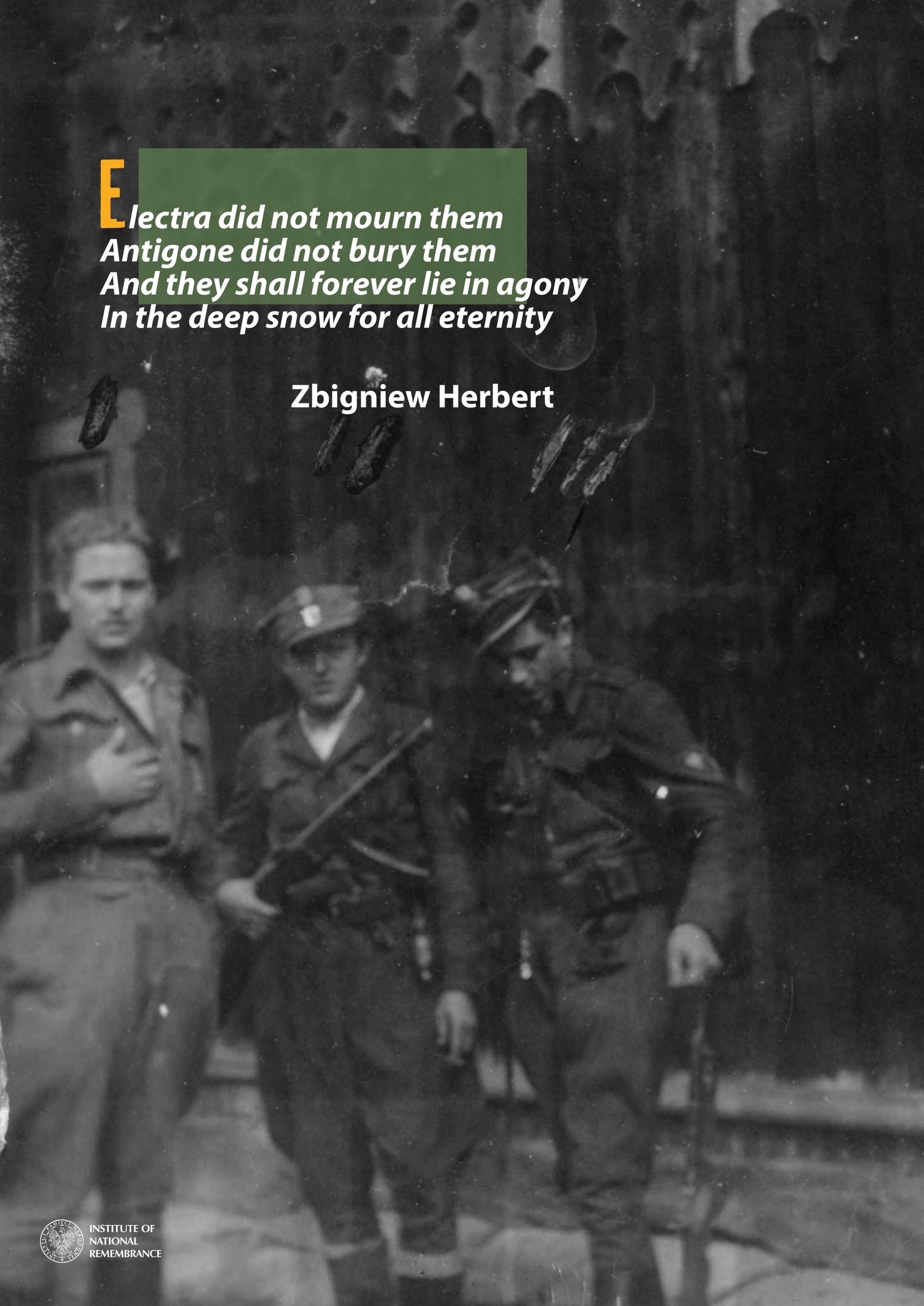


ACCURSED SOLDIERS PRO-INDEPENDENCE UNDERGROUND 1944-1963



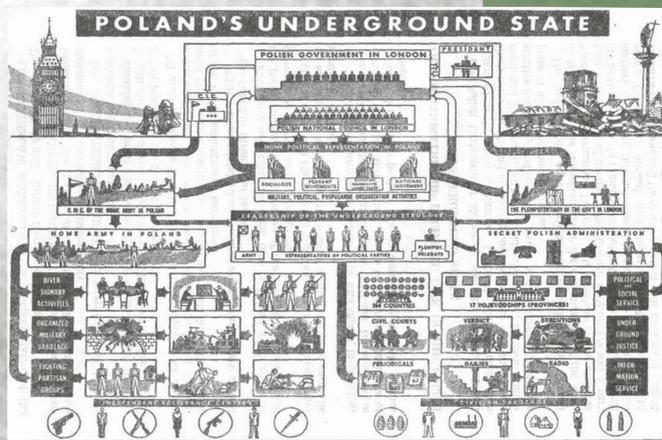
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Photo: 5th Wilno Brigade of the Home Army, July 1945. AIPN.



Electra did not mourn them
Antigone did not bury them
And they shall forever lie in agony
In the deep snow for all eternity

Zbigniew Herbert



Despite Soviet and German occupation, the constitutional Polish authorities continued to operate, both in exile and back home, with the Polish Underground State (Polskie Państwo Podziemne, PPP) established in the territory of occupied Poland. Numerous military organizations were established in the Polish underground. Beginning with 1942, most of them were merged into the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK), that is, the underground Polish Army. Its objective was to start an uprising at the right moment. There were also other underground organizations, with the major ones associated with the National Party and the peasants' movement.



Soviets and Germans in Brest, 1939. AIPN.

Poland was invaded twice in 1939: on 1 September by the Third Reich and on 17 September by the Soviet Union, which at that time was Germany's key ally. The occupiers divided the territory of the Second Republic of Poland between themselves.

When in 1941 Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union, Great Britain paved the way for the Soviets' joining the anti-Nazi coalition. After the initial German victories the Soviet Union took over the initiative in 1943 with an aim to incorporate some of the Polish lands into the USSR and subjugate Central and Eastern Europe.

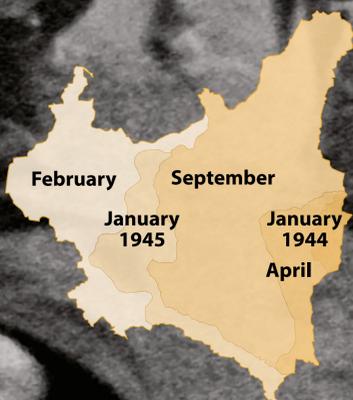
THE GERMAN AND THE SOVIET INVASION 1939

