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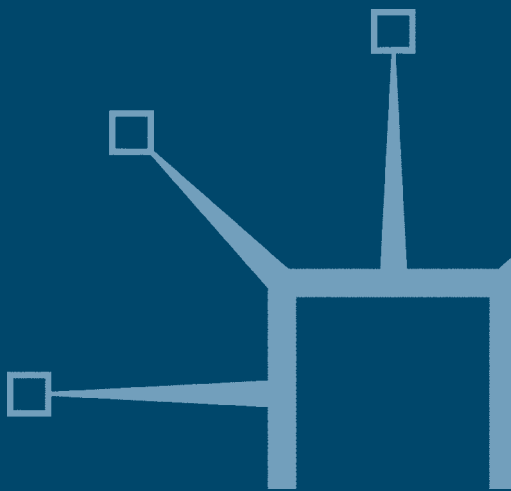
Civil War in Poland, 1942–1948

Anita J. Prazmowska



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Preface

The study of the origins of the communist regime in Poland has attracted the attention of scholars during recent years, but they have been faced with the consequences of the inconsistent analysis which was all that was allowed during the communist period. The wartime period was presented as, on the one hand, a battle between the London government and the underground movement loyal to it, and on the other, the progressive forces led by the PPR in occupied Poland. Unfortunately the result of this government-sanctioned approach to recent history has been far from what might have been expected. While the official view could not be challenged, the alternative view, which could be neither put forward nor properly investigated, took root. Thus the general perception has been that during the course of the war left-wing and progressive programmes had not been discussed, while the London government and the Home Army underground were seen as patriotic. The relationship between the complex political debates of the wartime period and the anti-communist underground after the war has been largely ignored. The communist regime thus bears a heavy responsibility for not merely attempting to distort the study of its origins, but has also indirectly contributed to the unchallenged alternative approach to the subject in which the roles of good and evil were merely reversed.

During the Gorbachov period, Soviet-sanctioned policies allowed for the discussion of 'blank areas' in contemporary history, and for the first time made it possible for a fuller study of the relationship between Soviet objectives and the complex underground movements that emerged during the war. During the period which followed, Polish historians have been able to investigate ex-Soviet archives. The archives of the London government-in-exile and the exiled political and military leadership, which had been previously available, have recently attracted a more discerning and questioning scholarly community.

The result is that it is possible to approach the question of wartime resistance and plans for post-war Poland knowing that the majority of documents are now available. The composition of the London government-in-exile, its aims and plans to return to Poland after the cessation of hostilities have been now studied in detail. Likewise, its relationship to the underground movement in occupied Poland has been

investigated. The complex network of organizations which emerged in the Polish territories can be analysed with some degree of accuracy.

Relations between these proved to be far from easy and their loyalty to the government-in-exile could never be taken for granted. National unity in the face of German and Soviet occupation policies was assumed, although, as recent publications have shown, was never absolute or enduring. In Britain the government-in-exile fought to retain control over the political parties and the military leadership. In its relation with occupied Poland it strove for organizational unity. As this book will show, neither was ever a foregone conclusion, and in fact during the critical period from 1942 onwards, divisions were the norm rather than an exception. The taboo subject of fratricidal conflict can now be broached and, as will be shown, was a constant feature of the underground organizations manoeuvring to place themselves in an advantageous position, which would allow them to capture power once the war was over.

Similarly, the general availability of evidence and an open-minded approach to the subject allows historians to assert that a whole gamut of political programmes had been discussed and considered by wartime underground organizations, among which the communist PPR was initially the least significant organizationally. At the same time it is apparent that progressive ideas were formulated and put forward. The government-in-exile, through its agency in occupied Poland, the Delegatura, and the united military resistance, the Home Army, tried to discourage potentially divisive internal debates, but these were not successful. In occupied Poland, to a larger extent than in the exile community, questions relating to the post-war period were of great significance in relations between the various sections of the political and military organizations. Of these the relationship between the Socialist Party and the radical sections of the pre-war party and the trade union movement are very interesting. Likewise the uneasy unity between the Home Army and the peasant military units is very important in understanding the limits of the Home Army's authority.

The issue of Soviet domination of liberated Poland and the manner in which the first provisional government was formed and placed in power has been the subject of a number of outstanding monographs. Nevertheless, the limits of communist authority are a subject which needs to be more fully investigated. The persistence of divisions which dated back to the wartime period and the collapse of the government-in-exile's authority led to the splintering of the underground movement at the time when Soviet control of Polish territories became more appar-

ent. With Soviet assistance the communists established the first administrative structures in post-war Poland, though they still had to build up a power base in the community and to destroy the opposition. The transition from wartime resistance to peace was difficult for all parties, both the ruling parties and those which had been sidelined. They both continued to struggle, the first for authority, the second increasingly for survival. The activities of the NKVD, war-weariness and, not least, the anti-communist underground opposition's failure to provide a credible alternative to the reconstruction programme, ultimately established communist control in post-war Poland. Soviet policies were of critical importance in tipping the balance in favour of the communist-dominated provisional government.

Planning for post-war Poland included debates on the subject of national minorities. Thus the trend towards an ethnically homogenous Poland meant that at the end of the war the continuing presence of the Ukrainian, German and also the Jewish communities within Polish borders would not be tolerated. This subject, like that of the non-communist opposition, was not aired during the communist period. Only with democratization of Poland have historians been able to fully investigate the extent of ethnic cleansing which took place in Poland after the war. The attitude of the ruling parties towards the nationality issue was ambivalent. They shared the desire to gain the support of the community, and to that end they were willing to utilize nationalist slogans and to overlook the right of these groups to determine whether they wanted to remain in Poland or leave. The expulsion of the Ukrainian and German communities from Poland was a foregone conclusion, irrespective of which political party established the first administration. The issue of the mistreatment of Jews in post-war Poland has been the subject of numerous publications in recent years, a point which is reinforced when the matter is viewed from the perspective of fratricidal conflicts fought during the occupation and the years following the cessation of hostilities.

It is the aim of this book to, first, link the debates and conflicts which took place under occupation to those which continued after the war between the ruling parties and those which made the decision to oppose the communist-dominated government. In investigating what programmes were debated during the war and how these could be achieved, this book aims to go beyond the analysis of the leadership's role and aims. Wherever possible, relations between partisan units, between their leaders and the rank and file, between parties and their potential and actual supporters will be analysed. The attitude of the community to

these debates and conflicts forms an important element of the investigation.

My research in Poland was made possible by the opening of archives to researchers from outside Poland. The Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw and the Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe in Rembertów proved to be rich sources of information. In London the Polski Instytut i Museum Sikorskiego and the Studium Polski Podziemnej generously allowed me full access to their archives. I am, in particular, grateful to the staff of the Archiwum Akt Nowych and the London archives for their assistance during my long stints of research.

The Nuffield Foundation, the British Council, STICERD and the London School of Economics have been generous with grants and financial assistance, which allowed me to travel to Poland for research purposes.

My colleagues have been particularly helpful when I faced dilemmas in understanding the transition from war to peace in countries which had experienced occupation. Dr Robert Boyce offered interesting examples of the French resistance's transfer from underground resistance to freedom. Mr Svetozar Rajak was very helpful in explaining how the Yugoslav Partisans prepared for transfer from a fighting force to that of a ruling party. In both cases this enabled me to identify key dilemmas inherent in various societies' adaptations to the new situation created by the end of occupation. My undergraduate and postgraduate students have always been a source of intellectual stimulation to me. Their irreverent challenge to my ideas has propelled me forth, never allowing me to choose easy interpretations to complex processes.

In Poland, my research has been facilitated by Marian Turski and Professor Andrzej Garlicki. Without their assistance and intellectual support, this work would have been less ambitious and more conventional in its conclusions. Professor Włodzimierz Brus had kindly agreed to read the manuscript and offered invaluable comments on the post-1945 period. My friends have been both supportive and indulgent during the book's long period of gestation. I remain indebted to all those who encouraged me in this endeavour.

I am particularly grateful to Jan Toporowski for his emotional support, and to him I dedicate this work.

ANITA J. PRAŻMOWSKA

List of Abbreviations

AK	Armia Krajowa (Home Army)
AL	Armia Ludowa (People's Army)
BCh	Bataliony Chłopskie (Peasant Battalions)
CBKP	Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polski w ZSRR (Central Bureau of Communists from Poland in the Soviet Union)
CKL	Centralny Komitet Ludowy (Central People's Committee)
CKŻP	Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich (Central Committee of Polish Jews)
CUP	Centralny Urząd Planowania (Central Planning Office)
DSZ	Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych (Delegation of the Armed Forces)
GL	Gwardia Ludowa (People's Guard)
GOP	Grupy Ochronno Propagandowe (Protection-Propaganda Groups)
KBW	Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (Internal Security Corps)
KMSK	Komitet Ministrów dla Spraw Kraju (Ministeral Committee with Special Responsibilities for Home Affairs)
KPP	Komunistyczna Partia Polski (Polish Communist Party)
KRN	Krajowa Rada Narodowa (Homeland National Council)
MBN	Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego (Ministry of National Security)
MO	Milicja Obywatelska (Citizens' Militia)
NKVD	Narodovy Komisariat Vnutrich Dyel People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
NOP	Narodowe Oddziały Partyzanckie (National Partisan Units)
NOW	Narodowa Organisacja Wojskowa (National Military Organization)
NSZ	Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Units)
NZN	Narodowe Zjednoczenia Militarne (National Military Unity)
OUN	Organization of Ukrainian Nationals
OZON	Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (Camp of National Unity)
PAL	Polska Armia Ludowa (Polish People's Army)
PKN	Polski Komitet Narodowy (Polish National Council)
PKP	Polityczny Komitet Porozumiewawczy (Conciliatory Political Committee)
PKWN	Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Polish National Committee of Liberation)

PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party)
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)
PS	Polscy Socialiści (Polish Socialists)
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Alliance)
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)
RJN	Rada Jedności Narodowej (Council of National Unity)
RPPS	Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów (Workers' Party of the Polish Socialists)
SD	Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Democratic Alliance)
SL	Stronnictwo Ludowe (Peasant Alliance)
SN	Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Alliance)
SP	Stronnictwo Pracy (Labour Alliance)
TRJN	Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej (Provisional Government of National Unity)
TUR	Towarzystwo Universytetów Robotniczyan (Association of Worker's Universities)
UB	Urząd Bezpieczeństwa (Security Office)
UPA	Ukraińska Armia Powstańcza (Ukrainian Insurrectionist Army)
WiN	Wolność i Niezawistosc (Freedom and Independence)
WRN	Wolność Równość i Niepodległość (Freedom, Equality and Independence)
ZDR	Zbiorowa Delegatura Rządu (Government Joint Delegation)
ZPP	Zwiazek Patriotów Polskich (Union of Polish Patriots)
ZWZ	Związek Walki Zbrojnej (Union for Armed Struggle)
ŻOB	Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Fighting Organization)

Introduction

The German attack on Poland in the early morning of 1 September 1939 ended twenty years of Polish independence. During the six years which followed, Polish society was first traumatized by German and Soviet occupations and, after liberation, by the consequences of Soviet re-entry into Poland. While initially Poland's long-term interests and plans for post-war reconstruction were a matter for the government-in-exile and its foreign policy, from the end of 1942 and, in particular, when Soviet troops entered Polish territories in July 1944, the debate on the future of Poland became an issue of internal rivalries and conflicts between parties active in Poland. At the same time the question of Poland's post-war borders and the future government's relations with the Soviet Union was discussed by Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt. The Polish government was not allowed to send representatives to these talks, for it was not possible to seek the views of the community under occupation.

While the 'Polish Question' became the touchstone of relations between the wartime allies, Poles in Poland and those in exile, both the Soviet Union and Britain, attempted to formulate their own plans for the country's future. Deep divisions within the Polish community exiled in Britain and the Soviet Union, signalled the likelihood of fratricidal conflict. In the meantime, Poles under occupation pinned their hope on a reformed political system coming in the wake of liberation. In the circumstances, it was inevitable that the end of German occupation, the collapse of the international standing of the exile authorities, and the entry of the Soviet troops into Polish territories, would create confusion, divisions and ultimately conflict.

In September 1939 when the lightning success of the German attack exposed weakness in military planning and failure of leadership, the authority of the pre-war government suffered a setback, from which it

would not recover. As the first military defeats became apparent the government and Poland's political and spiritual leaders abdicated responsibility for the conduct of the fighting and moved towards the Polish–Rumanian border in order to leave Poland. As the extent of the military defeat became obvious and as the Soviet troops moved to occupy the eastern areas, they crossed into Rumania. Although their aim had always been to lead the fight against the invaders from exile, by removing themselves from occupied Poland the pre-war regime left the field open for a new leadership to emerge. Whoever would organize the underground movement would inevitably aspire to influence the course of political developments after liberation.

At the same time, both in Poland and in the exile communities a long process of recriminations began. The search for those responsible for the military failure and the political isolation in which Poland found itself in September 1939, in spite of existing alliance agreements with Britain and France, inevitably led to judgements being passed on the nature of politics in inter-war Poland, and from that to a debate on who had the right to claim leadership after the war. From the outset, the military coterie which had ruled Poland since the death of Josef Piłsudski in 1935, sought to maintain a grip on decisions concerning the setting up of the government in exile and the raising of military units in the West.[1] Opposition parties and their leaders wanted to ensure that Piłsudski followers would not succeed and joined in the political conflicts over the composition and political profile of the exile government. They too believed that the fight for control of Poland after the war would begin in exile. Thus the first victory in the battle for control of the political life of post-war Poland was won when, in October 1939, a government-in-exile was established in Paris.

While members of the pre-war government, including the president, prime minister and minister for foreign affairs found themselves unexpectedly interned in Rumania, a critic of the Piłsudski regime, General Władysław Sikorski, formed the first exile government in Paris. Those connected with the pre-war government had hoped to prevent all opposition parties from having a say in the composition of the exile authorities. They were thwarted by the French authorities, who had distrusted the inter-war Polish government and were anxious about the consequences of anti-French policies pursued by the Piłsudski coterie. When he left Poland in the wake of German advances, the French Ambassador in Poland, Leon Noël, made sure that Sikorski, whose pro-French views were well known, proceeded to Paris.[2] In the early stages of the war he was the highest ranking military man who had made it to France

and with French encouragement he could confidently look forward to becoming the exile prime minister with the aged pianist Ignacy Paderewski possibly becoming the president.

The Polish Constitution that was amended in April 1935 allowed, in circumstances of national danger, for the transfer of authority from the President to his nominee. Naturally the pre-war government, interned in Rumania hoped that by transferring presidential authority to one of their nominees it would retain control over the composition of the government in exile. On 20 September, when President Ignacy Mościski was unable to leave Rumania, he was persuaded to resign and nominated the Polish ambassador to Rome, Bolesław Wieniawa Długoszowski, a supporter of the Piłsudski camp, as the new president. The French authorities objected, as they disliked and distrusted Wieniawa Długoszowski. In the curcumstances, the Polish ambassador in Paris, Juliusz łukasiewicz, a key member of the Piłsudski camarilla was able to insist on the alternative nomination of Władysław Raczkiewicz, a man associated with the Piłsudski camp, for the post of president of the government-in-exile.

The French authorities wanted Sikorski, who was known for his advocacy of a pro-French policy during the inter-war period, to lead the government-in-exile. The French could exercise influence over decisions made by the Poles through diplomatic pressure and by making sure that Sikorski's opponents did not gain entry visas to France, but they had no legal right to overrule decisions made by the Poles.[3] With French support Sikorski was able to outmanoeuvre his opponents and secure for himself the post of prime minister and minister of war. He also claimed the post of commander-in-chief of the Polish units in France. Sikorski's task in making appointments to the government-in-exile was made much easier by the fact that most of the members of the pre-war government had been interned in Rumania. A second advantage was that France took an active interest in the composition of the Polish authority being formed on their territory. Sikorski was given an assurance that supporters of the Piłsudski camp who escaped from Poland or Rumanian internment would not be allowed to enter France.[4]

The government of National Unity which Sikorski was thus able to assemble was sworn in on 2 October. It consisted mainly of leaders of the four parties which had been in the opposition during the inter-war period. These were the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – PPS), the National Alliance (Stronnictwo Narodowe – SN), the Peasant Alliance (Stronnictwo Ludowe – SL) and the Labour Alliance (Stronnictwo Pracy – SP). Little natural unity existed between these parties

other than their opposition to the Piłsudski regime and the fact that they had been treated very harshly during the 1930s. Their authority in Poland during the 1930s had nevertheless been minimal. In addition to the president, the only prominent members of the Piłsudski camp to be included in the government were August Zaleski who had been minister of foreign affairs and Adam Koc, one-time director of the Polski Bank Handlow and head of OZON the government pupper political party. Sikorski gave Zaleski the foreign ministry portfolio and Koc the treasury, thus securing their individual loyalty. From the outset the president was, and would continue to be, Sikorski's bitter foe and rival. Article 13 of the 1935 Polish Constitution granted the president extensive prerogatives, which Raczkiewicz had been initially persuaded to delegate to the prime minister. Though neither was quite sure what the implications of these political arrangements were, both behaved as if they had absolute authority over the government. Since they represented very divergent political ideas the scope for conflict was extensive.[5]

One of the first areas of conflict between the president and the prime minister related to the appointment of General Kazimierz Sosnkowski to the post of deputy president. His late arrival in Paris meant that either Raczkiewich or Sikorski would have to resign to make way for the highest ranking military man within the Polish émigré community. Since neither was willing to oblige, Raczkiewicz created for Sosnkowski the post of deputy president. Sosnkowski's presence strengthened the Piłsudski camp in the government and the exile community. He had been one of Piłsudski's closest friends during the early 1920s but his disapproval of the 1926 coup d'état led to an estrangement between the two. During the September 1939 campaign his reputation as a solider and leader was enhanced by a successful defence of Poland's southern flank. He managed to make his way out of occupied Poland and arrived in Paris on 11 October. By then decisions concerning the composition of the government in exile had already been made. Nevertheless, the presence of so important a person could not be ignored. This explains why, in spite of his wish to decrease the influence of the Piłsudski camp in the government, and in particular, in plans for the future of Poland, Sikorski felt compelled to give him responsibility for matters relating to the creation of an underground movement in occupied Poland.[6] Furthermore, it had been suggested that Sosnkowski's standing within the Piłsudski camp would make it possible to establish close contacts with ex-army officers in occupied territories. Their role was considered vital to the creation of a successful underground resistance force.[7] From the outset the government-in-exile was divided on the issue of Poland's

future place in Europe. Thus as the war raged, the Poles who gathered in Paris were already positioning themselves in preparation for the contest which would inevitably take place once Poland was liberated.

