



“ NO DEFEAT CAN BREAK THE FREE ”

POLSKA W BROJNIE

Warsaw, August 1, 2019

We Remember!



THEY RESISTED

The Warsaw Uprising commanders often proved they were cautious, skillful in planning, courageous and heroic – says Mariusz Olczak, a historian.

Who were the commanders of the Warsaw Uprising?

First, it's worth mentioning that people who had worked in the underground since the beginning of the war and commanded underground units, mainly in the Home Army, also had extensive military experience. General Tadeusz “Bór” Komorowski, the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army [Armia Krajowa, AK], who decided on the outbreak of the uprising, had started his military career in the Austro-Hungarian

army, and fought in its ranks during World War I. Later, he fought in the war with the Bolsheviks, and as a deputy commander of a cavalry brigade in the September campaign. In the underground army, he was the deputy of General Stefan “Grot” Rowecki, the Commander-in-Chief of the Union of Armed Struggle, and after his arrest in July 1943, General Komorowski became the Home Army commander.

General Antoni “Monter” Chruściel, the Commander of the Warsaw District of the

Home Army, had a similar path, and in the uprising, he was the commander of all the forces of the Warsaw District of the Home Army. He was a soldier of the Eastern Legion, commander of the 82nd Siberian Rifle Regiment in Brest; in 1939, he took part in the defense of Modlin. From June 1940, he fought in the underground. General Tadeusz “Grzegorz” Pełczyński, the Chief of Staff of the Home Army Headquarters, was a legionnaire; in the interwar years, he was the head of the Second Department

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UPRISING

INVINCIBLE WARSAW

Dear Readers,

The date of August 1, 1944 marks the beginning of one of the most heroic episodes of World War II and Polish history. The Warsaw Uprising broke out on that day. A dozen or so thousand young and inexperienced soldiers of the Polish Underground State stood against the heavily armed Germans. They fought for free Poland, for their dignity, and for their honor.

We are the last generation that may personally thank the insurgents for their heroism and courage. For their readiness to make the greatest sacrifice in the name of love to their Homeland.

Let's seize this unique opportunity to find the heroes, and express our gratitude for the attitude that shaped the next generations of Poles. We should also pay tribute to all those who are no longer with us, such as Colonel Ryszard “Jerzy” Białous – a legendary commander of Battalion “Zośka” – whose ashes have recently returned to his Homeland. His funeral in Powązki Military Cemetery is certainly a symbolic moment in the history of modern Poland.

On the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising outbreak, I wish to express my gratitude and respect to all the insurgents. I assure you, we will never forget about you. To you be praise and glory, invincible Warsaw and its defenders! ■



Mariusz Błaszczak
Polish Minister of National Defense

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of the General Staff [Oddział II SG] in charge of intelligence and counterintelligence, in conspiracy since the autumn of 1939.

Commanders of the largest insurgent units were also experienced officers, seasoned in battles, mostly still legionnaire battles. For example, Colonel Jan "Radosław" Mazurkiewicz, the Commander of the "Radosław" Group, which included the "Zośka" and "Parasol" battalions. He fought in the 1st Brigade of the Polish Legions, in the Polish-Soviet War; he was a counterintelligence officer of the Second Department of the General Staff, and he commanded the Kedyw – the Home Army Directorate of Diversion – in conspiracy.

Younger insurgent commanders also had combat experience...

That's true. Those young officers fought their first battles in September 1939. Ryszard "Jerzy" Białous and Jan Kajus "Jan" Andrzejewski, for example. They were both sappers who fought in the 1939 defense war. During the Warsaw Uprising, Andrzejewski commanded Diversion Brigade "Broda 53," and fell on August 31 in Stare Miasto [Old Town], during an attempt to break through from Stare Miasto to Śródmieście [City Center] district. The command of the unit was taken over by Lieutenant Białous, who in conspiracy and in the Uprising was a leader of Battalion "Zośka." He walked with his soldiers the whole combat route from Wola through Stare Miasto to Czerniaków. He proved his worth as a commander in battle; he was responsible for his soldiers, he also knew how to plan and carry out spectacular actions, such as capturing the "Gęsiówka" concentration camp.

The youngest insurgent commanders, at the level of platoon or team commander, were young boys, who often had some scouting background, were army-trained in conspiracy or were underground cadet school graduates. We can mention here Jan "Anoda" Rodowicz, who during the Uprising fought in Wola as a Deputy Commander of the 3rd Platoon "Felek" of Battalion "Zośka." He distinguished himself on August 8 in the fights for the Wola cemeteries, where he was seriously wounded. Then, despite his freshly healed wounds, he joined his squad in Górny Czerniaków to fight at the frontline again. His attitude is an example of heroism and strong character. Once again seriously wounded, he was evacuated on a pontoon across the Vistula River to the Praga district.

What qualities, apart from a strong character, were required for commanding purposes?

Apart from the usual army values, crucial were caution and planning skills, but also courage and sometimes heroism, for which soldiers were honored with Virtuti Militari Crosses. During the fights in Warsaw, over



LT JAN "ANODA" RODOWICZ

100 of these most valued Polish war medals were awarded. The first application to posthumously award the Virtuti Militari Cross for a combat deed regarded Lieutenant Tadeusz "Gryf" Kubalski, Deputy Team Commander in Battalion "Wigry."

