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CONCEPTS OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY
POSITION OF THE POLISH UNDERGROUND STATE
IN RESPONSE TO THE RED ARMY'S INVASION
OF THE EASTERN TERRITORIES OF THE SECOND
REPUBLIC OF POLAND (1943–1944)
– A BROAD OUTLINE

During World War II, the main aim of the Polish President, the Polish Government in Exile, the Polish Armed Forces in Exile and the Polish Army in occupied Poland was to regain full sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Polish state. The achievement of that goal was determined not only by the defeat of the Third Reich but also by the policies exercised by the USSR, one of aggressors who dismembered the Second Republic of Poland in September 1939 and later joined the Great Coalition. During the war, Soviet policies addressing Poland's quest for independence posed the greatest legal challenge for the Polish Government in Exile and its home divisions. The Western Allies approached the political aspects of that struggle with a vast degree of ambiguity.

The complexity of the problem in Polish foreign policy resulted from the fact that upon Germany's invasion of Russia on 22 June 1941, the Soviet Union automatically broke off its close alliance with Hitler, becoming the key member of the anti-German camp. In the years that followed, the Soviet army engaged the German (and not only) forces in a series of battles that inflicted a devastating blow on the military and economic potential of the Third Reich and its allies. The Red Army's continued success gave impetus to the Soviet Union's expansive, imperial foreign policy. The Soviets launched aggressive propaganda campaigns which undermined Poland's right to sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Eastern Borderlands¹. Those measures

¹ W. Materski., *Zerwanie stosunków polsko-sowieckich* in: *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, ed. W. Michowicz, vol. 5: 1939–1945, Warszawa 1999, pp. 319–387; idem, *Na widencie. II Rzeczpospolita wobec Sowietów 1918–1943*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 655–701.

weakened Poland's efforts to protect its rights in the east. The Western Allies turned a blind eye on Poland's struggle in fear of severing their relations with Moscow², especially since they failed to open a second theater of war³.

The vast disproportions in Poland's and the USSR's military and economic potential detracted from the government-in-exile's significance in the Allied camp. Owing to British and American war strategies, President Raczkiewicz and the successive prime ministers (Sikorski and Mikołajczyk) found their efforts to protect Polish sovereignty in the eastern territories not only difficult but, in the contemporary military reality, completely impossible and futile. The Western Allies' attitudes towards the Polish problem were best illustrated during the breakthrough period in Polish-Soviet relations in April 1943 when the Germans had discovered a mass grave of Polish officers murdered by the NKVD in 1940 in Smolensk⁴.

The USSR's decision to break off diplomatic relations was a powerful blow for the Polish authorities and their struggle to secure Polish rights in the Eastern Borderlands. This problem took on a new significance in the face of suspicions that the Soviet army would be the first to enter the territory of the Nazi-occupied Poland. In the second half of 1943, Polish-Soviet relations did not focus entirely on the Eastern Borderlands, but they also addressed rudimentary issues, namely Poland's independence which, despite Poland's efforts on the anti-German front, became highly debatable in the face of Russia's increasingly blatant imperial ambitions.

The Red Army's advance towards Poland's pre-war borders was one of the key problems facing the Polish Government in Exile and, above all, its factions in the occupied country. The Polish underground movement, in particular the Polish Underground State, became divided over the matter at the turn of 1943 and 1944. The differences concerned the structure of the conspiracy movement which was to be preserved in the face of the encroaching troops of "our allies' ally".

² J. Tebinka J., *Polityka brytyjska wobec problemu granicy polsko-radzieckiej 1939–1945*, Warszawa 1998, passim; M. Hałas, *Goście czy intruzi? Rząd polski na uchodźstwie. Wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1943*, Warszawa 1996, passim.

³ According to the Western Allies, there was a threat of a repeated scenario from 1918 when Russia and Germany had signed a peace treaty. In the absence of Anglo-Saxon armies on the continent, the Western Allies were particularly cautious not to generate tension in their relations with Russia.

⁴ *Zbrodnia katyńska w świetle dokumentów*, ed. J. Mackiewicz, Londyn 1982, p. 85; W. Materski, *Zerwanie stosunków...*, p. 374; idem, *Na widecie...*, p. 701; E. Duraczyński, *Rząd Polski na uchodźstwie 1939–1945. Organizacja, personalia, polityka*, Warszawa 1993, p. 222; cf. *Prawdziwa historia Polaków. Ilustrowane wypisy źródłowe 1939–1945*, ed. D. Baliszewski, A.K. Kunert, vol. 2: *1943–1944*, Warszawa 1999, p. 1005; Andrzej K. Kunert and Dariusz Baliszewski suggest the date of 11 April 1943; for more information on the discovery of the mass grave, refer to: A. Paul, *Katyń. Stalinska masakra i tryumf prawdy*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 197–209.

The strategy to be adopted in the event of a Soviet invasion was one of the key points of a national uprising plan developed by the 3rd Division of the General Command of the Union of Armed Struggle (KG ZWZ) and the Commander-in-Chief's Headquarters. In the initial uprising plan, "Operations Report No. 54", forwarded to London on 5 February 1941, KG ZWZ accounted for the threat to insurgent operations that could be posed by the second occupant, USSR, on the anti-Nazi front⁵. A defense strategy accounting for the Red Army's hostility towards the insurgents had been developed before the Soviet-German war in a completely different political reality. The Soviet occupation of Poland's Eastern Borderlands plunged the USSR and the Second Republic of Poland into a state of war, and the Red Army's potential advance was perceived as the greatest threat to Polish military efforts and quest for independence both from the political and the military perspective. After 22 June 1941, Polish territory was occupied by only one aggressor, and the signing of the Sikorski–Mayski agreement completely changed the initial concept of the anti-German uprising in Poland⁶. The USSR's attitude to the military and political strategies of the Polish Underground State was an important consideration in the decision-making process both for the Government in Exile and its domestic divisions. Despite the fact that Poland and the Soviet Union had established official diplomatic relations, that a Polish army was being organized in the USSR and that both countries were members of the same political and military camp, by 1942, the command of the Polish Army in exile⁷ and at home feared the military and political consequences of the Red Army's invasion of Poland. On 22 June 1942, General

⁵ M. Ney-Krwawicz, *Koncepcje powstania powszechnego na ziemiach polskich* in: *Operacja "Burza" i Powstanie Warszawskie 1944*, ed. K. Komorowski, Warszawa 2004, pp. 68–71; idem, *Koncepcje walki i powstania in: Armia Krajowa. Szkice z dziejów Sił Zbrojnych Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego*, ed. K. Komorowski, Warszawa 1999, pp. 207–212; see also: idem, *Koncepcje walki Armii Krajowej in: Władze RP na obczyźnie podczas II wojny światowej*, ed. Z. Błażyński, Londyn 1994, pp. 527–533.