The first meeting of the newly formed National Council (Rada Narodowa) took place in Paris on 23 January 1940. Intended initially as a body which would act as an inspectorate, defining the government's prerogatives, in reality it worked as a quasi parliament. Its role became that of guiding and advising the government-in-exile. Sikorski made sure that most of the appointees to the National Council were representatives of political parties which had been active in the opposition during the inter-war period. A representative of the Jewish community was also added to the Council's membership.[8] None of the three main national minorities was represented on the National Council. Together the Ukrainian, Jewish, German, Byelorussian and Lithuanian communities constituted one-third of pre-war Poland's population. Since the government-in-exile was determined to reconstitute Poland in its pre-war borders, this omission suggested a desire neither to grant them the same rights as those enjoyed by ethnic Poles in pre-war Poland, nor to reverse the discriminatory legislation of that period. Initially a Catholic bishop and a priest each had a seat on the National Council, thus giving the Catholic Church a strong presence. Even after the first reshuffle when Father Brandys relinquished his seat, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the second largest Christian church in pre-war Poland, was not invited to nominate a representative to the Council.

It was apparent that the conflicts within the ranks of the government-in-exile went beyond the obvious personality clashes and rivalries between the old regime and its critics. Sikorski as well as his opponents, basing themselves on the analysis of events following the First World War, presumed that the end of the war would be accompanied by internal revolutions. They therefore anticipated the need to prepare troops to deal with that eventuality. Thus military units which were to be raised in France would have the dual role of making a military contribution to the liberation of Poland and securing power for the exile government.[9]

During the first months of his premiership Sikorski came to believe that only through making a direct military contribution to the allied war effort would Poland secure a place at the post-war negotiating table. Thus while in France he went to great lengths to build up Polish military units in the West and then to place them at a number of war theatres. The purpose of these efforts was to prepare them for fighting in the allied war activities while at the same time ensuring that they could

be moved towards Poland when the moment of liberation approached.[10] In this, Sikorski was determined to overrule the exile military leaders who would have preferred to allow the allies to concentrate on defeating first Germany and then the Soviet Union, while the Polish units were kept intact for the final battles on Polish territories.[11]

By the time of the German attack on France, the Polish government-in-exile had raised an army of 80 000 men, of which, all with the exception of one brigade, were based in France. The brigade led by General Kopański, which was meant to expand from its starting number of 3000 to an optimistic 7000, was attached to General Weygand's Middle Eastern army in Syria. Sikorski's view ultimately prevailed and, by the time of the German attack on France, he was able to insist on the exile units' dual role of, in the first place, participating in the allied war, while at the same time planning for future use in Poland. Unfortunately the Norwegian campaign revealed the incompatibility of these two objectives. In its desire to become an active participant first in the Soviet–Finnish war, and then the Norwegian campaign, the Polish government-in-exile insisted that its 5000 strong Independent Highland Brigade should be included in the invasion force. The political benefits derived from this sacrifice turned out to be meagre. In spite of the hopes that this token force would secure for the exile government a permanent place on the Supreme War Council, such representation was not achieved. Sikorski's critics refused to be silenced and pointed to the fact that this policy might well result in the government having no units left with which to participate directly in the liberation of Poland. This, as they warned, might increase the government's dependence on the Western powers' willingness and ability to free Polish territories.[12]

In spite of an official pronouncement that it would not seek to deal with the causes of the September 1939 military failure, the exile government did everything but that. Under the guise of seeking out those responsible for the disaster, a purge of the diplomatic corps was the first stage of the process of removing supporters and appointees of the pre-war regime from positions of influence. Sikorski also used the argument that they had been responsible for the September failure to keep those who managed to leave occupied Poland or to break out of Rumania from entering France, thus swelling the ranks of his opponents in both the army and the government. Since the highest proportion of military men who escaped from Poland were officers, and they were usually supporters of the Piłsudski regime, Sikorski also instigated a purge of the officer rank within the newly formed units.

One of the most dangerous possibilities faced by any exile authority is that of losing contact with the homeland. Failure on the part of any exile authority to keep abreast of developments in the country can lead to it becoming irrelevant or, even worse, to being replaced by another authority. For the Polish government-in-exile the question was not merely that of being in constant contact with Poles in occupied territories, but also one of the political profile of any underground leadership. Thus control over the underground movement was a matter of critical importance to the Polish government-in-exile and its opponents within the exile community.

Before the fall of France, contact between occupied territories and the still free areas could be maintained on a regular basis. Military men and politicians who decided to leave Poland after the German and Soviet occupation crossed into Rumanian and Hungarian territories, which still maintained nominal neutrality. Although Germany put pressure on both governments to stem this tide, many Poles were able to evade arrest, as neither government was unequivocal in its support of Germany. At the same time, smaller numbers of men, after the initial hasty flight, returned to Poland. The Baltic States likewise acted as a conduit for those wishing to flee into exile. Movement across the German–Soviet line was possible. Polish legations in neutral states acted as posting stations and facilitated the movement of personnel and the transmission of information to France. In realty, until the fall of France, with varying degrees of success, the Polish government-in-exile and its opponents managed to maintain constant courier links with the homeland.

At the beginning of November Sikorski received new information about an underground organization which had been created in Warsaw by General Michał Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz, one of the least discredited military leaders of the September campaign. Possibly acting on instructions of the commander-in-chief of the Polish army in September 1939, Marshal Rydz-Śmigły, Tokarzewski started building up an underground military organization to fight both occupying powers, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.[13] News of the emergence of an underground movement was not welcomed by Sikorski, for by all accounts he did not want to see the formation in occupied Polish territories of a military organization independent of the émigré government. As a result he instructed General Sosnkowski to prepare a submission on resistance in occupied Poland to the Ministerial Council on 8 November.

Sosnkowski's recommendation was that underground activities in Poland should be divided into two separate areas of competence. He

believed that political and organizational matters were be separated from purely military ones. The first were to be subordinated to the government-in-exile and the second would be directed by the commander-in-chief of Poland's armed forces.[14] Sikorski did not approve Sosnkowski's proposal and instead announced the formation of a ministerial committee with special responsibilities for home affairs (Komitet Ministrów dla Spraw Kraju – KMSK), and put General Sosnkowski in charge of it. From the outset the committee's brief to deal with all matters relating to occupied Poland conflicted with responsibilities assigned to the ministry for home affairs. Stanisław Kot, the minister for home affairs, became Sikorski's close friend. He clearly was meant to keep a close eye on all matters relating to the underground movement in Poland, that in principle were in Sosnkowski's hands.

On 23 November the KMSK issued its first directives, the so-called Instruction No. 1, addressed to all government delegates in occupied Poland. This defined the extent of permitted cooperation between the civilian population and the occupying powers. Only in areas relating to relief, medical and charitable activities was official contact permitted. No personal, social or cultural intercourse was to take place between the two sides. Instruction No. 1 specified that spies and provocateurs should be punished by death, though only after their guilt had been proven.[15] The Instruction ordered that the activities of all underground organizations should be confined to gathering intelligence and information which would be conveyed to the government-in-exile. No action likely to cause retaliation against the civilian population was to be undertaken.[16]

At the same time as the KMSK assumed official responsibility for the civilian underground movement in Poland, instructions were conveyed that a new military organization was to replace the one which had already been created in Poland by Tokarzewski. The new underground military organization was to be called the Union for Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej – ZWZ). Sosnkowski was appointed as its acting commander, representing General Sikorski in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Polish Forces. General Tokorzewski was given responsibility for areas under Soviet occupation. As a person well known in that region he was recognized and denounced to the Soviet authorities, which arrested him. Tokarzewski's effective demotion and imprudent assignment to an area where he was bound to face the threat of exposure, led to accusations that Sikorski had contrived to get rid of a powerful rival in occupied Poland. General Stefan Grot-Rowecki was initially nominated as commander of the ZWZ for German-occupied

Poland but after Tokarzewski's arrest was also allowed to take over responsibility for the Soviet occupied areas.[17]

The most important result of Sikorski's policies was the separation of civilian and military matters and the limiting of the underground movement's prerogatives to purely military matters. During this early period, Sosnkowski was able to develop the organizational structure of the ZWZ. Nevertheless his relations with Kot and Sikorski remained strained and this contributed to his difficulties in bringing all underground military organizations under the umbrella of the ZWZ. During this period Sosnkowski's authority was particularly important in persuading various officers to subordinate themselves to the government-in-exile. While the pre-war officers acted frequently as a catalyst to the formation of armed underground units, in some cases this deterred those in the resistance who opposed the pre-war government. Nor was the government-in-exile able to enforce a ban on contact between various party leaders in exile and their organizations in Poland. The result was that most maintained radio contact with occupied areas, and through couriers who undertook the perilous journey between the occupied and free areas continued to support and encourage the creation of underground military units loyal to their party. The right-wing National Alliance (Stronnictwo Narodowe – SN) which had reservations about Sikorski, maintained its own military network. The SL did so likewise in creating and then maintaining the peasant armed units.[18] Only after the German attack on the Soviet Union, when the process of consolidation become a matter of extreme urgency, did the Sikorski government threaten sanctions against parties and units which remained outside the ZWZ umbrella organization. In February 1942 the ZWZ was renamed the Home Army (Armia Krajowa – AK). By then the growing importance of events taking place in Poland reduced the willingness of the AK commanders to subordinate themselves unquestioningly to instructions from London. In any case difficulties with radio communication always allowed the AK commanders a high degree of independence.[19]

Throughout the war the government-in-exile would battle with the issue of fine tuning its relations with the military organizations in occupied Poland. They were only too well aware that lack of instructions and the granting of too much flexibility to the AK and underground leaders could result in the emergence of organizations which would be better placed to make decisions concerning the future of liberated Poland. Conversely, too restrictive policies and guidelines would expose the government-in-exile's lack of understanding of the realities prevailing in occupied Poland could lead to alienation, by revealing the glaring

gap between instructions sent to Poland and the government's inability to enforce them. The KMSK tried to bridge this gap by appointing trustees from those who were supposed to be respected community members and would ensure that government's instructions would be implemented. In November 1939 Sikorski still thought in terms of the KMSK offering guidance to these trustees who, it was expected, would in turn act as the government's political representatives.[20] Uneasy relations between the various factions which made up the government-in-exile affected the course of debates. Acting with Sikorski's full support, the minister of the interior, Kot, steered the course of developments towards the division of political and military matters in the occupied territories. Sosnkowski in the meantime was trying to develop a united underground movement which would be loyal to the government-in-exile. In February 1940, believing that his military objectives were being sabotaged by Kot, Sosnkowski offered his resignation. He was persuaded to withdraw it by Sikorski who professed to support fully Sosnkowski's endeavours.[21] The result of these internal conflicts was that clarification of relations between the government-in-exile and the occupied territories was delayed. In April 1940 the KMSK announced two decrees which were meant to finally resolve the most pressing problem of contacts between the government and occupied territories.