During the fights in Wola on August 4, when the barricade was threatened, "Gryf" went to attack, and the whole unit followed him. This way, they seized a house building that secured the barricade and the entire area it defended.

It often happened that during fights regular soldiers would be taking over command of their units in place of their wounded or fallen commanders...

Yes, especially in Stare Miasto and Czerniaków, where dramatic and heavy fights were going on, privates, who, due to their character, personality, training and courage, became important commanders. One of the examples is Zbigniew "Szczerba" Blichewicz, an actor fighting in Battalion "Bończa." During the fights in Stare Miasto, he became famous for his bold attacks on St. John's Cathedral, for which he was awarded the Virtuti Militari Cross, and appointed the commander of the 101st company of that battalion. During the fights for Rynek Starego Miasta [Old Town Square], when the insurgent defense was breaking down, Barbara "Czarna Baśka" Chojnacka, a platoon messenger in Battalion "Bończa," grabbed a machine gun, making her colleagues follow her to fight, and fired from the barricade at the Germans attacking from the Warsaw Barbican.



MAJ JAN KAJUS "JAN" ANDRZEJEWSKI

What military operations of the Warsaw Uprising can be recognized as skillfully commanded?

Certainly, the capture of "Gęsiówka" – the KL Warschau concentration camp at Gęsia street in Wola – by Battalion "Zośka" on August 5. It was a professionally prepared military operation preceded by reconnaissance. Its goal was to release prisoners, but also improve the insurgent connection between Śródmieście and Stare Miasto. The capture of "Gęsiówka" is one of the greatest insurgent successes, and until today remains a symbol of the Warsaw Uprising. ■

Interview by Anna Dąbrowska

Mariusz Olczak, a historian and archivist, Deputy Director of New Files Archive [Archiwum Akt Nowych] in Warsaw. Author of biography: „Jan Rodowicz Anoda. Życie i śmierć



bohatera »Kamieni na Szaniec« (2015) and co-author of the selection of source texts: »Okreg Warszawa-Miasto ZWZ i Okreg Warszawski ZWZ-AK« (2018)



WARSAW UPRISING INSURECTIONIST - "RADOSŁAW" GROUP

At the beginning of August 1944, during the fights in the Wola district, the "Radosław" Group soldiers captured German uniform storage rooms on Stawki street. They found there, i.e., hundreds of camouflage jackets used by SS units. The jackets soon became a common element of an insurgent outfit, and were referred to as "panterki" [leopards]. Scouts of the "Zośka" and "Parasol" battalions wore white and red armbands with Scouts Cross. Warsaw insurgents were armed with a 9-mm Błyskawica machine gun, produced in underground armament factories, being a Polish version of the English Sten MK.2 machine gun and the German MP-40. To carry ammunition, they used a German ammo pouch holding three magazines.

Text: Paweł Rozdżestwieński, drawing: Jarosław Wróbel

OUR FIGHTING WAS DRIVEN BY FAITH

With Lieutenant Daniela "Pszczola" Ogińska, a soldier of the 7th Home Army Infantry Regiment "Garłuch," talks Jakub Nawrocki.

Today, just like 75 years ago, we are in the middle of summer, and Warsaw is full of young people...

It was a hot summer. The enormous tension was in the air. We knew something huge was about to happen. We saw Germans withdrawing to the other side of the Vistula River. You could feel the panic. If I had commanded the Uprising, I would have started it three days earlier. At that time in Warsaw, there were only Germans who protected their buildings and institutions.

However, the commanders decided otherwise, which affected the life of your genera-

tion. Why did you join the Uprising? Was that an order, a necessity, an impulse?

For us, the young people of that time, it was a great privilege to join the military conspiracy. We all thought it was an honor. We were given a chance to settle accounts with the Germans. There was no order for that. We all considered it our duty, and it was a matter of course. To such an extent that I still regret that my friend and I were ordered to pull back from Okęcie, so we could not help our boys wounded during fights for the airport. We felt like it was a dishonor.



LTCOL JAN "RADOSŁAW"
MAZURKIEWICZ

"RADOSŁAW" GROUP – INSURGENT ARMY'S ELITE

"Broda," "Parasol," "Czata 49," "Pięść," "Zośka" – these names do not need to be introduced to anyone in Poland. These are the nicknames of the elite units of Kedyw Dispatching Squads – the Diversion Command of the Home Army Headquarters – which, during the Warsaw Uprising, became a part of the "Radosław" Group.

The name of the Group was taken from the pseudonym of its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jan Mazurkiewicz, Commander of Kedyw. On August 1, 1944, the Group included: Diversion Brigade "Broda", which was in fact a regiment (the scout battalion "Zośka" under the command of Captain Ryszard "Jerzy" Białous and the companies: "Żuk", "Topolnicki" and "Lena"), battalions: "Parasol", "Miotła" and "Czata 49", formed mainly from the Home Army soldiers from the Land Supply Headquarters. Moreover, Battalion "Pięść", set on the basis of Division II (counter-intelligence) of the Home Army Headquarters, and "Kolegium A" Company, which had previously been subordinated to the command of the Kedyw of the Warsaw District of the Home Army, were joined to the Group.