⁶ In "Personal and classified instructions for the national commander" of 8 March 1942", Commander-in-Chief general Sikorski argued that the possibility of a Polish-Soviet treaty should be taken into account in operation plans; *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: VI 1941 – IV 1943, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1990, p. 202.

⁷ In his instructions addressed to General Rowecki ("Rakoń", "Kalina", "Grot"), General Sikorski noted that the Soviet army, pressured by German forces, could launch a counterattack already in 1942. As the result "Germany would be defeated, and the Russian army would enter German territory, partially through Poland". Sikorski emphasized that if the envisioned situation were to take place, "we would be unable to actively counteract the Russian troops entering Poland in pursuit of the withdrawing German army. The State and the Polish Armed Forces at Home could be effectively reinstated only if Russia were to act in good will to fulfill the undertaken obligations [...]". General Sikorski observed that anti-Russian campaigns could be completely incomprehensible for the Western Allies; therefore, they could be subjected to acute criticism, and they could be used by the Soviets as a pretext to "break off the agreement and occupy our Country. This could lead to unnecessary bloodshed". Nonetheless, "we should be fully prepared when the Bolsheviks encroach into our territory", argued Sikorski, and the Polish Armed Forces at Home would stage a military attack against German troops; *ibidem*, p. 203.

Rowecki, Commander of the Home Army, forwarded "Report No. 132. Poland's position on Russia and our options in the eastern territories"⁸ to the Commander-in-Chief. The report listed issues that had a decisive impact on Polish operation plans in the Soviet front. General Rowecki wrote that "Russia always has been and always will be our enemy"⁹. In "Instructions 1111/42", Rowecki recommended the observance of the provisions of the Sikorski-Mayski agreement in the Polish army's operation plans, and referred to the agreement as "a tool in the battle against Germany. The agreement was not a manifestation of the Poles' and the Bolsheviks' free will, but it was imposed on both parties by the German invasion of Russia"¹⁰. Rowecki thus implied that political guarantees would not offer real protection to Polish interests in the event of the Red Army's advance. In the "Kalina" report, he analyzed three hypothetical case scenarios in the eastern front, he described their impact on the planned uprising and the ensuing threat from the Soviet armed forces. As regards the most pessimistic third variant which envisaged the Soviet army's victory over German forces and the USSR's advance into Europe in the footsteps of withdrawing Nazi troops, General Rowecki was of the opinion that an armed struggle should not be initiated against the Germans. He argued that the German occupation would be swiftly replaced by Soviet military control. The following recommendations were formulated in the "Kalina" report: protecting state administration by appointing the Government Delegate for Poland, his cabinet and public security agencies (National Security Corps /PKB/ and Internal Affairs Department /DSW/), keeping the Polish army in exile and refraining from exposing the Home Army¹¹. The possibility of armed retaliation against Soviet aggression could not be ruled out¹².

Although the USSR was listed in the "allies"¹³ section of the successive uprising plan detailed in "Orientation report No. 154", developed by the

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 273–278.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 274.

¹¹ According to General Rowecki "The Home Army would emerge from hiding only when we have a sufficient guarantee that Moscow will be loyal, and that it will not hinder our efforts to restore an independent Polish Republic". The Soviets were expected to provide such a guarantee as the result of the efforts undertaken by the Polish Government in Exile on the international arena with the full involvement of the Western Allies; *ibidem*, p. 275.

¹² According to the General Command of the Home Army, an armed retaliation was part of the third option during the anti-German rising. When faced with the threat of being disarmed by the approaching Soviet troops, the Polish Armed Forces at Home stationed in the insurgent base (the "redoubt") would take military action to shake the conscience of the West and give a clear answer to Britain's and the USA's position on the Polish-Soviet conflict. Rowecki did not support this scenario because it would imply Poland's defeat, nevertheless "even if we are in for a hopeless fight, we can't give it up on account of our responsibility to the future generations"; *ibidem*, p. 277.

¹³ Rowecki wrote: "Russia. I consider it to be an ally only for formal reasons, and I deeply believe that Russia will demonstrate a hostile attitude to Poland as soon as it has regained its strength [...]"; *ibidem*, p. 332.

General Command of the Home Army on 8 September 1942, the author of the “Kalina” report demonstrated a highly cautious, if not pessimistic, approach to the Soviet invasion of Poland. General Rowecki was of the opinion that the Red Army’s advance into Poland would ultimately end in yet another occupation which the country would not be able to resist effectively. According to the Home Army commander, the Polish Armed Forces should remain a part of the conspiracy movement, and their existence could be communicated to the public only upon the commander-in-chief’s explicit orders¹⁴.

As the eastern front advanced towards Poland’s pre-war borders, the Soviet threat became a predominant topic of debate in the underground movement’s plans to stage an anti-German uprising¹⁵. In radiogram messages forwarded in 1943, General Rowecki proposed to replace the plans detailed in reports No. 54 and 154 with a series of local uprisings. Leaving aside the military considerations, in particular the combat potential of the Polish Armed Forces on the German front, the purpose of an armed struggle was to manifest the “Polishness” of the Eastern Borderlands. In the face of USSR’s increasingly brutal territorial claims¹⁶, this concept became a crucial motivator underlying the Polish military effort. The local uprising concept proposed by General Rowecki was approved by the Commander-in-Chief who wrote in a telegram of 25 March 1943 that in the event of the Red Army’s invasion, only the civilian administration should be revealed, whereas Home Army troops exposed during military struggle against the Germans should be “withdrawn deeper into the country to prevent their destruction”¹⁷.