The first decree, announced on 16 April, related to principles governing relations between the government Delegate and the military organization in Poland, the ZWZ. The second was supposed to define relations between the Delegate and representatives of the most important political parties which had united to form a Conciliatory Political Committee (Polityczny Komitet Porozumiewawczy – PKP). Established in February 1940 the PKP represented the four largest opposition parties of the inter-war period; the Polish Socialist Party (which disbanded on the outbreak of the war and reformed in the guise of a temporary war time organization named Freedom, Equality and Independence (Wolność Równość i Niepodległość – WRN), the Peasant Alliance, the National Alliance and the Labour Alliance. Far from resolving complex issues concerning relations between military and political matters or the prerogatives of the exile authorities over those in occupied Poland, both decrees confirmed the state of present and potential conflicts. It would appear that in principle the leaders of the military organization, the ZWZ, were forbidden to make any political decisions, though in the event of losing contact with the government-in-exile, such decisions could be made in consultation with the parties united in the PKP. In his relations with the PKP the Delegate was to act as a conduit through

which the government transmitted its policies to the organized political groups, though at the same time it was anticipated that the government Delegate to the Occupied Territories would have the right to appoint additional district Delegates, thus forming the skeleton of a future administration.[22]

The basic structure of the underground movement was in place by December 1940. The ZWZ, which in effect was an underground army, anticipated from the outset that it would only take limited military action during the course of the war. In 1939, when the rules which would govern the ZWA's future actions were put in place, it was assumed that only when Germany and the Soviet Union appeared to be on the brink of a final defeat would the ZWZ transform itself into a full army and stage a national uprising which would liberate Poland. Plans for a national uprising assumed cooperation with Polish units in the West and were developed on the assumption that the Western allies would be directly involved in fighting taking place in Poland.[23] Although the Western allies refused to make such a commitment, the hope that they could be persuaded to change their mind remained strong. Thus the idea of a national uprising dominated plans for the final stages of the war as did the unswerving conviction that the Western powers would eventually come round to confirming their active role in restoring Poland to its pre-war borders. The exile authority naturally anticipated that, as a government which had been granted full diplomatic recognition by France, Britain and the US, it would return to Poland to form the first post-war government.

In spite of efforts to retain control over the AK, both Sikorski and his sucessors (after Sikorski's tragic death in 1943) found this to be a difficult exercise. Communication problems and the expansion of the ranks of the AK all contributed to the leadership's growing separation from the government-in-exile. As the war progressed so the AK realized that it could play an important role in disrupting German communication lines in the main operational theatres of the Eastern Front. Sikorski and his successors were not able to impose their authority on the AK, which proceeded to plan military actions without reference to instructions from London.[24]

Sikorski's policies towards the military and political organizations emerging in the occupied territories were characterized by distrust and constant attempts to pre-empt the possibility of their posing a challenge by those organizations to the authority of the government-in-exile. This might explain Sikorski's uneasy relations with Sosnkowski, whose prestige and authority were essential to the formation of a united military

underground force as well as Sikorski's final decision to recognize the PKP, which brought together the four pre-war opposition parties, rather than allow General Tokarzewski to forge military and political unity between political and military organizations in Poland. Had Tokarzewski been allowed to proceed in accordance with his plans the military underground movement and the civilian authority would have been monopolized by the same groups, most likely those which had been dominant during the 1930s. This would have ultimately led to their outright rejection of the authority of the Sikorski government. The four parties which made up the PKP were the key supporters of the government-in-exile and, as they had been the victims of the Sanacja's anti-democratic legislation during the 1930s had good reason to distrust the military. The Polish government in France nevertheless succeeded in claiming absolute authority over state matters, most notably foreign relations and long-term plans for the future of liberated Poland. With the buildup of military units in the West the government-in-exile fought to retain control over military and political decisions made by the wartime allies which related to the Polish question both during the war and at the time of liberation. The underground military structure in Polish territories was to confine itself to the most immediate problems which emerged as a result of the policies of the occupying powers.[25]

The second element of the underground structure was the PKP which brought together the most important parties in occupied Poland. But even those parties succumbed to internal conflicts, and their leadership was divided between those who departed for exile and those who remained in occupied Poland. Since these decisions had been made on a personal basis, in many cases those who remained in Poland had more authority over the membership than those who were in exile. It was inevitable that those who remained in Poland would not willingly hand over to the party leadership-in-exile absolute authority over making post-war plans and preparations. In due course they were increasingly unwilling to accept the authority of the exile sections and instead focused on developments and rivalries taking place in Poland. At the same time the exile party organizations were weakened by internal rivalries, some of which predated the outbreak of the war.

The third element of the exile government's system of exercising control over developments in Poland was the network of Government Delegates. The establishment of the system of Delegates was initiated in 1940 and coincided with the fall of France. When contact between Poland and the exile government was disrupted, the underground pro-

ceeded to make its own decisions. As a result a Joint Government Representation (Zbiorowa Delegatura Rządu), which became known by its abbreviated name as the Delegatura, was nominated to become the organization responsible for civilian matters and for maintaining contacts between the exile government and occupied territories.

On arrival in London Sikorski was able to re-establish contact with Poland. It would appear that the establishment of the Delegatura with the basic administrative structure met with his disapproval. Thus he requested that it should be disbanded and in its place individual delegates were appointed with reduced responsibilities acting only as liaison agents. The new Delegatura retained the basic structure of ministries established earlier, but was never anything other than a skeleton from which the future government organization would be built. In December 1941 the Gestapo captured the Government Delegate for territories incorporated in the Reich. In the circumstances Cyryl Rataj, the Government Delegate for the General Government assumed the role of Delegate for all Polish territories. He and future Delegates tried, on the one hand, to reduce the degree of subordination to the government in exile and, on the other, to increase their authority over the AK. Internal divisions within the political groupings which supported the government-in-exile and the determination of the leadership of the AK not to allow the Delegate to dictate policies prevented the organizations in Poland from successfully challenging the authority of the government in exile.[26]

At the same time it was inevitable that as war progressed strains between the government-in-exile and authorities in occupied Poland would increase. The government's authority and ability to impose its will on the occupied territories through the office of an appointed Delegate would be reduced with time, even if it was ever eliminated by the political leadership in Poland.

The fact that the best organized underground military organizations in occupied Europe were dominated by pre-war officers from the outset made it likely that they would not accept their relegation to a purely military role. Since the Piłsudski coup d'état in 1926 the army had progressively increased its involvement in politics. In 1935, following Piłsudski's death, this process was consolidated with a group of his military comrades retaining and further increasing control over civilian life. The new constitution of 1935 diminished the authority of the elected assembly and extended the prerogatives of the executive.[27] The governments of the period, generally known as the 'rule of the colonels' was to all purposes a military regime.

In September 1939, the military defeat did not diminish the political aspirations of the majority of the Polish officer caste. On the contrary, as defeat loomed the desire to continue fighting, either from exile or in Poland, was maintained. What was missing was a proper process of reassessment of the military regime's responsibility for the disastrous showing in September 1939, for the weakening of the democratic system and finally for the diplomatic isolation which made Poland's fate a foregone conclusion once Germany attacked.[28] The officer caste, both in exile and in Poland, retained a strong desire to keep control over political matters and an unabashed conviction that they were the natural guardians of Poland's national interests. In the circumstances Sikorski's hope that all political and long-term plans would be left to the government-in-exile which hoped to restore democracy after the war, were bound to conflict with the still strong inclination of the military leaders to continue involvement in politics.

Until the fall of France, Sikorski could depend on the French government's sympathetic support for his desire to diminish the pre-war officers' opposition to his policies. Nevertheless, relations between the president and Sikorski were always strained and those between the officers who flocked to France to join the military formations there and the government remained difficult. The fact that he had based the government's claim to the status of France and Britain's fighting ally, which could only be based on the ability to make a credible military contribution, confirmed his dependence on the military men, who in turn resented his claim to leadership. From the outset the question of Sikorski's foreign policy and his decisions concerning the use of military units raised in France caused conflicts with those who still remained loyal to the pre-war military regime. Within the officer corps this remained very strong. The army thus formed was top heavy with a surplus of officers, while the ranks, who were recruited from the Polish community in France, and with experience of trade-union and left-wing politics, did not share the officers' view of politics.