Burning Royal Castle in Warsaw in 1939. AIPN.

THE SOVIETS MARCH IN 1944

In the war zone on the territory of Poland [...] the highest authority and the responsibility concerning all matters connected with waging war [...] shall be concentrated in the hands of the commander-in-chief of the Soviet army.

Article 1 of an agreement between the USSR and the Polish Committee of National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN), signed on 26 July 1944. The PKWN was established on 21 July 1944 in Moscow and was a puppet organ, entirely subordinate to Stalin. It was to act as the government of conquered Poland and was later transformed into the Provisional Government. The PKWN affirmed the Polish-Soviet border along the Curzon Line, that is, on the River Bug, which was tantamount to the loss of the entire Eastern Borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland.



The map illustrates the stages of the Red Army's marching onto the territory of the Second Republic of Poland. The arrival of the 'ally of our allies' onto the Polish territory made the Home Army launch Operation Tempest. The objective was for representatives of the Polish Government in London to seize power on the liberated territories.

On 4 January 1944 the Red Army crossed the pre-war Polish border. In the following months it captured the Polish Eastern Borderlands, which were then incorporated into the USSR. Introduced on the remaining Polish territory, the communist administration was subordinate to the Kremlin. Those actions were coupled with liquidation of the legal Polish authorities, and repressions against soldiers of the Polish underground. The communists did not enjoy support of the general public. Without the Soviet backup and terror they would have never managed to take over the power in Poland.