In the plans of the insurgents, the "Radosław" units were to serve as a shield for the Home Army Headquarters in the Warsaw district of Wola, but from the beginning of the fighting they became one of the leading attack forces of the insurgent army. On August 2, the soldiers of "Zośka" captured two German medium Panther tanks, which became the core of the armored platoon. On August 5, one of the tanks took part in the capture of the German concentration camp in Gęsiówka (KL Warschau), from which about 350 Jews from all over Europe were liberated. Since August 5, the Group was fighting off strong attacks of German units on Wola. On August 11, the Germans launched a general attack on Okopowa street and by the evening they finally pushed the insurgents out of this district. The decimated Group broke through to Stawki street in the Śródmieście district.

On August 13, Lieutenant Colonel "Radosław" took over the defense of the northern part of the Old Town. The fights in this area caused further, large losses among his soldiers, who as the last, after unsuccessful attempts to break through the German cordons on August 30-31, went through the sewers, underground, to the Śródmieście district (the soldiers of Battalion "Zośka" pretending to be a German unit penetrated the front line in the Saxon Garden). Next, the soldiers of "Radosław" manned the lower part of Czerniaków, a district of the city adjacent to the Vistula riverbank. On the other side of the river, on its right bank, there were regiments of the 1st Polish Army commanded by General Zygmunt Berling, subordinated to the Soviet command of the Red Army. The Warsaw insurgents on the left bank of the river were located in the middle of the German-Russian front, whose border ran along the Vistula River. The left-bank districts of Warsaw still fought against the Germans, and Praga district, located on the right bank of the river, was in September occupied by the Russian. "Radosław" in Czerniaków was supported by Berling's battalion under the orders of Major Stanisław Łatyszonek (Soviet officer). Together, they survived here until September 23. Some of Berling's soldiers surrendered to the Germans, the rest tried unsuccessfully to cross the Vistula River back, but did not get sufficient support from their own troops on the other side of the river. Of course, the Home Army soldiers and civilians did not get this support either. A small group of surviving soldiers of Brigade "Broda",

under the command of Captain Białous from Battalion "Zośka", together with Polish non-commissioned officers and officers from the unit commanded

by Łatyszonek, escaped across the German lines to the Śródmieście district.

On October 2, 1944, the plenipotentiaries of the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, General Tadeusz "Bór" Komorowski, under the leadership of Colonel Kazimierz "Heller" Iranek-Osmecki, signed the act of capitulation of the uprising at the German army headquarters in Ożarów near Warsaw.

The "Radosław" Group differed from the majority of the insurgent units by

much better weapons, training and combat experience, acquired earlier in sabotage operations in the country under German occupation. Several years of fighting in conspiratorial conditions, in the face of the constant threat of death, shaped the soldiers, who in an open battle were able to attack and repel enemy troops, supported by heavy artillery, tanks and air force, using handguns and petrol bottles, until they went out of ammunition.

Piotr Korczyński

THE WARSAW UPRISING IN PICTURES



Uprising children leaning against sandbags at the gate of Kredytowa 3.
Photo: MPW/Joachim "Joachim" Joachimczyk



A group of boys at Sienkiewicza street.
Photo: MPW/Marian "Wyrwa" Grabski



A group of insurgents on the barricade (location unknown – probably in the area of Bracka, Nowogrodzka and Żurawia streets).
Photo: MPW/Marian "Wyrwa" Grabski

Photographs from the collection of the Warsaw Rising Museum (MPW)

A dishonor? You were following orders.

We were hoping we could get out to help our wounded. However, in the night of August 1 to 2, an order to pull back arrived. But we thought it was our duty to come to the aid of the wounded.

At sixteen, does one think about death? Are they aware they might die?

No, it was absolutely out of the question. We really didn't think we could die when we went out to fight. Young people underestimate the horror of death. Our fighting was faith-driven, we didn't think about death.

Which of the heroes of those uprising days you remember best?

It is, of course, the commander of my regiment – Regiment "Garluch" – Major Stanisław "Wysocki" Babiarz. In retrospect, when I look at his figure, I held a completely different view of him back then. I was 16 at the time, and he was

a great figure of authority to me. Similar was the case with Ms. Alicja, with whom I took my military oath. As an adult, I have a completely different judgment perspective. When we retreated from Okęcie, I was garrisoned with Major Babiarz together in one house. I felt honored to see him every time we met. Privately, he was a very nice man.

Sixty-three days passed, and...?

And there was despair. A huge despair. We believed to the very end that those airdrops would help us, that the Russians would eventually cross the Vistula River and support us. We did believe them.

What did you do after the war?

I managed to get into university, but with a lot of obstacles. I received no extra points for my background, and my conspiracy past was unwelcome. I finally got on the extra list and completed a pharmacy

course. Many times they would try to drag me into various organizations and associations of strictly political nature, but I always said that I belonged only to scouts. After all, I had 120 girls under my command!

What would you like to share today – looking through the prism of your life experience – with the young generation, especially with those young people for whom the Warsaw Uprising is just a date and a brief information from a history textbook?

First of all, I would like them to remember that Poland is our homeland, and we have to respect it. Regardless of our internal quarrels, the good of Poland should be a priority to all Poles. I would like the young generation to always know that this is our country, our land.

Finally, a short question, which I'm sure you've heard more than once – was it worth it?

Freedom is always worth fighting for. ■

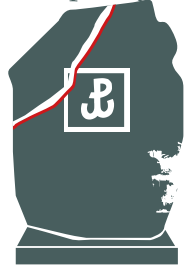


7 SEWER RATS

A plaque commemorating “sewer rats”, juvenile insurgents who from August 8 to September 29, 1944, moving through the sewers, maintained contact between Żoliborz, Stare Miasto, and Śródmieście districts. The sewers enabled contact and transport of materials, weapons, ammunition and reports between the fighting districts, and later evacuation from the areas seized by the Germans.