The Polish prime minister and his opponents within the government nevertheless agreed on the war aims as outlined by Sikorski, though they disagreed on how these were to be secured. Conflicts over methods rather than aims were nevertheless so serious as to precipitate several political crises. On 18 December 1939 Sikorski outlined his government's vision of a post-war Poland. While he stated that the final decisions would ultimately depend on the will of the Poles, he promised that Poland would be a country in which democratic rights and the

rights of loyal national minorities would be guaranteed. By unequivocally condemning the pre-war political system, Sikorski made it clear that Poland's restoration would be accompanied by a process of political reforms.[29] The means of ensuring that this was achieved were not necessarily clear and would be a source of internal controversies. Similarily, there was no disagreement between Sikorski and his opponents as to the absolute necessity of raising Polish military units in the West, though whether these should be used to support the war effort in the West or retained for the final thrust into Poland, was a matter of controversy.[30] Sikorski and his critics were united in their conviction that Poland should fully cooperate with the Western powers both during the war and after the re-establishment of a free state, although this general commitment was not enough to forge unity within the émigré community.

Within the political and military leadership-in-exile there was full agreement on the need to secure the full recognition of Poland as a fighting ally. Thus by initially raising an army in excess of 80000 the Poles hoped to secure membership of all joint political and military bodies. Sikorski thought of direct involvement in fighting, wherever that might be, whereas his critics, most notably Colonel Alexander Kędzior, commander-in-chief of the Polish forces in France, was more circumspect and wanted the Poles to retain the newly formed units for action during the liberation of Poland. Sikorski's view prevailed and henceforth all efforts were made to place Polish units in areas of joint action, irrespective of the relevance of the combat zone to Polish interests. Thus Polish troops were offered for participation in fighting against the Soviet invasion in Finland and then in Norway. At the same time a Polish unit was attached to General Weygand's French army based in Beirut. Thus even before the fall of France the doctrine that 'all routes lead to Poland' had taken root. The distinction between fighting to liberate Poland by military means and that of participation in joint military activities with Poland's allies in order to secure their commitment to the liberation of Poland was no longer debated.[31]

At least until the German attack on the Soviet Union in July 1941, there was little disagreement among Poles-in-exile about the fact that Poland was facing two enemies: Germany and the Soviet Union. Sikorski, however, unlike most members of the government-in-exile, was sensitive to the fact that neither France nor Britain was prepared to back the Polish point of view with actions. Whereas both, as a result of Germany's refusal to withdraw from Polish territories, had declared war on Germany, neither was prepared to break off diplomatic relations with

the Soviet Union when it occupied Polish territories. Sikorski realized that any attempt to demand that the British and French governments should declare both Germany and the Soviet Union as a common enemy would be futile. For the sake of building a stronger bond between the Polish government-in-exile and the two wartime allies, he was prepared not to press the issue of the Soviet Union and in due course showed himself flexible enough to consider re-establishment of some contact between the exile government and the Soviet authorities. The main motive appears to have been the need to open access to Polish manpower in the Soviet Union, which Sikorski wanted to tap for the purpose of building up his units in France.[32]

The fall of France destroyed the very basis of the Polish government's calculations for the liberation of Poland. Military cooperation with France had held out the prospect of continental action, and with it the hope for a swift reversal of the September defeat. At the same time, the careful calculation that the Polish government-in-exile would be able to assert itself at the post-war conferences because of the contribution it intended to make to that fighting, collapsed as only 27 000 Polish troops were saved and brought to Britain. It is difficult not to overestimate the extent of the reversal of Polish hopes and plans. On arrival in Britain in June 1940 Sikorski had to deal with the need to build unity within his government, which was traumatized and shocked by the swiftness of the French collapse.[33] Furthermore, he and his critics within the government and military leadership had to review the question of their military contribution to the continuing war effort. Finally, Sikorski had to establish his and his government's standing with the British government.

Sikorski arrived in London with the conviction that the new prime minister, Winston Churchill, was interested in supporting the Poles and in aiding their military plans, though it was still far from clear how this was going to work out in the long term. France had always been Poland's key continental ally. Relations with Britain had been of secondary importance. Notwithstanding the British guarantee of 31 March 1939, Britain's interest in Poland and her fate appeared to be slight. Finally, the Poles on arriving in Britain realized that henceforth the war would assume a wider dimension, as Britain's imperial priorities and developing relations with the US meant that the continental war would not be Britain's sole or even immediate preoccupation. Most telling was the British government's adamant refusal to make commitments to restore Poland to its pre-September 1939 borders.[34] Neville Chamberlain, and later, Churchill, would not be coerced by the Poles, or by any other exile

authority, to make territorial commitments in advance of the German defeat.

Unfortunately for the Polish cause, once safely in London various members of the government-in-exile proceeded to settle old and new scores. Sikorski wanted to rationalize the activities of the government, but at the same time he sought to purge it of those whom he deemed to be disloyal. Within the ranks of the four parties which were the mainstay of the government's support this exacerbated rivalries and jealousies. They all protested at what they saw as the diminution of their powers. Their threat to withdraw from supporting the government were only avoided by further redistribution of official posts. At the same time, the Piłsudski opposition, still looking for an opportunity to re-establish control over the exile authority, launched an offensive against Sikorski, accusing him of mishandling the evacuation of Polish troops from France and of having betrayed Polish interests by signalling to the British his willingness to establish relations between the government-in-exile and the Soviet Union. The attack was led by the Polish ambassador to France, Juliusz łukasiewicz, but the president was only too happy to have an excuse to dismiss Sikorski and to appoint August Zaleski as the next prime minister. The conflict which was played out in public and with the British authorities fully informed of its details, was finally resolved by Sosnkowski's mediation. The result was that henceforth Sikorski became more dependent on British support, while opposition to his policies did not diminish.

Polish units that had been evacuated from France were now concentrated in Scotland where the harsh conditions and inactivity created circumstances conducive to festering discontent and intrigues. A high proportion of men rescued from the coast of France were of officer rank. They maintained their support for the memory of the Piłsudski regime and were hostile to Sikorski and the political parties involved in his government.[35] At the same time parties which supported Sikorski bickered and fell out with each other and splintered into rival factions. Sikorski would never resolve the problem of internal opposition which was further inflamed by the establishment of diplomatic relations between the government-in-exile and the Soviet Union in June 1941. The government-in-exile was weakened and divided when it faced its biggest test of strength.

The German attack on the Soviet Union broke the uneasy state of affairs which had prevailed since the breakdown of military and diplomatic talks between Britain and the Soviet Union in August 1939. Though Britain did not declare war on the Soviet Union in response to

its occupation of Polish territories and the subsequent incorporation of the Baltic States, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, the implications of Soviet–German cooperation could not be overlooked. Diplomatic contacts were reduced to a minimum. The Soviet attack on Finland threw British and French policies into turmoil. Though after some deliberations aid was not given to Finland, within the government and opposition demands were made that the Soviet Union should be treated as an enemy state, in particular because economic exchanges with Germany strengthened the latter's military potential. Still there was a reluctance to embark on an open confrontation with the state, which would, it was believed, ultimately become Germany's next victim and with that Britain's potential ally.

When Churchill became prime minister, the British government at last became willing to consider the likelihood of future unity. The German attack made this inevitable, for Britain and the Soviet Union faced the same enemy, even if joint action would always be limited by the geopolitical realities of the war. The Soviet Union henceforth became Britain's main continental ally. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor the US became a full partner in the joint endeavour to defeat Germany. In spite of this overwhelming reason for cooperation, only tentative progress was made throughout the war towards addressing the question of the post-war balance of power. The future of territories captured by the Soviet Union during the period of cooperation with Nazi Germany was one of the issues which Britain and the US sought to clarify, but not at the expense of the Soviet Union's commitment to the joint war effort.

For the Polish government-in-exile, the German attack on the Soviet Union and the consolidation of British–Soviet cooperation which followed, automatically spelled relegation to the ranks of a lesser ally, and furthermore one which, if not handled firmly, had the potential to bring discord into relations between the US, Britain and the Soviet Union. Britain depended heavily on Soviet will to fight beyond Soviet borders. In those circumstances, although Churchill, and his government remained sympathetic to the tragic plight of the Poles and continued to be willing to facilitate them in their desire to pursue their fight against Germany, he was equally determined that the Polish government-in-exile and its short- and long-term aims, would not stand in the way of cooperation with the Soviet Union. Soon after the German attack on the Soviet Union, the Poles found themselves shoehorned into the role of a supporting ally, with the diminishing right and ability to pursue their own war aims. To the majority of Poles, the Soviet Union,

which refused to relinquish its claim to Polish territories occupied in September 1939, was an enemy.