Red Army troops in Cracow, 1945.
From Romuald Broniarek's archive/FORUM.



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By what right do you, Poles, fancy Polish independence? Why, the Soviet authority reaches all the way to here and we can put independence out of your head. It is Marshal Rokossowski's job to bring you down a peg or two.

Mateusz Frydman, investigator of the Main Directorate of Information of the Polish Army



Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin during the Yalta Conference in February 1945. U.S. National Archives.

With the German defeat, during the conferences in Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam the victorious powers decided to leave Poland under Soviet authority. The Polish borders were altered — the pre-war Eastern Borderlands were incorporated into the USSR, while in the west and north Poland obtained lands which had belonged to Germany.

In Yalta Poland was promised 'free and fair' elections, open to democratic and anti-fascist parties, after the war.



The communist power elite: Bolesław Bierut (third on the left), Wanda Wasilewska, Michał Rola-Żymierski (second on the right), with their principal — Joseph Stalin, 21 April 1945, Moscow. The photo was taken on the occasion of the signing of the Polish–Soviet friendship treaty. PAP.



On 27 and 28 March 1945 16 leaders of the Polish Underground State were unlawfully arrested and transported to Moscow. The men were sentenced in a show trial, which was an element of the planned liquidation of the legal structures of the Polish state and their substitution with the puppet authorities subordinate to the USSR. Photo: defendants during the trial in Moscow. Public domain.

The victory parade in London which could not be attended by Polish soldiers who had fought by the Allies' side during WWII. The Illustrated London News, 15 July 1946.

**YALTA
1945**

HIERONIM DEKUTOWSKI 'ZAPORA'

Approximately 400-strong, a group commanded by Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora' proved a significant force, conducting a few dozen major military actions, which paralyzed the functioning of the communist authorities. It operated in Lublin, Kielce, and Rzeszów Provinces. Photo: Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora' (on the left) and Captain Zdzisław Broński 'Uskok'. AIPN.



'LALUŚ', THE LAST ACCURSED SOLDIER



Sergeant Józef Franczak 'Laluś' was the last partisan of the second underground who perished in combat. A soldier of the 1939 Defensive War, active in the Union of Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej, ZWZ) and then in the AK. In August 1944 forcedly conscripted into the Polish 2nd Army. Józef Franczak deserted in early 1945 after witnessing the murders committed by the communists on Home Army (AK) soldiers. Hid from the law enforcement agencies for 18 years. Fought under 'Zapora's command. 'Laluś' was fought dead by the Citizens' Militia operational group on 21 October 1963. AIPN.

The Accursed Soldiers were members of the armed pro-independence underground who, beginning with 1944, fought against Soviet occupation and the communist regime imposed by Moscow. The communists called them 'bandits' and 'fascists', contorting their history and distorting the objective they were fighting for. The regime was trying to erase the Accursed Soldiers from the collective consciousness.



Born in 1925, Master Sergeant Mieczysław Dzimieszkiewicz 'Rój' was conscripted into the communist Polish Army immediately after the war. When his brother, a soldier of the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, NSZ), was murdered by the Soviets in the autumn of 1945, 'Rój' joined the partisan forces. Until his death in 1951 he mounted armed resistance against the communist system and its functionaries. Photo: Mieczysław Dzimieszkiewicz 'Rój' (first on the left) with his detachments. AIPN.

The implementation of Stalin's actual plans regarding Poland sparked armed resistance, which was a continuation of the struggle for independence which had begun in 1939. The combat trail of most Accursed Soldiers began during the war and continued in the post-war reality, although some of them began their pro-independence fight after the end of the German occupation due to their young age.

After the war 120,000–180,000 people were active in the pro-independence underground. Almost half of them recruited from the AK, 30,000–40,000 were associated with the nationalist circles, and another 30,000–40,000 fought in local underground groups.

WHO WERE THE ACCURSED SOLDIERS?