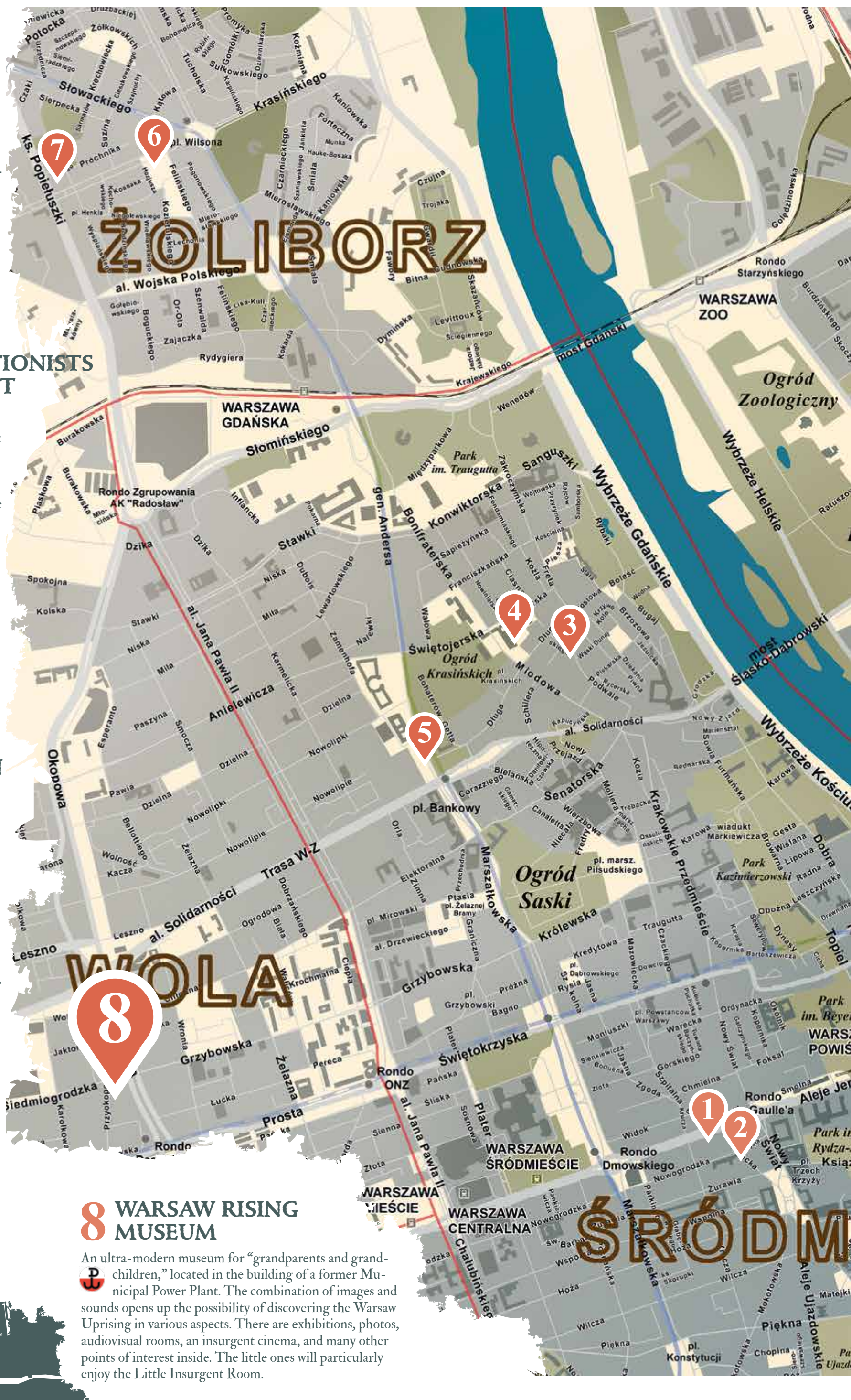
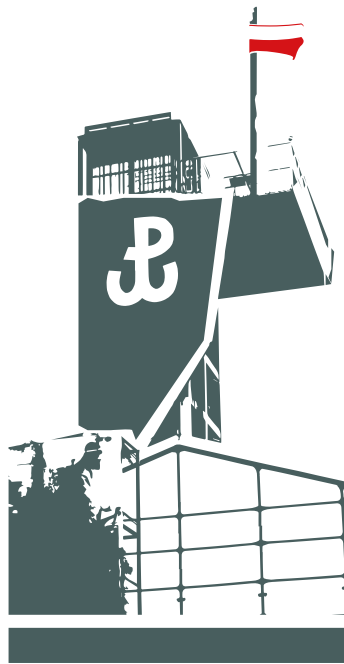
6 LITTLE INSURRECTIONISTS MONUMENT

The monument commemorates the youngest soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising. On the pedestal with a commemorative plaque, there is a sculpture of two little insurgents in motion. It is a copy of the work of sculptor Jadwiga Załuska, who was a paramedic during the Uprising. In the background, there are epitaphs from the time of the Uprising



5 BATTALION “WIGRY” MEMORIAL STONE

The scout Battalion “Wigry” was formed by scout instructors gathered around Scoutmaster Władysław Ludwig and Scoutmaster Roman Kaczorowski. Throughout the entire occupation period, and especially during the Uprising, the battalion showed its bravery, suffered many casualties, and many places in Warsaw – such as Rondo “Radosława” (a roundabout) – bear the names of its heroes.



