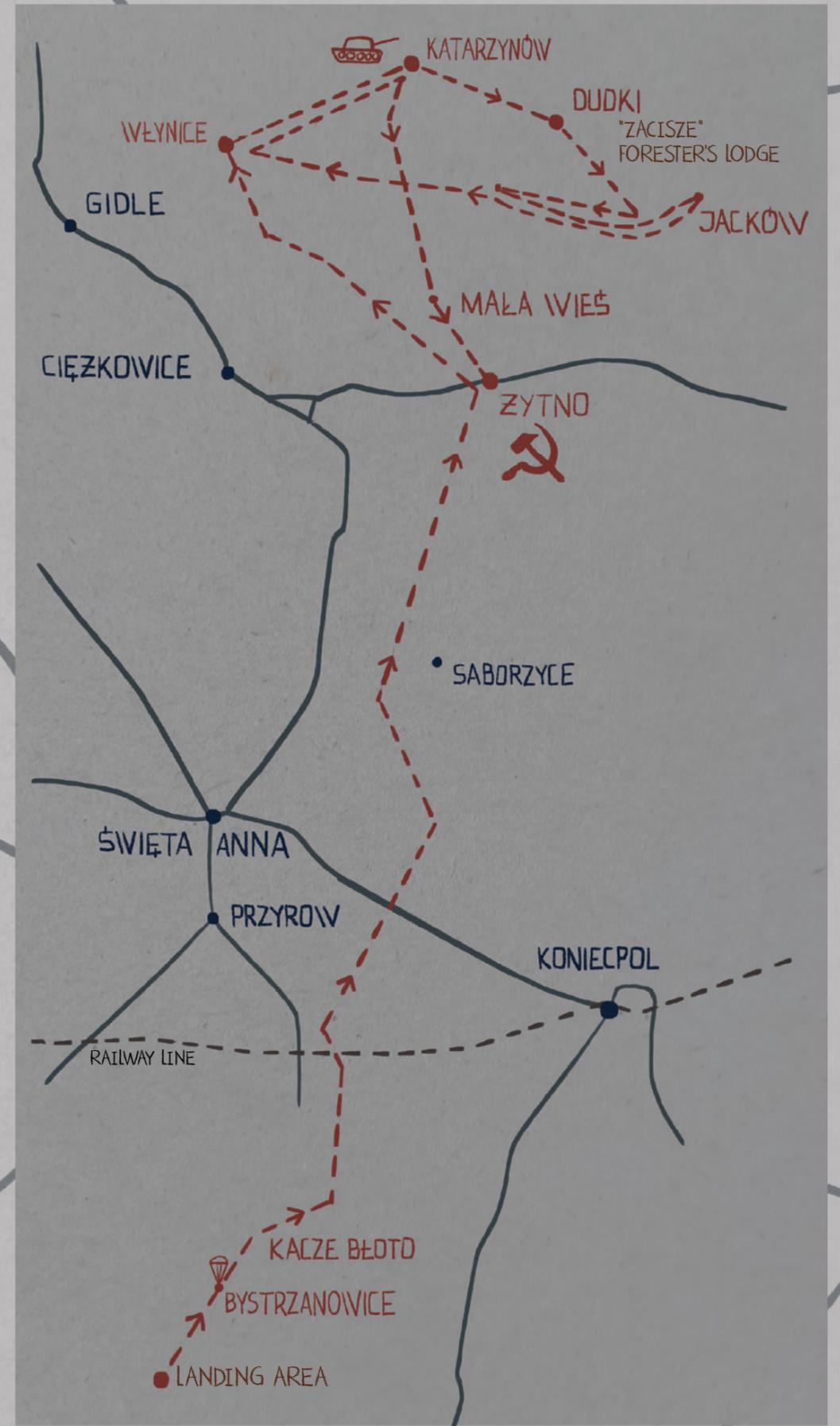
"NIEDŹWIADEK" NEVER RETURNED TO POLAND. HE DIED IN BUTYRKA PRISON IN DECEMBER 1946.



HAVING RETURNED TO SCOTLAND, ANTONI POSPIESZALSKI WAS INVOLVED IN FURTHERING THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG POLISH SOLDIERS. AFTER DEMOBILISATION, HE TAUGHT ENGLISH IN CAMPS FOR POLISH FAMILIES WHO HAD BEEN RESCUED WITH GENERAL ANDERS' ARMY. FROM 1952, HE WAS INVOLVED WITH THE BBC POLISH SECTION FOR 23 YEARS.