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INFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA ACTIVITY



Photo: Władysław Kaba-
ciński (on the left) and
printer Stanisław Ro-
spod standing beside
the printing press of the
Southern Region of the
Freedom and Independ-
ence Association. Placed
at the Discarded Carme-
lite Fathers' cloister, the
press was discovered by
the Security Office (Urząd
Bezpieczeństwa, UB) on 6
November 1945. AIPN.

Members of the underground and the communists were both aware that if the elections were to be free, the new government would not stand a chance. The underground's information centers were to keep up the spirit of resistance and spread uncensored news. Samizdat newspapers and leaflets were to break the communists' monopoly on news.

Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz 'Łupaszka' (on the left), First Lieutenant Jerzy Jezierski 'Stefan' — soldiers of the 5th Wilno Brigade of the Home Army walking on a river bank, 1945. AIPN.



THE MAIN UNDERGROUND FORMATIONS

Post Home Army structures prevailed in the post-war anti-communist underground. The NIE organization was established in place of the disbanded Home Army (AK), and was later substituted with the Office of the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland. In the autumn of 1945 the Office was replaced with the Freedom and Independence Association (Zrzeszenie "Wolność i Niezawisłość," WiN). As the organization had a civil profile, its objectives were of a social and political nature. Due to the Soviet terror many WiN activists continued their struggle in partisan units.

The second major force was the nationalist underground. After the disbanding of the Home Army its units of nationalist provenience formed the National Military Union (Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe, NZW) together with the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, NSZ). Some of the nationalist underground, particularly the NSZ, mounted armed resistance to the Red Army upon its arrival on the Polish territory. After the war the nationalists put even greater emphasis on the need for armed resistance than the post-Home Army underground.

THE POST-HOME ARMY AND THE NATIONALIST FORMATIONS





We learned [...] that the NKVD or Polish Security Services were waiting for each of us in our homes. So how could we return home? We went back into the forest instead...

Fragment of an interview with T. Grotek, *Migawki z Przeszłości* (Warsaw, 2010).

The armed underground was also organized from the bottom-up. The scale of the Soviet repressions led to a recreation of disbanded units and new partisans joining the underground. A number of regional or local organizations were established following the entrance of the Red Army. The largest of them were: the Greater Poland Independent Volunteer Group 'Warta', the Underground Polish Army, and the 'Błyskawica' Partisan Group.



Captain Stanisław Sojczyński 'Warszyc' chose to ignore the 19 January 1945 order to disband the Home Army. From a battalion under his command, he established an underground organization codenamed 'Manewr', which was later transformed into the Underground Polish Army. In 1946 it consisted of as many as approx. 2,600 people, operating in 18 counties of the Łódź Province. Photo: Captain Stanisław Sojczyński 'Warszyc'.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS



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FREEING PRISONERS

One of the elements of the self-defense was attacking camps, prisons, and jails run by the NKVD and the Polish security apparatus. The partisans did that to free their brothers in arms and underground activists. The underground also attacked Citizens' Militia and Security Office stations, paralyzing the operation of the communist repression apparatus and providing additional weapons to the partisan units. The Accursed Soldiers also conducted actions during which the overzealous activists of the communist regime were lashed or even liquidated.

Photo: partisans from a unit commanded by First Lieutenant Stefan Bembiński 'Harnaś' before attacking a prison in Kielce. AIPN.

The Radomsko city jail, which was attacked twice by 'Warszyc's' units. On the night of 19–20 April 1946 they freed 57 Rzejowice inhabitants detained for providing aid to the partisans. Some of the soldiers deployed to fight the units of the Underground Polish Army joined the partisans.

Some underground leaders were aware that independence could not be won through armed combat because that would have required defeating not only Polish communists, but also the USSR. Thus the partisan units were to paralyze or hamper the operation of the communist administration, with the objective to persevere until the elections promised during the Yalta Conference.

The armed actions against the communist regime's forces were conducted mostly, but not exclusively, in self-defense — the partisans were defending themselves against the manhunts aimed at destroying their units.

ARMED CLASHES



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They started looting whatever they could. [...] Then grenades were thrown into the attic of the house, and also into the barn and the shed. The explosions started a fierce fire. The attackers magnanimously spared the old folks' lives, leaving them on the smoldering ruins.