The USSR’s decision to break off diplomatic ties with Poland was a clear sign of the Soviets’ true intentions towards Poland, in particular on the eve of the Red Army’s invasion of Poland’s eastern territories. On 25 April 1943, the former Soviet ally became the “our allies’ ally”, and this fact had a significant bearing on emergency scenarios developed by the Polish authorities. The Polish government had to swiftly develop clear guidelines for facing the Soviet army and preserving Poland’s sovereignty. This urgent need was communicated by General Rowecki¹⁸ in his telegrams to the Com-

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 333.

¹⁵ According to General Rowecki’s report of 26 February 1943, the outbreak of the uprising should be coordinated with “the encroachment of the Russian army, rather than the collapse of Germany”; ibidem, p. 423; see also: M. Ney-Krwawicz, *Koncepcje powstania...*, p. 78; idem, *Koncepcje walki...*, p. 216; idem, *Koncepcje walki Armii Krajowej...*, pp. 540–541.

¹⁶ Ref. W. Materski, *Na widecie...*, pp. 685–700.

¹⁷ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach...*, vol. 2, pp. 485–486.

¹⁸ In the telegram of 19 June 1943, he wrote: “Whereas I am fully aware that our Soviet policy is wrought with problems, I find it difficult to keep track of the sudden and unexpected twists in political relations. In the underground world, every change of orders is extremely difficult to execute, and when it comes to the eastern borderlines – it is practically impossible. [...] I can command the army to adopt only one attitude towards the Russians at a time”; *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 3: *IV 1943 – VII 1944*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1990, p. 29. According to “Kalina”, a defensive position defined in a cohesive and logical manner would lay the foundations for a further plan of action which would be consistent with the operations on the anti-German front; ibidem, p. 32.

mander-in-Chief. Based on the former Soviet policy addressing Poland, Rowecki argued that Poland should adopt “an active and defensive stance, therefore, a generally hostile stance” towards the USSR¹⁹.

The General Command of the Home Army became clearly divided over the Polish-Russian issue in 1943, in particular in the second half of the year. The General Commander of the Polish Army, General Komorowski – Bór, Chief of Staff General Pełczyński and Colonel Irenek – Osmecki upheld their uncompromising positions regarding Soviet territorial claims. They were clearly opposed by other Home Army officers, among them General Stanisław Tatar (“Erazm”), head of the 3rd Division of General Command, and lieutenant colonel Marian Drobik (“Dzięcioł”), head of the 2nd Division of General Command²⁰, who argued that in consequence of Soviet victory in the eastern front, the Red Army would invade Poland already in the winter of 1943/1944. They claimed that Poland’s fate would be decided by the USSR, and any attempts to resist the Soviets would be sheer madness, a futile struggle aimed at saving Poland’s honor that would ultimately lead to the downfall of the Polish Underground State²¹. They advocated a flexible tactic towards the USSR that would be based on a rational analysis of Poland’s resources in 1943 and 1944 and its ability to win the political and military conflict with the Soviets. The results of the analysis left no room for hope – every confrontation with the USSR would end in a devastating defeat of Poland. General Tatar and Lieutenant Colonel Drobik suggested in two separate reports that urgent attempts should be made to reach agreement with the Kremlin, even at the expense of the Eastern Borderlines²². In their opinion, the proposed solution was Poland’s only chance of establishing its own

¹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 30, 31. General Rowecki argued that depicting the Soviets as allies to the Polish independence movement was a big mistake which undermined the Polish army’s morale and disintegrated social unity; ibidem, p. 30.

²⁰ W. Bułhak, *Raport szefa Oddziału II KG AK ppłk. dypl. Mariana Drobika “Bieżąca polityka polska a rzeczywistość” i sprawa jego aresztowania (listopad–grudzień 1943)* in: *Wywiad i Kontrwywiad Armii Krajowej*, ed. W. Bułhak, Warszawa 2008, pp. 15, 23–47.

²¹ Drobik was of the opinion that continued passivity without any efforts to reach a broader compromise with the USSR was sheer madness that was deprived of any logic; ref. *Pokonani w obozie zwycięzców – o sprawie polskiej w latach II wojny światowej z Markiem Kazimierzem Kamińskim i Tadeuszem Kisielewskim rozmawiają Władysław Bułhak i Barbara Polak*, “Biuletyn IPN” 2005, No. 5–6(52–53), p. 40; see also: W. Bułhak, op. cit., p. 27; Z.S. Siemaszko, *Działalność generała Tatara 1943–1949*, Lublin 2004, p. 24

²² Z. S. Siemaszko, op. cit., p. 24, J. Stepień, Lieutenant Colonel Marian Drobik’s memorandum of November 1943 advocating changes in Poland’s policy towards the USSR, “Teki Archiwalne”, new series, 2001, vol. 6 (28), pp. 173–198; The authors of the memorandum, in particular Drobik, subscribed to Winston Churchill’s opinion that the Polish-Soviet conflict could be permanently pacified by satisfying the USSR’s territorial claims. M. K. Kamiński argued that this line of thought offered no guarantee that Russia would accept Polish independence after the war. The authors of the memorandum seemed to disregard the idealistic foundations of Soviet expansionism. For the USSR, the annexation of Poland’s eastern territories was not the ultimate goal. For critical remarks to Drobik’s memorandum, refer to: W. Bułhak, op. cit., pp. 39–40.

overnment and rescuing everything else that could be saved. Generals Komorowski and Pełczyński²³ were openly resentful of the concept and, consequently, the proposal was rejected by the General Command. Drobik²⁴ was arrested by the Gestapo on 8 December 1943, and Tatar²⁵ was dispatched to London on 14/15 April 1944 as part of operation "Bridge 1", therefore, the contents of their reports did not influence the Home Army's official position on Soviet claims.