Sikorski, unlike the president and most of the Polish military leadership, welcomed the establishment of cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1941. He was not blind to the potential for difficulties, but to him manpower became an absolute priority. He had reasoned that Poland would obtain leverage to defend its case after the war only if it had fully participated in the war against Germany. Thus the need to provide military units to fight with the allies was a means of accruing and increasing future influence. Unfortunately, after the fall of France it became impossible for Polish men to make their way across neutral and occupied European territories to Britain where they could enrol with the Polish units. The trickle of men continued between September 1939 and the fall of France, but after that plans for military expansion could no longer be based on the hope that more men would escape from occupied Poland. Only in North America and the Soviet Union did Sikorski identify sufficiently big Polish communities from which a large fighting force could be built up. Recruitment in North America ultimately proved too complex, both because the Polish communities there were divided and the men unwilling to abandon everything to join the Polish army in Britain. Nor was the US government willing to change legislation to allow its citizens to enrol with foreign armies. For US citizens of Polish origin enlistment with the US army was an infinitely more logical option. Thus the Poles in the Soviet Union, who Sikorski estimated to number in the range of 3 million, were an obvious source of manpower.[36]

In the circumstances, Sikorski took the opportunity created by the German attack on the Soviet Union and Churchill's immediate initiative in declaring unity of purpose between himself and Stalin, to do likewise. The ensuing Sikorski–Maisky Agreement signed on 30 July provided for the raising of Polish units in the Soviet Union. The diplomatic coup was secured at the expense of a further estrangement with the president and the prime minister's isolation within his own government. Stalin had refused to make a commitment to the restoration of Polish territories earlier incorporated into the Soviet Union, thus Sikorski's policy increasingly made the securing of Poland's independence in its pre-war borders dependent on British and US willingness to champion the Polish cause. This, according to Sikorski's thinking, would take place only if a sufficiently large debt of gratitude was built up towards the Poles during the course of the war.

During its extended sojourn in Britain between 1940 and 1945, when

the British government withdrew recognition, the Polish government-in-exile built up a formidable military force, the ostensible purpose of which was to aid the allied war effort, but which in reality was primarily to secure for Poland the status of Britain's fighting ally. From troops which had been evacuated from the Northern coast of France during the final days of the Franco–German war, a First Polish Corps was formed. Until June 1944 when, after several reorganizations, it went into action during the allied landing in Northern France, the Corps was stationed in Scotland. Due to difficulties in recruiting, its size was limited to 18000. Only in 1944 when Poles who had been earlier forcefully recruited into the Wehrmacht could be incorporated into the Polish forces, was the Corps fully expanded.

Even before the fall of Poland, Polish military leaders tried to establish the basis of future cooperation between the British and Polish military air forces. After the September defeat bomber crews were directed to Britain while fighter pilots were retained in France. After June 1940 surviving personnel were incorporated in the Polish Air Force which fought under British command. In accordance with the Anglo–Polish agreement signed on 5 August 1940 the Poles formed four bomber squadrons and two fighter squadrons. Future expansion was made dependent on availability of additional trained personnel. During the Battle of Britain the two fighter squadrons were confirmed to have brought down 203 German planes. Throughout the war Polish pilots took part in most major aerial actions over occupied Europe and in defence of the British Isles.

Three Polish destroyers arrived safely in British coastal waters in September. Further naval units came to Britain later. Most participated in convoy duties in the Atlantic and the North Sea. Throughout the war additional naval units were made available to the Poles either by adapting fishing and commercial ships or when French ships were captured. Although the Polish Navy never operated independently, the British authorities were willing to allow the Poles to have ships that were entirely crewed by Polish men and which were given Polish names.

After the fall of France a Polish Brigade which had been attached to General Weigand's Army in the Middle East refused to be bound by the armistice agreement signed by France and Germany. It therefore left French-controlled Syria and joined British troops in Palestine. In October 1941 this Brigade took part in the defence of Tobruk.

It was, however, in the Soviet Union, as a result of the Sikorski–Maisky agreement, that the government-in-exile managed to secure the largest number of men who were in due course incorporated in Polish units.

Initially Sikorski thought in terms of these units fighting with the Red Army and entering Poland from the East.[37] Sikorski did not believe that the Soviet Union would be able to defeat Germany, and his military plans for the liberation of Poland assumed that British and US troops would enter from the West to liberate Poland and also to relieve the Red Army. Although he planned for joint military action, he built all his plans for the future of Poland on the expectation that the Soviet Union would take a leading role in the liberation of Polish territories. The decision of General Władysław Anders, the commander-in-chief of the Polish units in the Soviet Union not to aid the Soviet war effort but to remove them to Iran and place them under British command, was a blow to Sikorski's plans. His view had been that a Polish military presence in the East was not only necessary to secure Soviet cooperation, but also to reaffirm Polish authority. Now his military and diplomatic strategy for Poland to assume an independent role in the prosecution of war in the East were destroyed.[38] Spurred on by Stalin's decision to rid himself of the Poles and encouraged by the British authorities in the Middle East, and keen to reinforce the British war effort in the Middle East and North Africa, General Anders moved all fully formed units out of the Soviet Union. In March 1942 33,000 men, accompanied by dependants, arrived in the Iranian port of Pahlevi. In September another 37,000 men left, after which Polish recruiting stations in the Soviet Union were closed and no further manpower was released to join units formed by the government-in-exile.[39] The majority of soldiers evacuated from the Soviet Union, after a period of rest and training, went to fight in Italy.

Sikorski's determination to build the exile government's political position within the community of wartime allies on the basis of Poland's military contribution to the defeat of Germany had not been successful. The single most obvious reason why by the end of 1942, the Poles had failed to obtain either commitments to the restoration of Poland in its pre-war borders or to representation on the joint allied military bodies, was the degree to which Britain and the US depended on the Soviet Union. While the defeat of Germany was an obvious shared objective, any attempt to extract commitments from Stalin were moderated by the realization that the brunt of the war effort in Europe was being carried by the Soviet Union. In the circumstances the future of Poland was too unimportant to Churchill to warrant exacerbating Stalin's distrust of Western objectives by unwisely insisting on assurances for the restoration of Poland's eastern territories.

The growing cooperation between Churchill and Stalin and the

uneasy suspicion that the two would make agreements at Poland's expense haunted Sikorski during 1942. This was the time when Churchill became increasingly concerned with supplying and aiding the Soviet war effort. Churchill and Anthony Eden's repeated statements that Poland's fate would be decided at post-war conferences, did little to reduce Polish anxieties. During the middle of 1942 Sikorski tried to open talks on what he hoped would be a forthcoming continental war. He requested that an Allied General Staff be formed to plan joint military action. In the summer he went further in asking that future military action on the continent should be coordinated to coincide with the activities of the Home Army in Poland. Thus he hoped that plans for the liberation of Poland would become a Western concern. In all these efforts Sikorski was not able to motivate the British military leaders to commit themselves to joint plans for the liberation of Poland.[40]

In the middle of November Sikorski tried to return to the subject of continental action by putting to Churchill and to General Alan Brook, Chief of Imperial General Staff, a memorandum which outlined the anticipated future course of the war.[41] Sikorski reiterated his belief that the Soviet Union did not have the power to ultimately defeat the German war capacity. He also believed that an attack on the German heartland from the North or West would not be successful, since the German military leaders would have anticipated it and prepared their defences. Thus Sikorski advocated a thrust into Eastern Europe from the Balkans in the northerly direction. This would have the advantage of an attack on Germany's unprotected flank. It would also allow for the creation of an Eastern Front, which would preclude Soviet entry into Poland and Central Europe. In his proposal Sikorski expected that the Home Army's plan for a national uprising would play a pivotal role in the ultimate defeat of Germany. Naturally he envisaged that Western supplies would be provided for the Home Army to play its allotted role. Polish troops in the Middle East would be utilized on the Balkan Front allowing them to arrive in Poland in good time to consolidate frontiers and to establish the first post-war authority.[42] The Independent Parachute Brigade, built up in Scotland from the best available Polish manpower evacuated from France, was to be dropped into Poland with the explicit aim of capturing key installations and forestalling a revolution.

Unfortunately for Sikorski and the exile government's long-term plans, this attempt to draw the British into action, which would have consolidated his long-term plans for Western participation in the liberation of Poland and create a barrier to the Soviet entry, failed. Sikorski was informed that his plans were premature as Britain had no proposal

for military action east of Germany. For the Poles this spelled the end of their plans, which linked the Home Army's role in Poland to that of the government-in-exile's role in the West. When on 31 January 1943 the German army surrendered at Stalingrad Western and Soviet hopes that the Nazi momentum had stalled were realized. Henceforth the Red Army would take the initiative and the likelihood of their entry into Eastern Europe in pursuit of the retreating Wehrmacht became a real possibility, and viewed from a Western point of view, very much a desirability. The liberation of Poland was increasingly likely to take place in the wake of Soviet action against the retreating German units. Thus Sikorski's carefully structured plans for the balancing of the Poles' contribution to the war effort, and the linking of military action in the West with that in occupied Poland, unravelled. The government-in-exile was facing the possibility that it would lose control over developments within the underground movement while at the same time being sidelined within the community of the allies which would determine the post war European balance of power.

1
Poland under Occupation, 1941–1942

The Polish government-in-exile's aim of limiting the underground movement's natural desire for independence was affected by the nature of communication links. While the government was in France these were maintained on a regular basis, mainly through the constant movement of messengers. In addition to Hungary and Rumania turning a blind eye to Poles passing through their territories, Italy could be counted on to show some degree of tolerance. At the time of the German attack on Poland, Italy did not declare war on Poland and the Sikorski government took care not to antagonize Italy. The Polish ambassador in Rome, Wieniawa-Długoszowski was, moreover, able to obtain Count Galeazo Ciano's tacit approval for the passage of thousands of Poles to France, where it was known they were being enlisted in the Polish units.[1] The fall of France and the flight of the Polish government to London made this traffic difficult but not impossible.