Pacification of 'Uskok's' family home



With regard to the partisans' families, the communists applied collective responsibility, not hesitating to loot or set the partisans' family farms on fire or repress their wives, children, parents, and siblings, often very severely. The arrests of family members were sometimes used as a means to make the underground activists surrender to the security service.

FAMILIES

It is possible to imagine even for a moment that the world [...] could sell millions of people who trusted it into captivity?

'Szlakiem Narbutta', December 1944.



The arrest of NZW partisan Michał Krupa 'Wierzba' on 11 February 1959. Krupa was sentenced to life imprisonment mitigated to 15 years imprisonment. He was released in 1965. AIPN.



After the Red Army had marched across the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland, the Polish partisans who remained behind the front line were doomed to die in combat or as a result of Soviet manhunts. One of them was Second Lieutenant Anatol Radziwnik 'Olech' (1916–1946), an officer of the Home Army, and commander of the merged Lida and Shchuchyn Home Army regions, who fought against the Soviets after their seizure of the Eastern Borderlands. He died in combat against the NKVD units. AIPN.



Partisans of First Lieutenant Waclaw Grabowski 'Puszczuk's' NZW unit killed during a skirmish with the Security Service, 5 July 1953. AIPN.

The Soviets began to fight against the underground from the moment they entered the Polish territory. They were aware that taking over and maintaining power depended on the liquidation of the resistance movement. Initially, that task was entrusted to the NKVD units that marched in along with the Red Army. Local structures of the terror apparatus, that is, offices of public security, were then organized in every province and county capital, with the Soviet officers' active participation.

The repressions were supplemented with propaganda, the objective of which was to dehumanize the pro-independence activists and present them as 'criminals', 'bandits', 'fascists', and 'reactionaries'. In some cases this propaganda outlived the communist regime and can still be heard.

COUNTERACTING THE UNDERGROUND



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The Warsaw government has finally decided to call the election. We have been waiting for this moment for months, convinced that the steadfast will of the entire nation shall finally lead to [...] the removal of the dictatorship and the communist violence.

Fragment of a pre-election leaflet distributed by the Freedom and Independence Association, autumn 1946.

The election promised during the Yalta Conference took place on 19 January 1947. Before that happened, the communists acted against those who could prevent or hamper its rigging. Over 400,000 Poles were deprived of the right to vote. The Security Services arrested approx. 80,000 people and held them in preventive custody. Last but not least, in the winter of 1947/1948 hunts were conducted for the partisan units, many of which were destroyed.

The votes were not counted as the result was known in advance. The rigged elections, the lack of reaction on the part of the West, and the repressions led to a crisis in the underground. After the winter manhunts many of the partisans had nowhere to return to. Consequently, 53,000 people reported to the authorities as a result of the amnesty announced after the elections. The armed resistance ceased to exist, with only a small number of units and individual partisans remaining in the underground.

ELECTIONS AND AMNESTY 1947



Corpse of Józef Halica, the chairman of the Polish People's Party Cracow-Prokocim Circle, who was murdered on 22 October 1946 on his own doorstep. His death is an example of the communists' struggle against the legal opposition. AIPN.



Captain Henryk Flame 'Bartek', a leader of the pro-independence underground, reported to the authorities within the framework of the amnesty. He was killed with a shot to his back by a People's Militia functionary. The authorities announced the amnesty to expose and register underground activists. Thus obtained information was then used to repress those who had given up the fight. AIPN.



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The 1947 election to the Sejm (parliament). S. Urbanowicz/PAP.

When it comes to political investigations we have used violence and we shall continue using it because it is the best way to force our enemies to tell the truth.