The Polish Underground State's action plan in the event of a Soviet invasion was based on a set of instructions forwarded by the Council of Ministers to the Home Army commander and the Government Delegate at Home on 26 October 1943²⁶. Three case scenarios were analyzed: 1) reinstatement of diplomatic relations between the government of the Republic of Poland and the Soviet Council of People's Commissars, 2) continued absence of Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations, 3) conclusion of a separate agreement between the USSR and the Third Reich. According to the first, most optimistic variant, underground administration would officially take command over Polish territories, and the reinstated Polish Armed Forces at Home would remain a part of the conspiracy. Should the Red Army attempt to incorporate Polish territories into the Soviet Union, Poland would file an official complaint on the United Nations forum²⁷, and the Home Army would restrict its operations to self-defense measures. In the event of the second scenario, the Polish government announced that "the matter would be brought to the attention of the United Nations in an official protest against the violation of Polish sovereignty – Soviet troops invaded Poland without consulting the Polish government. In its communiqué, the Polish government would also renounce any cooperation with the Soviets"²⁸. The national authorities should remain underground, and the armed forces would act in self-defense in the event of Soviet repression. In the third variant, the government advocated the scenario that had already taken place before 22 June 1941 – civilian and military authorities should go even deeper underground, limiting themselves to the "most necessary acts of self-defense"²⁹.

In the face of the Red Army's imminent advance into Poland's eastern territories, Home Army soldiers in eastern districts had to be provided with instructions for responding to Soviet regular and partisan troops. The commanders of Home Army districts were given the following orders under Instructions No. 1300, issued on 20 November 1943 for Operation Storm:

²³ W. Baliński, *Człowiek w cieniu. Tadeusz Pełczyński. Zarys biografii*, Kraków 1994, p. 84.

²⁴ Refer to: Bułhak, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁵ Z.S. Siemaszko, op. cit., p. 34.

²⁶ *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 1332-1334; see also: *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach...*, vol. 3, pp. 182-185.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 1333.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 1334.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

"1) Soviet partisan troops entering Polish territory should not be prevented from engaging in military combat with the Germans. Direct engagement with the Soviet enemy should be avoided. Polish troops that had already entered into a conflict with the enemy and, therefore, would be unable to repair their relations with the Soviets should be relocated. Our operations will be limited strictly to self-defense"³⁰. Polish soldiers were advised to play host to the advancing Soviet troops, obstruct any attempts at incorporating Home Army units into Berling's army and obey only the orders and directives given by legal Polish authorities.

The threat of the Red Army's regular troops crossing Poland's pre-war borders gave rise to yet another dilemma, namely the choice of strategy addressing Soviet partisan units that had already made their way to Poland³¹. Home Army commanders fully recognized the problem. In a series of telegrams sent in October 1943, General Komorowski, Home Army commander, informed the Commander-in-Chief of a series of attacks staged by the Soviet partisans³². The problem was not solved in 1943. Komorowski was faced with the difficult task of protecting national interests and, at the same time, controlling anti-Soviet attitudes among his soldiers. In order No. 126 of 12 January 1944³³, Komorowski argued that in view of the logic of war, Poland was unable to deny the USSR the right to fight against Germany on Polish territory, therefore, no such attempts would be made by the Polish government. Whereas Poland sanctioned the Soviet partisans' struggle against the German army and administration, it would not tolerate any political efforts aimed against the sovereignty, independence and integrity of the Republic of Poland. In this regard, General Komorowski instructed his troops to resist any such attempts by acting in self-defense.

During the occupation, the attitude towards the Soviets was a frequent topic of debate in various press titles associated with the conspiracy movement. In 1943, with the eastern front approaching Polish territory and the continued absence of diplomatic relations with Russia, this issue was widely discussed by underground publications. Those articles were an important awareness-building tool which prepared soldiers and members of the con-

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 1373.

³¹ Zob. K. Sacewicz, *Centralna prasa Polski Podziemnej wobec komunistów polskich (1939-1945)*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 135-168; idem, *Obraz sowieckich akcji dywersyjnych w okupowanej Polsce (1941-1943) na łamach "Biuletynu Informacyjnego"*, "Echa Przeszłości" 2003, vol. 4, pp. 127-151; Puławski A., *Sowiecki partyzant – polski problem*, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2006, No. 1(9), pp. 217-254.

³² *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach...*, vol. 3, p. 154.

³³ AAN, 203/I-2, *Żołnierze Sił Zbrojnych w Kraju*, 12 January 1944, col. 48-48a (also AIPN, 0397/251, vol. 2, col. 344-345); refer to: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", 3 February 1944, No. 5(212) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3: *Przedruk rocznika 1944. Konspiracja*, "Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy" 2003, special issue No. 3(200), pp. 1793-1796; *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 1449-1451; *Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski w relacjach i dokumentach*, ed. A.K. Kunert, Warszawa 2000, pp. 120-122.

spiracy movement for the possibility of a Soviet invasion. They featured recommendations, guidelines, instructions and analyses of future Polish-Soviet relations. Above all, those publications attempted to answer the following question: which political and military force was approaching Polish borders? *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, the flagship publication of the Information and Propaganda Bureau of the General Command of the Home Army (BIP KG AK), attempted to provide the answer already in November 1943. Its article stated that the Red Army was the military force of an imperial state “which is not an army of friends or a liberation army for Poland”³⁴. The authors emphasized the USSR’s aggressive claims to Polish territory, its attempts to disintegrate the Polish political scene by creating pro-Soviet initiatives, such as the Union of Polish Patriots (ZPP) and Berling’s army “which enabled Russia to engulf the remaining Polish territories through Sovietization”³⁵. In conclusion, the authors wrote that “[...] Poland’s historic aggressor, Russia, is approaching the Polish border without much display of good will, fighting our deadly enemy, Germany, on its way [...]. Our nation will be forced to take one of the most important political exams in its history”³⁶.