Itinerary of OPERATION FRESTON



History of efforts to send a mission

The code name "Freston" was given to the operation to move the first and only British military mission into German-occupied Poland.

- October 1943** The origins of the operation date back to 1943. **The Red Army's successes on the eastern front and the USSR's breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Polish government in London in April 1943** – in the face of Polish plans to organise an anti-German uprising – prompted **Stanisław Mikołajczyk**, Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile, to present to the Allied states the idea of sending a British-American commission to the country to prevent possible conflicts between representatives of the Polish Underground State (PPP) and the Red Army. There was no response.
- 21 February 1944** In view of **the approach of Soviet troops to Poland's pre-war borders**, Prime Minister Mikołajczyk asked British Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** to send a military mission to Polish territory to coordinate military aid to the Home Army and participate in the disclosure of PPP centres to the Soviets. No consent was given.
- 29 March 1944** In connection with **the liquidation of Home Army units in Volhynia by commanders of Red Army units** (where the 27th Volhynian Infantry Division was fighting against the retreating Germans as part of the "Tempest" plan from 15 January 1944), Col. **Michał Protasewicz**, head of the 6th (Special) Division of the Supreme Commander's Staff, wrote to Col. **Harold Perkins**, head of the Polish Section of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to bring inter-allied commissions.
- 30 March 1944** In view of **the Soviets' repressive and destructive actions**, Home Army commander Gen. **Tadeusz Komorowski "Bór"**, in a letter to the Commander-in-Chief in London, insisted that an Allied commission be sent by air to witness the Soviets' actions and could counteract them.
- April 1944** Prime Minister Mikołajczyk repeatedly attempted to persuade Prime Minister Churchill to send the mission; US Deputy Secretary of State **Edward Stettinius** also participated in these talks. This had no effect.
- Despite the lack of a political decision, SOE began to organise the mission, presumably with Churchill's tacit approval. Although the composition of the mission was complete in July 1944, its members did not arrive in Poland until six months later.
- 18 August 1944** After the fighting with the Germans over Vilnius (Operation Ostra Brama), **in view of the disarmament and the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR) arrest of the commanders of the Vilnius District of the Home Army who had been invited to the talks**, Prime Minister Mikołajczyk, in an official letter to Prime Minister Churchill, requested that a British liaison officer and an international commission accredited to the Polish underground authorities be sent to Vilnius. The British made sending the mission conditional on an agreement with the Soviet authorities. Because of **Joseph Stalin's** protests, the decision had to wait.
- August/September 1944** Meanwhile, mass arrests of Home Army soldiers in the Lublin region and their incarceration in the former Gestapo prison at Lublin Castle and in the NKVD filtration camp at Majdanek continued. **The tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising was underway.**
- 2 October 1944** Under pressure from the Poles and from the SOE Chief, **Gen. Collin McGubbins**, who was sympathetic to Poland, Prime Minister Churchill finally decided to send a mission to Poland. The British embassy in Moscow addressed a note to the Kremlin to this effect; formal approval from the eastern Ally was never obtained.
- 5 October 1944** The head of the Polish Section of the SOE, Col. Harold Perkins, handed over to Gen. **Stanisław Tatar**, Deputy Chief of Staff of Supreme Commander, the British decision to send to Poland a several-man military mission under the command of Col. **Duane T. Hudson**, with the participation of a Polish Silent Unseen, Lt. **Antoni N. Pospieszalski**. It was planned to locate the mission under the Home Army commander and send subsequent ones to individual Home Army districts. **The NKVD continued to arrest members of the Polish administration revealing itself in the liberated territories, declaring Home Army soldiers to be politically "hostile".** The Polish authorities hoped that, thanks to the presence of the British, the Soviet-subordinate Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) would not negate the legitimacy of the Polish government in London.
- 7 October 1944** Gen. Tatar began preparations for an airdrop into occupied Polish territory with a British mission.
- 13 October 1944** Mission members were transferred from RAF Tempsford airfield near London to Bari (Italy). They were waiting for their flight to Poland in the remote villa "La Silva" near Fasano.
- 16/17 October 1944** The Silent Unseen, **Col. Roman Rudkowski "Rudy"**, was dropped near Piotrków Trybunalski, whose objective included preparing the reception of the British mission in Poland.
- 19 October 1944** **Lublin heard desperate reports of Home Army soldiers being executed without trial, called bandits and murderers by PKWN propaganda.** It was decided to carry out the airdrop as close as possible to Częstochowa where, after the Warsaw Uprising, the Home Army Headquarters was being organised with its new commander, **Gen. Leopold Okulicki "Niedźwiadek"**. **The chosen site was the "Ogórek" drop site in the fields of the Bystrzanowice village**, 31 km south-east of the railway station in Częstochowa (**N50°41'00" E19°31'40"**). A conventional sign for this airdrop to the soldiers of the Home Army were the *"Wojenko, wojenko"* and *"Z dymem pożarów"* melodies broadcast by the BBC at specific times and in a specific way from London.
- 21 October 1944** The head of the 6th (Special) Division passed on information to the Kielce-Radom Area about the aims of the mission (observation of activities of the Home Army and reporting to London about the situation, plans, moods, and needs of the Home Army and the relations between the Home Army and the Red Army and other partisan organisations). Members of the mission were not to take part in combat except in self-defence. Every effort was to be made to facilitate the work of the mission. Confidential information about the presence of Capt. Currie, a Lieutenant in the Polish Army from the 6th (Special) Division, was passed on.