8 WARSAW RISING MUSEUM

An ultra-modern museum for “grandparents and grandchildren,” located in the building of a former Municipal Power Plant. The combination of images and sounds opens up the possibility of discovering the Warsaw Uprising in various aspects. There are exhibitions, photos, audiovisual rooms, an insurgent cinema, and many other points of interest inside. The little ones will particularly enjoy the Little Insurgent Room.

LET'S TAKE A WALK ALONG THE TRAIL OF THE WARSAW UPRISING

1 The tour begins near Wilcza street, where a plaque commemorating the activities of the Scouts' Field Post Office is placed on the building at Wilcza 35/41. 2 Then, we head to Bracka 5, there is a symbolic grave of an insurgent, Antek the Sprayer, and a plaque informing about his death, placed on the building at Aleje Jerozolimskie 11/19, in the courtyard. 3 Next, we travel by public transport to plac Zamkowy [Castle Square] and move along the city walls of Podwale street towards the Little Insurrectionist [Mały Powstańca] monument. 4 Next, we turn left, and reach the monument at Jana Kilińskiego street, dedicated to the victims killed in the German explosive carrier explosion. 5 From there, only a few steps to the Muranów cinema, in front of which

there is an obelisk commemorating heroic scouts in the Home Army Scouting Battalion "Wigry" square. 6 Then, by tram, we get to Żoliborz district, where, by St. Stanisław Kostka Church at Hozjusza street, there is the Little Insurrectionists [Mały Powstańca] monument. 7 A little further, at Krasińskiego street, at the corner of Popieluszki street, there is a plaque commemorating "sewer rats" – such was the name of juvenile insurgents who, moving through the sewers, provided communication between Żoliborz, Stare Miasto [Old Town], and Śródmieście districts. 8 Now we take the subway to Rondo Daszyńskiego (a roundabout), from where we walk to the Warsaw Rising Museum at Przyokopowa 28. This is where we complete our journey.

4 MINE CARRIER EXPLOSION

It was exceptionally quiet in Stare Miasto [Old Town] on August 13, 1944. Two tanks – as it was believed at that time seized from the Germans – were approaching the barricade near Podwale. These were probably the StuG 40 self-propelled assault gun and the Borgward B IV heavy explosive carrier. At 6.05 p.m., a box with a load of about 500 kg of explosives was released by an unaware driver, causing an explosion. It killed nearly 300 people, and wounded twice as many. A fragment of the caterpillar track of one of the vehicles is instilled in the wall of St. John's Archcathedral in the Old Town (erroneously described as the caterpillar track of the Goliath self-propelled tracked mine).

3 LITTLE INSURRECTIONIST MONUMENT

The first design of the sculpture was drawn up in 1946. Its creator Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz claimed that it was "an expression of his feelings, a form of homage to the children fallen in the fighting." The idea of commemorating the children fighting in the Uprising emerged among the scouts from the Heroes of Warsaw Capital Region of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP). The monument was unveiled in the presence of hundreds of scouts from all over Poland on October 1, 1983.

1 SCOUTING POSTAL SERVICE PLAQUE

The Scouting Postal Service was established on August 2 following the initiative of Scoutmaster Kazimierz "Granica" Grenda. The postmen included Zawiszacy [after Zawisza Czarny, a legendary Polish knight], boys, mostly aged 12–15. After the capitulation, the entire postal service archive was buried at night in the courtyard at Wilcza 41. After the war, it was retrieved by the communist Security Service [SB]. The archive's fate remains unknown.



LIBERATED BY WARSAW

Seizing “Gęsiówka” – a German concentration camp in Warsaw – in memoirs of Captain Ryszard Białous, who on August 5, 1944 commanded this victorious operation.

We joined the operation as the best-armed unit of the Warsaw Uprising. The conspiratorial fight had already brought us considerable gains, but they were nothing in the face of the number of weapons supplied to us by the Germans, systematically defeated by us from the first day of the Uprising. We suffered only the shortage of ammunition, and airdrops did not bring us any change in this respect. Nevertheless, the moods were great, and the spirit was victorious.

The large area we covered allowed us to move freely, and the cars and motorcycles with lilies on the hoods and sides emphasized the “power of the motorized army.”

Our armored platoon, cutting itself off from the rest with black uniforms of German armored tanks, was the crowning achievement of all that; a real platoon – not an ephemera, equipped with Panthers that we just seized and put to work with a lot of effort. The only artillery of the uprising was already behind the first feats and brought the troops the first honor in the uprising. The rumble of our Panthers’ engines, proudly carrying their scout lilies, evoked in us all a feeling of pride and power at the same time, and the deafening rumble of cannons, carrying

destruction to the enemy, was music to our ears.

(...) new task is to hit the ghetto area and the so-called “Gęsiówka,” a large concentration labor camp, located between the streets of Gęsia, Okopowa, Niska, and Bonifraterska. Numerous brick guard towers, the so-called storks, full of machine guns, bunkers and a high wall, secured with barbed wire and a high voltage line, enclose access to the execution of thousands of Poles and Jews forced to work as slaves in the most difficult conditions.