As part of national preparations for the arrival of Soviet troops, efforts were made to manifest the Polish roots of the Eastern Borderlands. This goal was to be achieved through the revolutionary ardor of Polish civilian authorities during Operation Storm and displays of national spirit in the local community. In official communication of 15 November 1943, the Government Delegate at Home instructed local residents not to panic and to remain in their respective territories to protect Polish property and support the national authorities. Members of the local community were also told to act “with dignity and politeness” in the face of the encroaching Soviet army³⁷. In addition to the orders instructing Polish people to give uncompromising support to the Government in Exile and to preserve national unity³⁸, the

³⁴ *Front wschodni – u granic Polski*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, 18 November 1943, No. 46(201) in: “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, part 2: *Przedruk roczników 1942–1943*, “Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy” 2002, special issue No. 2(195), p. 1598.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 1598.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Wskazania dla obywateli ziem kresowych*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, 25 November 1943, No. 47(202) in: “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, part 2, p. 1611. An underground publication of the Polish Socialist Party – Freedom, Equality, Independence (WRN) also issued an appeal to the Polish citizens inhabiting eastern territories, instructing them to stay put and refrain from panic. The authors of the appeal wrote: “We will show the Red Army that these territories are our home where we have set our roots, that we are still citizens of the Republic of Poland. We will demand respect for our rights, including the right to self-determination, within the framework laid down by the Polish national authorities”; *Jeżeli wkroczy armia rosyjska*, “Robotnik w Walce”, 21 November 1943, No. 6.

³⁸ Refer to: *O właściwą postawę*, “Ajencja A.”, 10 December 1943, No. 12; *Jeżeli wkroczy armii rosyjska*, “Robotnik w walce”, 21 November 1943, No. 6. WRN wrote: “[...] loyal to our authorities and the Polish Republic until the end, we will demand that the encroaching Russian army fully respects our rights to self-determination”. See also: *Przed kresem drogi*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”,

manifestations of Polish identity in the Eastern Borderlands were a key element in political and social preparations for the Soviet invasion. The authorities appealed to the public not to give in to hostile propaganda, to remain calm and to steady their nerves when the moment finally arrived³⁹.

The Red Army crossed the eastern border of the Second Republic of Poland on the night of 3 to 4 January 1944⁴⁰. The Polish territory was invaded by the military forces of “our allies’ ally”, a hostile power which did not maintain formal diplomatic relations with Poland. In the face of the Soviet offensive, the underground authorities were forced to develop detailed propaganda instructions as well as an official political and military position. Whereas the Home Army required an in-depth interpretation of the provisions of instructions No. 1300, the political elites were confronted with a serious organizational challenge in the process of responding to a tangible Soviet threat.

In January 1944, the General Command’s Information and Propaganda Bureau issued propaganda guidelines, signed by Colonel Rzepacki, that were a reflection of the Home Army’s position on the Soviet invasion. The following statement was made: “Poland desires good neighbor relations and cooperation with Russia on terms that do not hinder our country. It was not Poland’s decision to break off its diplomatic relations with Russia. If our diplomatic ties are reinstated, we are ready to collaborate with the Russian army on Polish territory. We demand that Russia respects our independence and territorial integrity and ceases to intervene in our internal affairs”⁴¹.

6 January 1944, No. 1(208); The Government Delegate’s Office for Home wrote: “The Polish government represents the Polish State and the Polish nation engaged in an armed struggle in the country. [...] Maximum unity symbolizes maximum democracy”; *Jeden jest tylko polski ośrodek władzy*, “Kraj. Agencja Informacyjna IP”, 4 January 1944, No. 1(18). These appeals took on a special significance not only in the face of the approaching eastern front but also the heightened activity of the communist underground; See also: K. Sacewicz, *Centralna prasa...*, p. 293-.

³⁹ *Noworoczne wskazania*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny. Z Frontu Walki Podziemnej”, 30 December 1943, supplement to “Biuletyn Informacyjny” No. 52(207) in: “*Biuletyn Informacyjny*”, part 3, p. 1731. The appeals were continued in 1944, refer to: *Oświadczenie*, “Agencja Prasowa”, 20 April 1944, No. 16 (209).

⁴⁰ M.K. Kamiński, *Dyplomacja polska wobec dyktatu mocarstw (lipiec 1943 – luty 1944)* in: *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, ed. W. Michowicz, vol. 5: 1939–1945, Warszawa 1999, p. 467; refer to: *Wojska sowieckie w granicach Polski*, “WRN”, 14 January 1944, No. 1(132); *Powaga sytuacji*, “Przegląd”, 21 February 1944, No. 16; *Przekroczenie granicy Polski przez wojska sowieckie*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, 13 January 1944, No. 2(209) in: “*Biuletyn Informacyjny*”, part 3, pp. 1759–1760. Members of the Polish underground argued that the encroachment of the Red Army into Polish territory fuelled the communist propaganda. They warned the public of the propaganda’s negative consequences. Refer to: *Taniec szaleńców*, “Polak”, 2 March 1944, No. 4; AAN, 206/2, *Polacy! Robotnicy! Chłopi polscy!*, July 1944, col. 4–4a.

⁴¹ AAN, 203/July-1, Wytuczne propagandowe No. 1/44, January 1944, col. 5; zob. też AAN, 203/VII-1, *Wskazówki do prowadzenia rozmów z Armią Czerwoną*, 1944, col. 12–15; *Polskie Państwo Podziemne w obliczu ofensywy Sowietów*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, 4 May 1944, No. 18(225) in: “*Biuletyn Informacyjny*”, part 3, p. 1987–1989; *O wolną Polskę*, “Wolność Robotnicza”, 21 February 1944, No. 4(6).

The Red Army invasion spurred a debate in the political community. The People's Party (SL) advocated a polite stance to the Soviets without surrendering the key goals of Poland's eastern policy⁴². In the absence of Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations, the following recommendations were formulated: "a) resist forced or voluntary conscription to the Soviet army and Berling's units by all means available, b) refrain from taking up employment in the Soviet political administration or the Soviet police, c) refrain from participating in election campaigns held by the Soviet authorities, d) go deeper underground in the event of a Soviet occupation – the Polish Workers' Party is better versed in the conspiracy movement than the Gestapo"⁴³.