21/22
October 1944

The first attempt at airdrop was carried out but was thwarted by poor weather conditions.

18 November
1944

Despite the difficulties in ensuring the safety of the mission (the Home Army troops in the field, weakened after the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising, had been reduced to 20 per cent of their numbers before the winter), another airdrop attempt was carried out, unsuccessful due to weather again.

Taking advantage of the winter season, the Germans intensified their man-hunts for Home Army soldiers. The concept of directing further missions (involving, among others, Andrzej Kowerski, a Polish officer working for the SOE) to the still-fighting areas of the Home Army was never implemented due to the inability to ensure British security, and shortly the arrival of the Eastern Front and the end of the war.

22 November
1944

In a dispatch to London, Gen. Okulicki wrote that – given the dispersion of Polish troops and exhaustion after numerous battles with the Germans – “the reports of the British Mission could harm us rather than help us.”

24 November
1944

Prime Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk resigned (he was invited to Moscow, for the first time for a meeting of this kind, and learned, on 13 October, of the hitherto secret Tehran resolutions that ceded Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence). Tomasz Arciszewski, more distrustful of the Allies, became the new Prime Minister.

27 November
– 22 December
1944

The British temporarily halted the mission’s arrival in Poland – until the Polish President officially nominated Gen. Leopold Okulicki as commander of the Home Army.

25 December
1944

The third airdrop attempt was carried out but the lights of the outposts were not spotted.

26/27
December
1944

The fourth airdrop attempt took place and was successful. Members of the mission parachuted into Polish territory on the second day of Christmas.



Photo: Z. Zelicki, Brygada Miękkich SOE FRESTON 1944, "Nierozdzielni i Pniści", 2007, No. 14/1, (25)A. Pospieszalski, OPERACJA FRESTON. British Mission in Poland - 1944/1945. "Zeszyty Historyczne Stowarzyszenia - Klubu Kawalerów Orderu Wojennego Wirtuti Militarii", 2006, No. 4.

Antoni Nikodem Pospieszalski “Łuk” (1912-2008)



Photo: National Digital Archives

Captain in the Polish Army, soldier in the Polish Armed Forces in the West, 1st Independent Parachute Brigade, the Silent Unseen, radio equipment specialist, communications instructor at the Polish Silent Unseen training centre at Audley End (STS 43) in the UK, officer of the 6th (Special) Division of the Supreme Commander, and Home Army officer.

During Operation Freston, having assumed the fictitious identity of a British officer as Capt. Anthony Neil Currie (the maiden name of his wife, a Scot), he performed duties as a translator, liaison officer and radio operator. Nicknamed “Professor” by his mission colleagues. At the time of the drop, he was 32 years old.

He was born in Berlin, his father was a Polish architect and his mother was German. In 1919, the Pospieszalski family moved to Poznań. In 1934, he graduated in Polish Philology from the University of Poznań, specialising in the works of Cyprian Kamil Norwid. After his studies, he took up a job as a teacher in Śrem and then in Wolsztyn.

During the Polish campaign in 1939, he commanded a platoon in the 68th Infantry Regiment from Września, as part of the 17th Wielkopolska Infantry Division. In January 1940, he crossed the Slovak border via Kraków and Nowy Targ and made his way to Hungary and then to France, where he joined the Polish armed forces being formed in the West. After the fall of France, he evacuated with the army to Liverpool.