From the political commander of “Gęsiówka,” whom we caught in the first day of the Uprising, we know that there are only Jews left in this camp, survivors of the Jewish uprising in a ghetto and various specialists, drawn from various parts of Europe.

The main objective of today’s attack is to free them and open the road to Stare Miasto [Old Town].

(...) The tank that destroys two barricades on the way to the big iron gate that closes the camp is the head of the attack. It shoots at two corner and two central towers in turn, and then, having made half a turn,

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it is to smash the gate with a blow, and then, standing in it, it is to fire at the next turrets and bunkers in a predetermined order.

(...) I look at my watch. The ten o’clock is near; the calmness surrounding the ruins for some time now is disturbed by the whirring of our Panther’s engine, which slowly and majestically moves away from the front of “Twierdza,” and then it appears in the widely open ghetto gate. I look at the towers again and only now do I see some movement inside them. At the same time, our machine gun roared nearby; long series from a few towers replied to that groan. The huge and powerful barricade, which separated our positions at Gęsia street from nobody’s land, stretching between the wall of “Gęsiówka” and us, turns out to be a very easy prey for our Panther; it rolls over it as it was a rubbish dump, and the noise of the crushed wall, crack of broken planks and iron rails only joins the noise of engines and machine guns. The Panther is already at the level of the second barricade, which it takes down as easily as it dealt with the previous one. The bang of machine guns fades away for a moment, as if the Germans, triggered

by the appearance of an unexpected enemy, were wondering what to do next. The break is short, however, and our tank is caught in the furious fire of fast-action guns, which scout lilies on the sides cross out with the smacks of deadly splashes.

(...) At the same time, the boys who accompany me try to get to the roof through the garage door, from where we can break into the tower through the window. “Piotr” and a few people hold the garage door open; I, walking on the hinges of the lock and muntin bars, climb onto the roof to lay flat on it. “Krzysztof” [Krzysztof Tyszkiewicz] shows up next to me, and now together we crawl towards the window of the tower. We can see a dead, or perhaps wounded, German hanging from a machine gun. The tower resonates with clatter, silenced after we throw in a grenade. We jump in through the window on the neck and back of the lying German. In the corner of the tower on the floor, we see another one in agony. While “Krzysztof” leans over to take away his weapon “just in case,” I try to see with binoculars the situation in the other towers from behind the corner of the wall. One edge tower is on fire; I recognize our boys in the rest. The Panther slowly and systematically shifts the fire of its gun from one tower to another, according to a predetermined pattern, and the precision with which the missiles fall inspires a sense of pride in me. A shot, clouds of dust and smoke, and single figures of running boys – this is a view that repeats itself with machine-like precision.

(...) Shooting goes silent slowly. The fire of the cannon is gone and now the Panther moves again towards the first barrack. I call “Laudański” and “Karolek” [Tadeusz Żurn] to get them out of the way a bit, and the iron colossus rolls past us, to stand up like a bricked-up one moment, because the view that opened before our eyes is at least strange. While so far, we have been worried about the absence of people in the area we had entered, now suddenly the barracks’ doors open under pressure, and the whole foreground fills with a mass of striped figures running in our direction with an incredible scream and waving of hands, thus separating us from the escaping Germans with a living wall. The joy of the liberation radiates from all the faces. It is certainly greater than ours, disturbed by the fact that for a while we are helpless against the enemy. Our fast-action guns are forced to remain silent, which the Germans take advantage of, escaping towards Stare Miasto.

For a moment I feel my throat clenching the contraction of joy that we made it in time. We were afraid that the Germans would eliminate the prisoners before our arrival. But when a mass of prisoners, so called Haeftlings, traps me, trying to express their gratitude and joy at the release in different languages,



The drawing of Ryszard Białous showing the capture of the German concentration camp in Warsaw’s Gęsiówka (KL Warschau) by an armored platoon of Home Army Battalion “Zośka” on August 5, 1944.

Young Ryszard Białous. The explosions in the background symbolize the military formation in which he had served before the war – sappers. A painting by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, who owned a studio at Bracka 23 in Warsaw. The tenement also housed Białous’s in-laws, Edward and Zofia Błoński, as well as their daughter Krystyna (1914–2007), whom Ryszard married in June 1939. This is one of Witkiewicz’s last paintings, dating back to June 1939. Three paintings of this series from 1939, unknown to art historians, in addition to Ryszard presenting Krystyna and Zofia, survived the war and in 1946 left Poland with the Białous family and then emigrated with them to Patagonia.

INSURGENTS

I realize the difficulty of my position, and order everyone to head sharply for the large brick garage that is adjacent to the wall. The stripped mass meekly, though joyfully, carries out this order and our fast-action guns can start their interrupted music, which, to the enemy, is the music of death.

(...) The sight that appears to our eyes is a clear sign of the total surprise that our attack has been for the Germans. In a large, beautifully furnished, yet tasteless, room, there is a long table covered with a white tablecloth and a vase with smoky soup, wine and vodka. Only the overturned chairs prove that the feast was interrupted unexpectedly, and the feasting were in a hurry to leave the beautiful room. The big antique clock in the corner of the hall chimes 11 o'clock.