In its public appeal, entitled "Citizens" (Obywatele), the Convention of Independence Organizations claimed: "Our country is invaded by Russian troops, the army of our second eternal enemy"⁴⁴. This was a clear signal that Poles should adopt the same attitude towards the Red Army that they had exercised with regard to Wehrmacht forces, or at least a very cautious approach.

The same stance was adopted by the command of the National Armed Forces (NSZ) which wrote in "General instructions No. 3" of 15 January 1944: "In addition to its claims covering half of Poland's territory, the USSR relies on the Polish Workers' Party and the People's Army to carry out a revolutionary communist campaign aimed against the entire Polish nation. [...]. In line with the NSZ's statement claiming that 'Poland's eastern borders established by the Treaty of Riga are not debatable', I hereby announce that the National Armed Forces will fight to restore Poland's eastern territories. The following guidelines and orders are hereby issued: 1) Soviet forces on Polish territory shall have enemy status. 2) In view of the situation in the

⁴² "Polska Ludowa", a press publication of the "Roch" People's Alliance, wrote: "We firmly claim Poland's eastern border as defined by the Treaty of Riga in 1921"; Polska a Rosja, "Polska Ludowa", January 1944, No. 1 (42).

⁴³ AAN, 200/2, Circular letter No. 6: Do zarządów wojewódzkich i powiatowych, March 1944, col. 27–28.

⁴⁴ As cited by W. Chojnacki, *Bibliografia zwartych i ulotnych druków konspiracyjnych wydanych pod okupacją niemiecką w latach 1939–1945*, Warszawa 2005, p. 461. Already in April 1943, a similar position towards the Soviet army was adopted by the "Blok" Anti-Communist Alliance, yet another right-wing movement in the Polish Underground State, headed by Henryk Glass. Glass addressed a "Memorandum on the dangers of a communist revolution in Poland" to the key decision-makers. He wrote: "Poland has not one, but two deadly enemies: the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Russia, 2) the German-Russian war and the gradual deterioration of both military powers significantly benefits the interests of the Polish State and nation [...] 4) Poland may not aid either party in this war". An evaluation of the communist underground, based on *Memoriał w sprawie niebezpieczeństwa rewolucji komunistycznej w Polsce* (April 1943), ed. K. Sacewicz, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2009, No. 1(14), p. 413. The "Blok" Alliance regarded the Soviet offensive in the eastern front as a measure supporting the achievement of Moscow's imperialistic ambitions. Ref. *"Blok" Henryka Glassa wobec zagrożenia sowiecko-komunistycznego na podstawie "Planu C" (październik 1943 r.)*, ed. K. Sacewicz, "Echa Przeszłości" 2007, vol. 8, p. 226.

international arena and the need to unite all enemy forces in the battle against the German occupant, [...] any conflict with regular Soviet troops should be avoided [...]. 3) In view of the Polish government's instructions of 27 October 1943, indicating that any collaboration with Soviet troops would be allowed only after the reinstatement of Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations, any attempts at cooperating with the Soviet military forces will be regarded as a breach of national interests and treason. 4) The efforts to restore diplomatic relations with the USSR and the achievement of this goal will not put an end to our struggle against the spread of communism and the establishment of Bolshevik agencies on Polish territory"⁴⁵.

The National Armed Forces' guidelines differed significantly from the instructions formulated in the report entitled "The independence movement and the Soviet invasion", developed by the Information and Propaganda Bureau of the Home Army's General Command on 16 February 1944⁴⁶. The report postulated that the absence of anti-German measures would support the "Soviet game", and Poland "would be liberated from German rule by Bolsheviks and their Polish agencies"⁴⁷. The above could shift the public's support away from the Polish government and towards the communists. The administrative authorities⁴⁸ were to emerge from hiding upon the Soviet invasion, although in the face of an anti-Polish campaign staged by the Ukrainians, they would not make their presence known in areas where the Polish community had been decimated and where agreement could not be reached with the national minorities. It was postulated that partisan forces which had exposed themselves during anti-German operations should emerge from the underground. The need for a second conspiracy movement "comprising members of political and military elites, with a uniform structure throughout the entire territory"⁴⁹ was advocated in the event of a civil war, Soviet military intervention and "persistent police control which takes place in a formally independent state"⁵⁰. The author of the report concluded

⁴⁵ "NSZ", 23 February 1944, No. 2; see also: Wróg, "NSZ", 5 April 1944, No. 3; A. Rawicz [J. Lilpop], *O co walczą Narodowe Siły Zbrojne?*, Warszawa 1943 in: *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne. Dokumenty, struktury, personalia*, ed. L. Żebrowski, vol. 1, Warszawa 1994, p. 92.

⁴⁶ AAN, 203/VII-38, *Ruch niepodległościowy wobec wkroczenia wojsk sowieckich*, 16 February 1944, col. 7-9

⁴⁷ Ibidem, col. 8.

⁴⁸ The report provided for other activities aiming to influence the Poles' attitudes towards the Soviets in Polish territories situated east and west of the Curzon line. Its authors envisaged a long-term occupation of the Eastern Borderlands, and a shorter period of foreign control in central Poland. They believed that Anglo-Saxon support would prevent the Sovietization of Poland. The existence of economic relations between the USSR and the Western Allies would enable the latter to exert political pressure on Moscow; *ibidem*, col. 7.

⁴⁹ Ibidem. Starting in the fall of 1943, a secret organization under the cryptonym "NIE" was developed under the orders of the Home Army's commander to safeguard Polish interests in the event of a Soviet invasion; see also: A. Chmielarz, *Epilog Armii Krajowej* in: *Armia Krajowa. Szkice z...*, pp. 323-328.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

that the failure to initiate an anti-German rising and the escalation of Polish-Soviet hostilities would be a serious mistake. Poland vested high hopes in the support of the Anglo-Saxon countries, but according to the author, only a British and American intervention could bring positive results⁵¹. The report emphasized that unless those powers interfered in the immediate future “any hopes of a post-war intervention would be completely futile”⁵².