In the UK, he was assigned to the 4th Cadre Rifle Brigade of Col. Dipl./Gen. Stanisław Sosabowski, creator of the first parachute unit in the history of the Polish Army. He served in Leven, Lundin Links, and Pittenweem and trained on special courses in secret Polish-British SOE centres. In October 1940, he completed a diversionary course (STS 25, Inverlochy Castle). He was one of the first to express his willingness to reach occupied Poland by air. He underwent parachute training at Largo House near Leven (known as the Monkey Grove), did trial parachute jumps at the Parachute Training School (STS 51, Ringway near Manchester), and completed a covert-operations course (STS 38, Briggens). His flight to the homeland scheduled for April 1942 was cancelled because the nights were too short. His abilities (he completed a radiotelegraph course with an excellent grade) and language skills (he was fluent in German, French, English, and Italian) were put to good use as he was appointed communications instructor at the Polish training centre at Audley End (STS 43) near Cambridge, which opened in May 1942.

In April 1944, he was the only Pole to be offered to take part in a top-secret British mission to the Home Army (Operation Freston). On 26-27 December 1944, he parachuted in the last airdrop of the Silent Unseen to Poland. Having been arrested by the Soviets (17 January – 17 February 1945), he completed the mission at the end of March 1945, like the rest of the participants, and returned to London via Moscow, Tehran and Cairo.

After the war, he organised the 1st Corps Grammar School Course in Scotland as part of the Polish Resettlement Corps. Following demobilisation in 1948, he was an English teacher in Polish resettlement camps. He worked as a journalist and then as deputy director of the BBC’s Polish Section (starting, in 1952, with his programme about a wartime trip to Poland). He was Section Reporter at the Second Vatican Council and collaborated with “Kultura Paryska”.

Towards the end of his life he lived in London and maintained close contact with his brother Professor Karol Marian Pospieszalski, associated with Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, lawyer,



Photo: Public domain

Yalta Conference

Date: 4 – 11 February 1945
 Participants: Winston Churchill (UK), Franklin Delano Roosevelt (USA), Joseph Stalin (USSR)

The conference set out the principles of post-war world order. Poland was left in the Soviet sphere of influence and this determined the fate of the Home Army soldiers, whose struggle ended in defeat, despite their sacrifice and heroism. The shifting of the Polish borders behind the so-called Curzon Line and the seizure of lands east of this line, which before 1939 accounted for about 50% of the territory of the Second Polish Republic (Poland lost Vilnius and Lwów), were confirmed. The post-German territories, including Western Pomerania and the area of the Free City of Gdańsk, the lands of Lubusz and Kłodzko, Lusatia, Lower Silesia, Opole Silesia, and part of East Prussia, were to be the compensation for Poland. As a result of the arrangements, a large group of Poles was located outside the country. The Western Allies officially confirmed the status of the Provisional Government of National Unity, announcing the withdrawal of recognition of the government-in-exile in London, the only legal and universally recognised representation of the Polish nation.

The Prime Minister of the Polish Government, Tomasz Arciszewski, protested against the arrangements of the Yalta Conference by issuing a statement on 13 February 1945. He stated:

[...] the decisions of the Conference of the Three were prepared and taken not only without the participation and authority of the Polish Government, but also without its knowledge. This method, used in relation to Poland, is not only a denial of the elementary principles that apply to allies, but also an unquestionable violation of the letter and spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the right of everyone to stand up for their own interests. For this reason, the decisions of the Conference of the Three cannot be recognised by the Polish Government and cannot be binding on the Polish Nation. The detachment of half of Poland's territory from eastern Poland by the imposition of the so-called Curzon line as the Polish-Soviet border will be seen by the Polish people as a new partition of Poland, this time by Poland's Allies.



Photo: Public domain

Potsdam Conference

Date: 17 July – 2 August 1945
 Participants: Winston Churchill, later replaced by Clement Attlee (UK), Harry Truman (USA), Joseph Stalin (USSR)

The conference represented a symbolic transition from the Second World War to the Cold War period. The Americans had already had their first successful atomic bomb tests so the balance of power vis-à-vis the Soviet ally was changing. Stalin had informants in the Manhattan Project and soon had all the plans and technical data for the new bomb.