(...) Immediately, we are surrounded by a dense crowd of radiant figures. Blessings pour out; someone tries to kiss my hand, and it makes me uncomfortable. Soon the quasi choral requests begin: "Give us weapons, give us uniforms, we want to fight you." Polish voices prevail over others. Some people shout their names. Many of them, as it turns out, are ghetto defenders.

I look at their faces with joy, and my thought goes back to those terrible moments when, in the face of the tragedy that our fellow citizens suffered in the besieged ghetto, we felt all our helplessness. The squad was still to get proper equipment at the time. We had only a few Stens, some light fast-action guns acquired at the cost of our colleagues' lives, and all we could do was give up those weapons, as ordered by the order of "Grot" [Stefan Rowecki], to the heroic ghetto defenders.

I remember the briefing at which I told the boys that order. I knew that it would be difficult for them to give up their weapons, which were so difficult to obtain, but there was no voice of protest and only a shy proposal: "Couldn't we, with what we will have left, try to destroy at least one German outpost to add our share," was a proof of understanding for the defenders.

We also made this contribution, and the modest action took place in a location a few hundred steps away from where we are now; the thanks came from the mouths of those to whom we had been unable to provide effective help at the time. I order some more energetic to form from the freed a relatively decent column and lead them to "Twierdza," where the "Fil" [Ludwik Michalski], an invaluable quartermaster, is to take care of the food and uniforms of the freed.

(...) What a feverish rush they are in to drop off their striped uniforms to dress in uniforms that until recently only their persecutors had the right to wear! How much joy radiates from the faces of those who have seen the face of death so many times.

"Zygmunt" and "Wacek" select mechanics for operating tanks and cars. "Fil" looks for cooks. Tailors, shoemakers and hairdressers come forward. Everyone wishes to fight in the unit that freed them,

and I see a certain disappointment in the eyes of those whom I had to hand over to other units.

(...) The crack of mortar bullets breaking in the courtyard interrupts the general cheerfulness and everyone hid in the buildings. Only a group of paramedics walks down slowly, carrying a wounded, recent Haefling, now a soldier of the Most Serene Republic of Poland, whose face, despite the pain, radiates with joy, because he sees around him the friendly and concerned faces of brothers fighting for the common cause. ■

Ryszard Białous

We publish a fragment of Ryszard Białous's insurgent memoirs (1914-1992) Walka w pożodze [Fighting under the Fire], published for the first time in Paris in 1946.



Ryszard "Jerzy" Białous (1914-1992) was a Polish scout, captain of the Home Army and commander of Home Army Battalion "Zośka," which was an entry team unit, belonging to scout assault groups, and at the same time the Dispatching Division of the Kedyw – Directorate of Diversion of the Main Headquarters of the Home Army. In the Warsaw Uprising, the battalion fought against the Germans in the "Radosław" Group in Wola, Old Town, Śródmieście [City Centre] and Czerniaków. Most of its soldiers died, and the commander was taken prisoner after the fall of the Uprising. The soldiers of this unit are well known to Polish readers as heroes of the Stones for the Rampart book by Aleksander Kamiński.

After the war, Białous was an officer of the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade stationed in the British occupation zone in western Germany. In 1948, he emigrated with his family to Argentina. He spent the rest of his life in Patagonia, working as an architect and engineer. In June this year his ashes were brought from Neuquén, Patagonia, to Warsaw. They were buried on July 31 in the headquarters of Battalion "Zośka" in the Powązki Military Cemetery.

On August 5, 1944, soldiers of Battalion "Zośka" under his command liberated 348 Jews from all over Europe who were imprisoned in KL Warschau, a German concentration camp located in the center of Warsaw, around the former Jewish ghetto, whose 400,000 inhabitants were murdered by the Germans during the four years of the war.



KL Warschau prisoners right after their liberation by the soldiers of Battalion "Zośka."

MYSTERIES OF "GĘSIÓWKA"

The camp covered a vast area of the city center, which was colloquially called "Gęsiówka."

In the Warsaw district of Wola, at the crossroads of Anielewicza and Okopowa streets, opposite the Jewish cemetery, a new monument was erected last year – three concrete blocks with the inscription in Polish, Hebrew and English versions, crowned with the symbol of the Fighting Poland, a Star of David, and a scout lily:

*On 5th August 1944
"Zośka"
the scouts battalion
of the "Radosław" Unit
Armia Krajowa
captured the German
concentration camp
"Gęsiówka"
and liberated
348 Jewish prisoners
citizens of various
European countries
many of whom later
fought and fell in
the Warsaw Uprising*

This is all that is left of KL Warschau – a German concentration camp in the capital of Poland.

The camp covered a vast area in the city center, which was commonly referred to as Gęsiówka. The name comes from the former military barracks located in Gęsia Street in Warsaw, renamed after the last war as Mordechaja Anielewicza street; Anielewicz was one of the leaders of the 1943 Jewish uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Ghetto was organized for Jews by the Germans in 1940, concentrating 400,000 Jews from Warsaw and neighboring areas in inhuman conditions. Gęsiówka, lying in the heart of the Ghetto, was converted into a prison for them. It was also the last seat of the Warsaw Judenrat, the Jewish Council, through which the Germans managed the Ghetto.