Thus throughout the war couriers and emissaries continued to make their way from occupied Poland to neutral states from where, with the aid of the Polish consular services, they would proceed to Britain. Spain, Switzerland and Sweden all acted as transit routes for messengers carrying information, instructions and funds from the exile community to Poland and enquiries and requests from Poland to London.[2] The distinction between couriers and emissaries was that couriers were merely carriers of messages, whereas emissaries carried information between the government and the parties which supported it in London. Their function was to liase between the two.[3]

In March 1941 regular radio links between Poles in Britain and the occupied territories were established. These were maintained throughout the war and even after the British government withdrew recognition from the London Poles. From 1942 the government maintained

daily radio contact in this way. To the British authorities, always anxious that the policies of the exile governments should not create conflict with the Soviet Union, this was an unwelcome development. Sikorski was frequently requested to reveal the codes so the British could monitor the content of radio communications with occupied Poland, but the Poles refused to supply them. The positive aspects of this extensive contact with the occupied territories were nullified by the conflicts within the Polish community-in-exile, which meant that communication with occupied Poland was monopolized or used by groups intent on retaining control over all decision making. Thus contact with the occupied territories became part of the general rivalry between the various political groupings.

In his attempt to make the KMK a forum for the discussion of all matters relating to occupied territories, General Sosnkowski found that the minister of the interior, Kot, who belonged to the Peasant Alliance, was determined to diminish its effectiveness. Rivalry between Sosnkowski and Kot affected not only decision making within the government-in-exile but, more importantly, had an impact on the way in which contact was maintained with parties and organizations in Poland.[4] Kot feared that the ZWZ would take over the running of all underground movements. He knew that the military organizations were dominated by those sympathetic to the pre-war regime. He criticized Sosnkowski and accused him of encouraging the ZWZ to sideline the civilian organization. In his capacity as minister of the interior he demanded that the underground organizations should be purged of those who opposed the policies of the government-in-exile, and that the ZWZ should be made fully accountable to civilian organizations.[5] In such circumstances the issue of communication with occupied territories acquired critical political significance. Sosnkowski fought to retain radio contact with the ZWZ, while Kot and his clique did all in their power to limit his freedom and furthermore to retain control of courier and radio contact. In the ongoing conflict Kot was suspected of colluding with the British Special Operations Executive in making sure that couriers carrying messages from Sosnkowski were not given priority in the allocation of plane seats to convenient places from which they could try and make their way to Poland. The Polish legation in Budapest, which was a particularly important staging-post in this traffic, became a focal point of these rivalries. In some cases, various couriers and emissaries were in direct conflict with each other as they sought to make their way to and from Poland. In their quest to reach Britain safely they not only had to evade the Gestapo but also to compete with rival

groups loyal to various factions within the government-in-exile. An example of the high degree of politicization that affected contacts with Poland was the existence of separate radio links with occupied territories. One was controlled entirely by the military leaders in Britain, the other was in the hands of the ministry of home affairs, dominated by the Peasant Alliance. An additional link with the occupied territories was created by radio transmissions of the Polish section of the BBC, which commenced in September 1939. Although owning and listening to radio was a punishable offence in Poland, this continued to be a regular method of keeping the country informed and of transmitting encrypted messages.

At the same time all information emerging from Poland was from the outset affected by the fact that those gathering, analysing and sending it on to Britain were either pursuing their own political agendas or were connected to a political grouping acting in exile. Once the information was received it was just as likely to be retained for exclusive use by the recipient, as it was to be used in the intrigues being constantly pursued within the exile community. This in turn would have an impact on instructions, which were subsequently despatched to occupied Poland.

The German attack on the Soviet Union had a major impact on all assessments made concerning the liberation of Poland. In London, Sikorski, supported by the British government, embarked on a bold initiative that led to the signing of an agreement with the Soviet Union on 6 August 1941. The military agreement, which accompanied the political one, provided for the creation of Polish military units in the Soviet Union. These were to be part of the Polish military force commanded by the government-in-exile.[6] The immediate consequence of this was a government crisis. Sikorski's failure to insist that the Soviet Union renounce territorial acquisitions gained in September 1939 caused his own ministers to rebel. When the Soviet Union agreed to state merely that the German–Soviet agreements of 1939 lost their relevance, the president refused to grant Sikorski powers to sign the political agreement.

More dangerous was Sosnkowski's disapproval. The parties that supported the government also disagreed over Sikorski's desire to proceed on the basis of what the Soviet Union was prepared to concede. When Sikorski went ahead with the signing of the agreement, during the following weeks he faced several crises. The president and Sosnkowski consolidated their opposition to Sikorski, though for the time being they still agreed to cooperate with him. Sosnkowski, who had held the post of minister without portfolio in Sikorski's government, resigned, but

even before signing the agreement with Maisky, Sikorski dismissed him from the post of commander of the ZWZ. He then appointed himself as commander of all Polish military forces, both those in exile and those in occupied Poland.

Sikorski's determination to enter into direct contact with the Soviet Union, even though no assurances were given about Poland's eastern borders, had an impact on all parties supporting the government. The National Alliance leadership quarrelled and as a result Marian Seyda left the government only to be replaced in due course by Tadeusz Bielecki, another leading member of the National Alliance. The Socialist Party was also in disarray. Although the party continued to support the government, its leadership was divided and this had an immediate impact on relations with the party organization in Poland.[7] Kot was despatched to Moscow to take up the post of ambassador, where he was singularly ineffectual, as he was ignored by the Russians and outmanoeuvred by Władysław Anders, who had been appointed commander of the Polish units in the Soviet Union. The ministry of home affairs was taken over by Stanisław Mikołajczyk, from the Peasant Alliance party.

It is important to consider the impact that conflicts in London had on relations between the exile authority and the underground resistance, and on relations between the various organizations in Poland. Thus, while Sikorski fought for control of the exiled government, trying to reduce the president's authority, at the same time he had to monitor the impact of his policies on developments in Poland. In this respect the outbreak of the German–Soviet war, the signing of the Sikorski–Maisky agreement and the governmental crisis which followed marked an important stage in the process of the gradual separation of ways between the exiled authorities on the one hand and, on the other hand, the political forces which emerged in Poland.

On 1 October 1941 a summary of information which had been received from Poland was prepared for Sikorski. Its aim was to assess clearly the extent of loyalty to Sikorski and to indicate the likelihood of problems developing in the future.[8] The report analysed all political and military organizations ranging from the extreme right to the radical left. It discussed each organization's political programme and the strength and character of its support base, and moved on to evaluate its attitude towards other underground organizations and the government-in-exile.

The extreme right was dominated by the National Alliance, but in reality the movement was deeply divided. Even before September 1939 the right in Poland lacked unity, but during the war these divisions

developed further. The stock of old conflicts was augmented by disputes concerning plans for post-war Poland. Each of the right-wing nationalist groups wanted to capture power on its own. None had any commitment to the democratic model. Post-war Poland, according to the extreme right, would be based on nationalist principles and laws, the role of which would be to defend the nation. Jews who would not be allowed to retain Polish citizenship, would be forced to either emigrate or to live in ghettoes and would only be allowed to work as hired physical labour. The Falanga, the pre-war fascist organization, was not overtly opposed to the Sikorski government and was willing to support the ZWZ, but was hostile to the military wing of the Peasant movement, the Peasant Battalions (Bataliony Chłopskie – BCh) and to the Polish Socialist Party. In some instances armed units loyal to the extreme right fought battles with the BCh and units loyal to the pre-war PPS.[9]

The nationalist–centre groupings tended towards clericalist and nationalist ideas. Dominated by colourful but highly individualistic military men, the organizations coming under this heading never managed to form a coherent bloc. Though until 1940 these organizations were successful in forming confederations, which threatened the ZWZ claim to bringing together all military organizations, by 1941 their force had been spent and most faded into insignificance. This was due to the leaders' inability to work in an environment where they would have to subordinate themselves to the rigours of conspiratorial work. Most were captured by the Gestapo and their organizations were destroyed. Nevertheless, the ZWZ continued to subsidize various military groupings headed mainly by officers, supporters of the pre-war government. The membership of these organizations was not easy to ascertain.[10]

The centre–democratic parties were dominated by the small Labour Alliance (SP) which owed its influence within the underground to the fact that its exile leaders supported the Sikorski government. It did not have military units loyal to the party. The SP position in occupied Poland was strengthened by cooperation with the Peasant Alliance (SL). Nevertheless, even this movement was deeply divided on a regional basis and according to the degree to which its various leaders in Poland believed that supporting the Sikorski government was prudent.[11]

The democratic movements appear to have been insignificant numerically and militarily. The main party representing this political trend was the Democratic Alliance (SD), which had been destroyed by infiltration by German informers and finally by arrests. Nevertheless, it had managed to publicize its political programme that argued for the transformation of post-war society and the development of a strong

democratic political system. Its popularity did not go beyond the two main cities of Warsaw and Krakow. It had attracted to its organizations some supporters of the pre-war government.[12]

The Peasant Alliance (SL) was the largest and potentially most numerous political grouping within the underground movement. It was, however, so divided on a number of issues that with the passage of time its effectiveness was diminished. At the time of the outbreak of the war the movement was still deeply divided by unresolved conflicts relating to the inter-war period. The 'Piast' faction led by Wincenty Witos had tended towards cooperation with the right wing. Once war broke out that section tried to continue this line, but was rebuffed. During the spring of 1940 Maciej Rataj, the leader of the democratic section of the Peasant Alliance, tried to bring all peasant organizations together. This brought into the fold two radical youth sections of the peasant organization that put forward demands for a commitment to land reform after the war.[13]