The Yalta resolutions were applied again. The delimitation of Soviet and Western Allied spheres of influence was discussed. As the Provisional Government of National Unity was recognised as the sole and official Polish cabinet, international recognition of the Polish government-in-exile was withdrawn. The issue of German reparations to Poland was taken up by Stalin; he gave assurances that he would satisfy Polish demands, but this never happened.

Churchill was horrified at the prospect of displacing the Germans from central Europe, but this matter had already been determined. He also refused to agree to a Polish border on the Lusatian Neisse. He was reluctant to accept the surrender of German lands to Poland, fearing a westward shift of the frontier of Soviet influence. Germany was subjected to the 4D principle: denazification, demilitarisation, decartelisation, and democratisation. The country's division into four occupation zones was confirmed, which, in 1949, gave rise to two German states: The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

The mission did not bear fruit. The primary objective (the transmission of knowledge of the relations in Poland to London on the eve of the Yalta Conference) was achieved at a marginal level. Only current radio reports reached London in time. The final written report with a very positive opinion of the Home Army and the Polish Underground State, drawn up in Moscow in late February/early March 1945, did not play a major role and the British, who were coming into contact with the Soviets in Poland, could not influence the course of history. Finally, the post-war world order decided at Yalta assumed the dominant position of the USSR in Central and Eastern Europe. Shortly afterwards, the Western powers withdrew their support for the Polish government in London.

As Antoni Pospieszalski points out in his memoirs, the mission was a failure. It was introduced to Poland but it was too late: "If a British military mission had been sent to Poland in 1943 or in the first half of 1944, during Operation Tempest and before the Warsaw Uprising, it might have had a bearing on the actions of the Home Army, and the attitude of the victorious Red Army towards the Polish armed effort. Perhaps even the Yalta Conference would have been different – if it had taken place." However, in 1945, "Colonel Hudson's enthusiastic report could not have influenced the situation; it is probably buried deep in the Foreign Office files."



Further fate of the commander and the Home Army soldiers covering the mission

Gen. Leopold Okulicki "Niedźwiadek"



Photo: National Digital Archives

In order to protect the soldiers from the NKVD and deprive the Russians of a pretext for repression, on 19 January 1945 in Częstochowa the commander of the Home Army issued his last order dissolving the Home Army and releasing the soldiers from their oath. The Home Army structures were to be taken over by the "NIE" organisation. Deceitfully arrested by the NKVD on 27 March 1945 in Pruszków, Okulicki was airlifted to Moscow and placed in Lubyanka prison. He underwent a tough NKVD investigation, culminating in a show trial of sixteen treacherously arrested PPP leaders (18-21 June 1945), who were accused of organising armed activity in the Red Army's rear. Despite his steadfastness, he received the highest sentence of the defendants – ten years in prison. He died in unexplained circumstances in Butyrka prison in Moscow on 24 December 1946.

Lt./Col. Józef Kotecki "Warta"

The commander of a crack defence unit of the mission. He received the War Order of Virtuti Militari from Gen. Okulicki on 3 January 1945 for rescuing the British during a skirmish with the Germans on 1 January 1945. After the unit was disbanded, he went with several soldiers with a thanksgiving prayer to Jasna Góra to symbolically begin a new stage of his life. He was under surveillance by the Office of Security. After the war, he graduated from the School of Engineering in Poznań; he worked in the electronics and armaments industries. In 1986, he was received by Pope John Paul II in a private audience at Castel Gandolfo. He then revealed to the Holy Father that he had protected the Miraculous Picture of the Black Madonna at the request of the Pauline Fathers in late 1944 and early 1945. In 2000, he was awarded the Jasna Góra Confederation Medal. From 1990 to 1992, he was an employee of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Repression. He died in 2003 and is buried in the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw.

Lt./Col. Karol Kutnicki "Kruk"

He commanded a crack defence unit of the mission, taken over from the wounded Lt Józef Kotecki "Warta", until the order for its dissolution on 17 January 1945. A few days later, he was recognised and arrested by the NKVD in Żytno. He was rushed on foot from Radomsko prison to Montelupich prison in Cracow. From there, he and other Home Army soldiers were transported deep into Russia. They ended up in the Lidiewka gulag where they were forced to work in the mines of the Donetsk Basin. After interrogation in the NKVD prison in Gorlovka, he was sentenced to death by the USSR war tribunal on 20 December 1946, which was commuted to 10 years' hard labour. In Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, he worked in tank production. He was employed in logging in the taiga beyond the Urals. Next he spent time in an SS camp near Stalingrad. In 1953, he was sent to a camp in Poćma near Moscow. He returned to Poland in 1954 and settled in Warsaw; however, the security services did not immediately leave him alone. He tried to find his soldiers. On his initiative, around 30 monuments and commemorative plaques were erected at battle sites and churches in the Radomsko, Częstochowa and Włoszczowa Home Army districts. He died in 1996 and rests in the cemetery in Marysin Wawerski.