Soviet military encroachment in the footsteps of withdrawing German forces brought diplomatic consequences that had been detailed in the government’s instructions of 26 October 1943. On 5 January 1944, the Polish government printed a statement in the London-based dailies *Dziennik Polski* and *Dziennik Żołnierza*⁵³. The British authorities intervened, and the statement was largely toned down in the part relating to Poland’s territorial integrity and its position towards the USSR. The published postulates were also a part of Prime Minister Mikołajczyk’s radio speech broadcast in Poland, and they were distributed in underground press and on leaflets⁵⁴.

The Soviet authorities gave a clearly negative answer. The message broadcast on 11 January by the TASS news agency dispelled all illusions⁵⁵.

⁵¹ The Polish authorities were advised to adopt the Western Allies’ political position.

⁵² AAN, 203/VII-38, *Ruch niepodległościowy wobec wkroczenia wojsk sowieckich*, 16 February 1944, col. 9.

⁵³ *Oczekujemy uszanowania praw Rzplitej i jej obywateli. Oświadczenie Rządu RP Gdy armia czerwona wkraca na ziemie polskie*, “Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza”, 6 January 1944, No. 4 in: *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, p. 1433. It emphasized the constitutional legality of the Polish government and the willingness to reinstate international relations that had been severed in April 1943, on condition that the USSR showed respect for the rights and interests of Poland and its citizens. Reports on the prime minister’s operations in the occupied Poland were delivered by “Biuletyn Informacyjny”; see also: *Oświadczenie premiera do kraju*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, 13 January 1944, No. 2(209) in: “*Biuletyn Informacyjny*”, part 3, pp. 1755–1756.

⁵⁴ The statement read: “Having regard to Poland’s unconditional right to independence, the declarations and obligations undertaken by our allies, we demand that the rights and interests of the Polish Republic, its state authorities and citizens be respected in every war and every political situation in the international arena. We demand full recognition and respect for our rights”; *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, p. 1437; *Oświadczenie premiera do Kraju*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, 13 January 1944, No. 2(209) in: “*Biuletyn Informacyjny*”, part 3, pp. 1755–1759. The government’s position was fully approved by the Home Political Representation (KRP), the Government Delegate for Poland and the Council of National Unity; *ibidem*, pp. 1438–1439; *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach...*, vol. 3, p. 247.

⁵⁵ *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, p. 1446. The Polish Workers’ Party argued that the “contents and form of the government’s statement is in keeping with the traditional, anti-Soviet propaganda”: *Koniunkturalne łamańce*, “Przegląd Tygodnia”, 13 January 1944, No. 2(51) in: *Publicystyka konspiracyjna PPR 1942–1945. Wybór artykułów*, ed. A. Przygoński, vol. 3: 1944–1945, Warszawa 1967, pp. 42–45. “Głos Warszawy”, another communist newspaper, was of the opinion that the Soviet position “demonstrated the USSR’s understanding [...] that the Polish problem should be solved in the spirit of historical justice, and that this process may not be disrupted by a group of schemers and rabble-rousers”. *Wytknięta droga*, “Głos Warszawy”, 18 January 1944, No. 6(98) in: *Publicystyka...*, vol. 3, p. 49–51; see also: *Bankruci brną dalej*, “Trybuna Wolności”, 15 January 1944, No. 48 in: *ibidem*, pp. 47–48.

The USSR refused to acknowledge Polish borders established by the Treaty of Riga, and acting on the decision of the People's Assemblies of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, it claimed every right to annex Poland's eastern territories. The Soviets argued that the Polish government's negligence of the nation's problems and desires had led to a crisis in the two countries' mutual relations. On 14 January, the Polish government issued a tempered statement in response to Soviet accusations, requesting the Allies' direct intervention with the Soviet authorities⁵⁶. In a statement of 17 January, the Kremlin officially criticized all Polish initiatives⁵⁷.

The Soviets' position evoked much criticism in underground press published both in Poland⁵⁸ and abroad⁵⁹, thus further consolidating the nation around the Government in Exile and its home divisions. According to the journalists, Moscow's reactions exposed the real goals and qualities of the Soviet state⁶⁰. Some reporters hoped that the Western Allies would no longer turn a blind eye on Poland's dilemma in the face of the USSR's increasingly imperialistic policies⁶¹.

In response to the Soviet statement, on 20 January 1944, the Council of National Unity and the Government Delegate for Poland sent a telegram to Prime Minister Mikołajczyk whose contents were published in underground press⁶². In the weeks that followed, the USSR's growing animosity towards the Polish government, in particular its claims to Poland's eastern territories, evoked a powerful response from the underground community which

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 1456; M.K. Kamiński, *op. cit.*, p. 473; *Odpowiedź rządu polskiego*, "Biuletyn Informacyjny", 20 January 1944, No. 3(210) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3, pp. 1768–1769.

⁵⁷ M.K. Kamiński, *op. cit.*, p. 473; *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 1465–1466; *Rosja odmawia rozmów z Rządem Polskim*, "Biuletyn Informacyjny. Z Frontu Walki Podziemnej", 13 January 1944, supplement to "Biuletyn Informacyjny" No. 2(209) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3, pp. 1770–1771. The "Antyk" subdivision of the Information and Propaganda Bureau of the Home Army's General Command referred to Soviet diplomatic tactics as "double-dealing and outrageous"; *Czy dojdzie do porozumienia z Rosją*, "Wolność Robotnicza", 18 January 1944, No. 2(8). A completely different view was offered by the press of Polish Workers' Party, ref. *Dwa oświadczenia*, "Przegląd Tygodnia", 20 January 1944, No. 3(52) in: *Publicystyka...*, vol. 3, pp. 52–54.

⁵⁸ Ref. *Nie będzie Targowicy*, "WRN", 14 January 1944, No. 1(132); *Stanowisko rządu sowieckiego wobec Polski*, "Przez walkę do zwycięstwa", 20 January 1944, No. 2(98). *Spór polsko-rosyjski*, "Głos Ludu", 21 January 1944, No. 2.

⁵⁹ Ref. *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 1446–1447.