Józef Dusza, investigator of the Ministry of Public Security

CAPTAIN WITOLD PILECKI

Fought in the 1920 Polish-Soviet War and the 1939 Defensive War, an Home Army soldier. In the autumn of 1940 Pilecki volunteered to be arrested and deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he set up an underground network. Pilecki prepared and sent reports concerning the genocide the Germans committed there. In 1943 he escaped from the camp and continued his fight in the underground. Pilecki did not stop even after the war and did not report to the authorities despite two amnesties. Arrested in May 1947, he was sentenced to death in March 1948 after a brutal investigation and show trial. The sentence was carried out on 25 May that year — Pilecki was shot in the back of his head in the prison in the Mokotów quarter of Warsaw. His burial place remains unknown.



Colonel Łukasz Ciepliński 'Ostrowski', 'Pług', chairman of the 4th Main Board of the Freedom and Independence Association. Murdered on 1 March 1951 with a shot in the back of his head in the prison on Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw. The Accursed Soldiers National Remembrance Day is celebrated on the anniversary of his death. AIPN.

In the new conditions, the post-war armed underground continued the pro-independence struggle which commenced back in 1939. The resistance initially enjoyed strong social support and until 1946 controlled the situation in many municipalities and counties. However, the elections rigged by the communists and the scale of the repressions slowed down its dynamic.

The terror apparatus was built basing on the Soviet model. Officers of the NKVD and the occupier's other formations, dressed in Polish uniforms, organized and supervised the introduction of the communist system. Their local collaborators eagerly adopted the methods tested in the Soviet Union. The communist repression apparatus and the judiciary made up the syndicate of crime, which was composed of hundreds of functionaries: the prison service, investigators, public prosecutors, judges, and executioners. They conducted brutal investigations and show trials, which were actually court murders. By 1956 more than 8,000 death sentences had been passed. The liquidated were often buried in unmarked pits.

Captain Witold Pilecki during his trial. Public domain.

COURT CRIMES



In Warsaw, until 1947 the bodies the victims of the communist court crimes had been buried secretly on the premises of prisons and jails, by the fence of the cemetery in the Służew quarter of Warsaw, and on the Bródno cemetery in Warsaw. In January 1948 it was ordered that the bodies be buried on communal cemeteries. A piece of land adjacent to the Powązki military cemetery in Warsaw was designated for that purpose. Until the end of People's Poland the information about the burial places of the pro-independence activists had been classified by the communists as state secret.

The pit where the bodies of Major Hieronim Dekutowski 'Zapora' and soldiers from his unit were buried. In 2012 their remains were found by the IPN search team. Photograph by Piotr Życieński.



When the 'adult' underground was coming to an end and only individual partisans were in hiding, the phenomenon of youth organizations was born in the underground. At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s thousands of young people began to organize the pro-independence underground. In most instances those were small groups active in individual schools, but there were also larger ones which operated on a greater scale. Sometimes called the 'generation of younger brothers', their members had been too young to fight during the war. In the years 1948–1955 the security apparatus liquidated almost 1,000 youth organizations, sentencing approx. 11,000 teenagers engaged in their activity.

Khrushchev's 1956 Secret Speech, which condemned some of Stalin's crimes, was a sign of a political turning point. The spring brought another amnesty. 'Rehabilitation trials' began. The terror somewhat subsided. But even so, the Accused Soldiers were hunted down by the security apparatus one by one, and then sentenced or murdered. The last of them, Józef Franczak 'Laluś', was shot dead in 1963.

The memory of the Accused had been distorted throughout the period of the communist system in Poland. It was only in the 1990s that the Republican League and other patriotic circles and then also the Institute of National Remembrance began to work on bringing them back to their rightful place in Polish history.



A delousing facility in the camp for juvenile delinquents (up to the age of 21) in Jaworzno. With the large scale of resistance among the youth, the communists organized a special 'reeducation' institution, which operated in the years 1951–1956. About a dozen thousand young people were 'reeducated' there through slave labour and intense indoctrination. Photograph by T. Szymański. From the archive of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

YOUTH UNDERGROUND

THE ACCURSED

IN NUMBERS

120,000–180,000

RESISTANCE MEMBERS.

OVER 17,000 PARTISANS.

ABOUT A DOZEN THOUSAND

DEAD AND MURDERED.

THE LAST ACCURSED SOLDIER DIED

18 YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR II.