2Lt/Capt. Szymon Zaremba "Jerzy", "Alun Morgan"

Gen. Okulicki's liaison officer and the sixth member of the mission. He reached Moscow and spent seven more months there with British intelligence officers. As the only Pole in Moscow who observed the famous "trial of the sixteen" for one day with General Okulicki as the main accused; he was the target of several assassination attempts by the NKVD. In September 1945, he arrived in London as a British officer, not quite formally from the point of view of the USSR, on the plane of the ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr. Until March 1946, he served in Scotland in the 6th (Special) Division of the Supreme Commander's Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. He remained in exile. He worked physically on a farm in Scotland until February 1950 and studied economics

and accounting extramurally at the School of Foreign Trade in London. From 1983, he was actively involved in social work for the Polish emigration and was, among others, President of the Polish Social and Cultural Centre (POSK) in London. At POSK, he met with Irena Anders, President Ryszard Kaczorowski, Jadwiga Piłsudska, and Polish Presidents Lech Wałęsa and Lech Kaczyński, among others. He died in 2015. He is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery in London.

In Katarzynów, Kobile Wielkie commune, since 1995, there is a monument dedicated to Corporal Janusz Urbanowicz "Nevada", a light machine gun operator for the protection of the Freston Mission who was the only one to die during the battle fought with the Germans on 1 January 1945.

At the invitation of the British ambassador, a group of more than a dozen Home Army soldiers who had once protected the Freston Mission met with British Queen Elizabeth II who was visiting Poland on 25 March 1996.

In November 2014, a plaque was unveiled in the Wielgomłyny commune to commemorate a meeting in the "Zacisze" forester's lodge between Gen. Leopold Okulicki, commander of the Home Army, and members of the British mission.



Further readings:

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- N. Davies, *Powstanie 1944*, Kraków 2004.
- Drogi cichociemnych*, Warszawa 1993.
- T. Drozd, *Operacja SOE pod kryptonimem "Freston". Misja brytyjska w Polsce - 1944/1945*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2005, No. 2, pp. 177-198.
- Report on the British Observer Mission Despatched to German Occupied Poland 26th December 1944*, "Najnowsze Dzieje Polski. Materiały i Studia z Okresu Drugiej Wojny Światowej" 1965, 19, pp. 216-256.
- Z. Zieliński, *Brytyjska Misja Wojskowa SOE FRESTON 1944*, „Niepodległość i Pamięć” 2007, No. 14/1 (25), pp. 157-166.

Internet sources:

Portal dedicated to the Silent Unseen (elitadywersji.org)



Photo: Z. Zieliński, *Brytyjska Misja Wojskowa SOE FRESTON 1944*, „Niepodległość i Pamięć” 2007, No. 14/1 (25).



Photo: <https://lesopoldekulicki.blogspot.com/> 2011/10/gen-okulicki-misja-specjal-operations.html



Photo from the collection of Grzegorz Turlejki.







It was night. For me, this convoy was weird because there was a special vigilance and no one spoke to anyone. Two vehicles were loaded with soldiers, all covered with some hoods and blankets, and there were some crates. I found it suspicious because I had already dealt with more than one unit as a liaison officer and I had never seen a convoy shrouded in such secrecy. I didn't find out until later that I had led the Freston Mission for a few kilometres through the woods with the security of Lt. "Twardy" and Lt. "Roman" to Lt. "Warta".

(Zbigniew Zieliński "Sęka"; as a 15-year-old, he was a liaison officer of the 27th Home Army Infantry Regiment in 1944)

On 11 February, they were all transported by air to Mielec. It is not known whether this was by chance or was awaited, but it was on this day that the Yalta Conference ended.

[...]

A group of several military observers failed to influence the course of events in Poland. This was impossible.

(J. Durka, "Freston" – brytyjska misja wojskowa SOE w Polsce. Przygotowania – przebieg – fiasko, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 2007, vol. 161)



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