⁶⁰ Ref. *Moskwa bez maski*, "Robotnik w Walce", 23 January 1944, No. 2(10); *Zdemaskowanie polityki Moskwy*, "Robotnik w Walce", 23 January 1944, No. 2(10); *Czy dojdzie do porozumienia z Rosją*, "Wolność Robotnicza", 18 January 1944, No. 2(8); *Zaborczość bez ostonek*, "Robotnik w Walce", 19 March 1944, No. 5(13).

⁶¹ Ref. *Zdemaskowanie polityki Moskwy*, "Robotnik w walce", 23 January 1944, No. 2(10); *Polska a Rosja*, "Polska Ludowa", January 1944, No. 1(42); *Nasze stanowisko*, "Rzeczpospolita Polska", 6 March 1944, No. 3(75); *Dziś i Jutro*, "Biuletyn Informacyjny", 27 January 1944, No. 4(211) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3., p. 1179.

⁶² S. Dzieciotłowski, *Parlament Polski Podziemnej 1939–1945*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 49, 181–182; see also: "Rzeczpospolita Polska", 7 February 1944, No. 2(74); "Biuletyn Informacyjny", 24 February 1944, No. 8(215) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3, p. 1837.

was not limited to official approval for the Council of Minister's policies⁶³. The roots of the Polish-Soviet conflict were widely discussed in government⁶⁴ and party press⁶⁵. Those reports had a purely informative purpose, but by spreading the awareness that Poland was threatened by the loss of its territory to its eastern neighbor, they built support for the preservation of Polish integrity, and they shaped social attitudes towards the Red Army. They also came as a response to underground communist publications which supported Western Ukraine's and Western Belarus' rights to self-determination, i.e. the annexation of those territories to the USSR⁶⁶. Members of the independence movement could not remain a passive witness to those claims⁶⁷.

The Polish underground was fully aware of Russia's imperialistic ambitions. In 1943 and in early 1944, members of the conspiracy movement knew that Poland was not about to be liberated from German occupation by an allied army in the name of building an independent, sovereign and territorially integral Polish state, but that the intervention served Soviet military goals. Despite this awareness, the independence movement was not united

⁶³ Ref. *Podziemne Państwo Polskie wokół jednolitych władz – zjednoczone społeczeństwo*, "Biuletyn Informacyjny", 13 January 1944, No. 2(209) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3, pp. 1753–1755; "Biuletyn Informacyjny. Z Frontu Walki Podziemnej", 3 February 1944, supplement to "Biuletyn Informacyjny" No. 5(212) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3, pp. 1803–1805; *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 1454–1455. The appeal of the Polish Underground State reads: "This appeal is a summons and an order. **Summons: if the Country is disciplined and united in solidarity, we will overcome the greatest obstacles, and we will find sufficient strength to fend off the enemy, [...] Order: [...] Poles have to overcome the existing divisions. Those who disobey the call for unity and solidarity are not only mad – they are criminals!**"

⁶⁴ Ref. *Kraj wobec roszczeń sowieckich. Kraj stoi na stanowisku nienaruszalności wschodniej granicy Rzeczypospolitej, ustalonej w traktacie ryskim*, "Rzeczpospolita Polska", 10 March 1944, special supplement in: *Prawdziwa...*, vol. 2, pp. 1511–1512; *Po linii grabieży z 1939 r.*, "Kraj. Agencja Informacyjna IP", 15 March 1944, No. 11(28); *Polska a Sowiety*, "Biuletyn Informacyjny", 16 March 1944, No. 11(218) in: "Biuletyn Informacyjny", part 3, pp. 1383–1384; ref. W. Chojnacki, op. cit., p. 125.

⁶⁵ Ref. *Rosyjskie apetyty na Polskę* [supplement] "WRN", 25 February 1944, No. 4(135); *Curzon – Ribbentrop – Mołotow*, "WRN", 24 March 1944, No. 6(137); *Porachunki dziejowe*, "Droga", 10 May 1944, No. 5; *Wschodnie granice*, "Droga", 10 May 1944, No. 5; AAN, 203/VII-19, Linia Curzona to linia 3 rozbioru, col. 7.

⁶⁶ Ref. *Problem granic polskich*, "Głos Warszawy", 4 January 1944, No. 2(94) in: *Publicystyka...*, vol. 3, pp. 35–37; *Problem granic wschodnich*, "Przegląd Tygodnia", 6 January 1944, No. 1(50) in: ibidem, pp. 37–39; *Naród polski a Sowiety*, "Głos Warszawy", 8 February 1944, No. 12(104) in: ibidem, pp. 76–79; *Czy Polska etnograficzna*, "Trybuna Wolności", 20 February 1944, No. 50 in: ibidem, pp. 91–93.

⁶⁷ The Socialists of WRN wrote: "We are exposing Soviet lies about Poland's right to self-determination every step of the way. We have to oppose the Soviet propaganda that is being spread by the Polish Workers' Party. Millions of Polish citizens will unite in protest against Soviet aggression. If we don't willfully succumb to Russia, it will never break the spirit of the Polish nation, and the democratic world headed by our allies will force Russia to give up its territorial appetite"; *Rosyjskie apetyty na Polskę* [supplement] "WRN", 25 February 1944, No. 4(135).

in its attitudes towards the Soviet army. While some factions postulated that the USSR was an enemy just like the Nazis, others argued that although the Soviets demonstrated a hostile and aggressive attitude towards Poland, they were “our allies’ ally”. Regardless of the dominant option, Poland was unable to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity, prevent the annexation of its Eastern Borderlines and the Sovietization of social and political life, in particular in the face of the Western Allies’ negligence and the helplessness. Despite the brutality of the Nazi occupation, the Soviet army was greeted by the Polish Underground State with much reluctance and mistrust, if not open hostility. Many initiatives undertaken by Poland’s puppet communist authorities, the Polish Committee of National Liberation, were torpedoed by the conspiracy movement and its propaganda, bringing humiliation to communist organizations in Poland⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ Ref. T. Żencykowski, *Polska Lubelska 1944*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 113–116.