The genocide against Jews from all German-occupied European countries was initiated by the Germans in 1942 on Polish soil. Most of the Ghetto residents were transported to the Treblinka death camp. It was not until January 1943 that the first unrest among the remaining Jewish population began. SS Reichsführer Heinrich

Himmler noted that the Konzentrationslager, a concentration camp, would be "of use" here. The preparations for its foundation were interrupted by a desperate Jewish uprising. The last sentence of SS General Jürgen Stroop's report documenting the extermination of the Ghetto reflects the "need" to establish such a camp in Warsaw. After the suppression of the Uprising, on June 11, Himmler gave an order to set up a camp in the Ghetto, of which there was a sea of ruins left in the heart of Warsaw. In July, three hundred German kapos – supervisors, criminal prisoners from the camp in Buchenwald in German Thuringia – arrived in Gęsiówka. On August 15, the first transport of Jews from the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, founded by the Germans on Polish territories incorporated into the Reich, arrived. The men went through a "selection", and were assigned to work. They were to clean up buildings in the Ghetto. There had no tools, and were forced to do everything with their bare hands. No doctors, no bathhouse. Those prisoners were looked after as much as possible by a Polish doctor, a political prisoner from the nearby Pawiak prison, Dr. Felician Loth. The concentration camp was named KL Warschau; although located in the center of a big city, the capital of Poland, it was isolated from the outside world. The Germans brought here mainly Jewish prisoners from abroad, from Greece and Hungary. The camp was designed by the same German engineers who built the Auschwitz camp. Hans Kammler was the chief engineer, the same man who built gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz.

The German discovery in 1943 in Katyn near Smolensk of thousands of corpses of Polish officers, whom the Russians had methodically murdered three years earlier, made the Nazi realize that the traces of their own crime must be erased. In the still active German camps, the bodies of the murdered were dug up and burned. Such repeated "burials" were a specialty of the German Sonderkommando 1005, whose aim was to remove evidence of genocide in the East. The action was led by SS Colonel Paul Blobel, who was responsible for the murder of 34,000 Jews in Babi Yar near Kiev in September 1941.

Continuation on the next page →



View on the Ghetto ruins and western part of KL Warszaw, within the streets of Gęsia, Okopowa and Gliniana (barracks lined up in a row). On the right, the actual, eastern part of the camp with "Gęsiówka" (not seen on the picture), where today the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews is located. View from St. Augustin Church's tower at Nowolipki in 1945.

At the same time, during a few months at the turn of 1943 and 1944, the Germans murdered about 10,000 Poles in Warsaw in mass street executions, in the intention of terrorizing the capital residents. However, as a precaution, they felt necessary to hide the evidence of their crime; moreover, the occupants feared the outbreak of a potential epidemic caused by the decay of corpses. The bodies of the executed were collected from the streets and transported to the area of Gęsiówka. Prisoners of the camp took care of it. The Auschwitz "death commandos", composed of Jewish prisoners, who



When **Richard Nixon**, US Vice-President, visited Poland for the first time in 1959, he laid flowers at the Ghetto Heroes monument at the square of the same name, near the place where the chimney of the German crematorium fumed during the war. Then, to everyone's surprise, he turned around and went towards the building in Gęsiówka, crossed the wall and laid his wreath there. This is documented on the photographs in Life magazine. The memory of German crimes was still alive. He was probably the last foreign politician who commemorated the existence of KL Warszaw in that place.

had previously worked in gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau, were employed for this purpose. Poles from the nearby Pawiak prison were also killed in Gęsiówka. In the interrogation records of the witnesses who testified after the war before Polish prosecutors, there are also testimonies about the existence and operation

of a gas-chamber vehicle in KL Warszaw, which arrived from Łódź, which resembled vehicles operating in the German death camp in Chełmno nad Nerem (Kulmhof an der Nehr), in Wielkopolska incorporated into the Reich. Blobel carried out the first mass burning of human corpses on special scaffoldings in Chełmno.

In KL Warszaw, the bodies of Polish victims transported from all over the city were ground to pulp, and burnt in a crematorium erected on the camp grounds. It was located in the place where a block of flats stands today at Karmelicka 17a in the downtown district of Muranów. However, there remained tons of human ashes after the combustion process. They were discharged into concrete wells at the first courtyard of the camp – they rest in there for eternity.

After the war, Poland got under the new – Russian – occupation. On the territory of a former KL Warszaw, a communist "labor camp" was established in the Stalin era. After 1956, the buildings were empty and partly burnt out.

Bogusław Kopka, PhD in humanities, historian, author of publications on World War II and the period of Polish People's Republic, i.e. "Konzentrationslager Warszaw. Historia i następstwa" (2007), for which he was awarded KLIO



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THE "ZWIASTUN" PROGRAM

For over two years now, the Polish National Foundation (PFN) has been implementing the "Zwiastun" ("Herald") educational program for NATO soldiers stationing in Poland. "The program is to present Poland as a modern, safe country which is developing all the time, but which also remembers its history," assures Cezary Andrzej Jurkiewicz, member of the Board of the PFN. Within the program, the Foundation organised numerous lectures and excursions. A few thousand soldiers participated in them, and they all emphasise that it helped them to know Poland from various perspectives. "This is a valuable opinion, because after they return to their homes, they will be natural ambassadors of Poland," he adds.

The PFN continues to develop the program. In the following months, the Foundation plans to organise a Moniuszko concert or lectures devoted to the indomitable soldiers. There are also plans to engage soldiers from other garrisons, not only in Orzysz.

More information about the "Zwiastun" you can find in Polska Zbrojna – July edition.

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