The Peasant Alliance formulated its outline of the post-war programme during this period and this outline brought the Peasant Alliance closer to the socialist underground movement, WRN. The Peasant Alliance nevertheless remained divided by regional particularism and, after the death of Rataj, by the lack of a strong leadership. Divisions within occupied territories were mirrored by those which continued in the exile leadership. By the end of 1941, as the exile PPS leadership became increasingly critical of Sikorski's government, the Peasant Alliance first distanced itself from those policies and then in due course followed the PPS lead. The movement towards close cooperation between the two parties had stalled by the end of 1941, with the PPS still unwilling to formulate its post-war programme. The question of land reform and state control of resources preoccupied both parties in equal measures. The Peasant Alliance in the first place formed its own military units, the Peasant Battalions, which in principle supported the ZWZ. Nevertheless, so strong was the SL's desire to retain operational control over the BCh that the leadership of the ZWZ gave in and defined for them a distinct role in the planned national uprising. But as the authors of the report were forced to admit, relations between the ZWZ and the BCh were in reality very bad.[14]

The Socialist Party, which supported a moderate and democratic line, formed the core of the left-wing groupings. The socialist movement was nevertheless riven with internal ideological conflict as a result of which a radical section, which took the name of Polish Socialists (Polscy Socialiści – PS) seceded from the main wartime socialist movement. The

inexplicable decision made in September 1939 to disband the party and to form a new organization for the duration of the occupation had all the appearance of an attempt to sideline the revolutionary wing of the party. Thus while the pre-war PPS was officially in abeyance, its wartime successor, the WRN, was the biggest political party which supported the Sikorski government. After 1941 its leadership became critical of Sikorski's Soviet policy and distrustful of his continuing dependence on politicians and military leaders of the pre-war government. The WRN, like all other political movements, dreamed of having its own military section, even though it fully supported the ZWZ within occupied Poland.[15] The radical and syndicalist sections of the socialist movements were more determined. The Polish Socialists who published a newssheet under the name *Barricade of Freedom (Barykada Wolności)* became the lynchpin of the socialist groupings opposed to the WRN during this period. It was noted that they had particular support among the workers of Warsaw and the industrial town of Łódź.

At the end of 1941 the communist movement seemed destined for oblivion. Members of the Communist Party of Poland (Komunistyczna Partia Polski – KPP), which had been disbanded by the Comintern in 1938, tried to distribute pro-Soviet propaganda and to cooperate with Soviet military units. A section, which had earlier broken away from the KPP, was reported to be planning to take military action to capture power at the end of the war. Estimated to number approximately 800–1000 members, it was confined to Warsaw. But the writers of the report warned that the communists would be able to rely on the support of Jewish fighters, ex-members of the Jewish work battalions, who were known to have prepared ammunition stores in the ghetto. Finally, it was suspected that the revolutionary section of the PPS grouped around the *Barricade of Freedom* was increasingly associating with communist political objectives.

The report concluded with a summary of trends which had manifested themselves more forcefully since the outbreak of the Soviet–German war. It was felt that all political movements were affected by growing activism of the younger generation, which was posing a challenge to the political leadership of the pre-war period. The result was that their desire and need to make a mark on the political life of the underground was causing instability. This in turn made it impossible to arrive at any joint programme for the restoration of independence. All political movements wanted to maintain their own military organizations with a view to using them in the battle for power that would follow the liberation of Poland. Thus their commitment to

the ZWZ was limited.[16] Two political groupings and military units loyal to them remained outside the PKP and the ZWZ. These were the extreme nationalists and the radical left.

The picture conveyed to London was not promising. It was admitted that even where unity had been forged, as was the case with the four parties that supported the government-in-exile, this was very fragile and therefore susceptible to internal strains. Furthermore, all political organizations viewed each other as rivals, and it was clear that once the war ended, the battle for political power would sweep aside any wartime consensus. Thus preoccupation with the need to define their own identity for the contest which would take place after the war was a powerful determining factor in actions taken during the course of the war.

The brutality of Nazi occupation policies was an ever-present factor in the underground activities. While initially the underground resistances were confident that national unity would offer them a screen of protection, this proved to be illusory. To the German and Soviet authorities, Poland was a military zone and although use was made of Polish administrators and police, no decision making was devolved to the Poles. The Gestapo and the NKVD were undoubtedly very successful in their determination to root out all opposition. This led to a reduction in attacks on the occupation authorities and of sabotage. Retaliation was so severe that the underground movement came to be more cautious about approving attacks. The ZWZ policy of unifying all military organizations had, among other reasons, the aim of reducing reckless military actions. All underground organizations at one time or another suffered losses, some at the highest level. In January and February of 1941 the ZWZ command structure in Soviet-occupied territories was virtually wiped out by arrests. During the autumn and winter of 1941/1942 successive arrests of those connected with the structure of government delegates to the district of Poznań led to the abandonment of plans for regional representation. In February 1943 Jan Piekałkiewicz, the government delegate, was arrested by the Nazis. His death in custody was most likely caused by torture. It was not unknown for individuals to be arrested and as a result of torture and intimidation to reveal all they knew about their organizations, which then led to further arrests. At various stages of the war infiltration and arrests affected underground organizations. Thus a carefully built-up organization could be wiped out completely. In the case of a radical nationalist organization called Miecz i Pług (The Sword and the Plough) the leadership was either persuaded to cooperate with the Gestapo or it was infiltrated by informers. Although no evidence has been found to substantiate this, it is

possible to hypothesize that in some cases hostile underground organizations might have been willing to resort to denunciations. At the same time the KMSK decided in April 1940 that special underground courts should be established in occupied Poland. One dealt specifically with military matters and the other with civilian mattes. The latter only came into operation at the beginning of 1943. This did not prevent other parties and organizations from operating their own kangaroo courts.

One way for underground organizations to announce their existence and to disseminate their political objectives was to distribute newssheets and pamphlets. In view of the severity of German repression, and the risk of the organization being exposed, this was the only way for political organizations to attract supporters and to project debates into the public arena. For the government-in-exile an analysis of these illegal publications gave an indication of what the various trends prevailing in the political community were. The frequency with which they appeared, their quality as well as their distribution, gave an indication of an organization's ability to sustain itself in difficult circumstances. A summary prepared in November 1941 confirmed the picture that the earlier political report provided. The existence of news sheets, which put forward a communist agenda, suggested that some sections of the old KPP were trying to rebuild the movement in Poland. As the ZWZ reported to London, however, none could claim to be the official organ of the communist movement.[17] The next report prepared in June 1942 suggested that the extreme left-wing organizations, not connected directly with the Communist Party, were on the offensive. By April of that year *Barykada Wolności* published an 85th issue. More worryingly, AK analysts realized that the WRN was conducting a polemic through the medium of its publication with an unknown, possibly new, communist news sheet, one with which they were not familiar. This publication was calling for action to be taken against the occupation forces, a point that was likely to strike a note with those critical of the AK preoccupation with plans for a national uprising at the end of the war.[18]

In its attempt to control developments in occupied Poland, the government-in-exile had to contend with complex divisions even within groups loyal to the London authority. Relations between the main political organizations in Poland and the ZWZ were bad from the outset. As General Rowecki explained to Sikorski in a message dated 15 December 1941, the underground army was seen as a successor to the military regime of the inter-war period. As a result all the main political organizations, notably the, SN, SL and PPS viewed it with extreme distrust.[19] They fought each other and the government-in-exile to gain

control of the ZWZ. ZWZ renamed AK used the need to retain operational freedom to shake off the political parties' attempts to control the underground resistance and to reduce the constraints imposed by the government in exile. An example of this type of conflict was a message sent by the PKP to the government dated 15 May 1942 in which the organization lodged a complaint against the AK for causing confusion by exceeding its authority and interfering in matters which went beyond military issues.[20] In trying to deal with such conflicts the government would be only too aware of its limited ability to enforce its policies on organizations operating in Poland.

The end of 1942 marked a new stage in relations between underground organizations. Sikorski realized his plan for the reorganization of the underground movement in Poland when in October a courier conveyed to Poland a council of ministers' decree defining the future role of the government Delegate. The message stated that once the war ended, the government Delegate would assume responsibility in the government's name but only until the prime minister and his government returned to Poland. Any political aspirations that the AK might harbour were to be blocked by the creation of a department of military affairs within the structure of the Delegate's office.[21]

The commander of the AK, Rowecki, protested angrily. This proposal had been put forward by the London minister of the interior, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who belonged to the SL. It was promptly blocked by General Marian Kukiel, the minister of defence, on whose instructions Rowecki was appointed to head the ministry of defence within the Delegate's office.[22]

At the same time the government Delegate and the leadership of the AK tried to make progress in bringing together all underground organizations. Unfortunately, the government-in-exile and its Delegates in Poland perceived that the attack on the Soviet Union and the inevitable defeat of Germany would bring closer the moment when a post-war administration could be established. The leaders of various political groupings believed that this was an important stage at which to reconfirm the independence of their organizations. The government's task of trying to persuade them to maintain and increase unity in the face of the critical forthcoming battles would be an uphill and unrewarding struggle.

At the end of 1941 the peasant movement continued to be the largest of the political organizations still committed to retaining a degree of independence. The prominence of leading supporters of the Piłsudski regime in the underground military formations was not conducive to

the creation of trust between the peasant community and the leadership of the AK.[23] Any attempts to overcome the peasant communities' apprehensions about closer cooperation with the AK had in the first place to tackle that community's hostility which had been aroused by the Piłsudski coup d'état and the militarization of political life that followed. In a report addressed to Mikołajczyk in March 1942 the leadership of the SL in occupied Poland made it quite clear that all activities directed by the military would automatically be distrusted. This attitude was encouraged by the conviction within the peasant movement that the military had still to make a commitment to supporting the Sikorski government. The SL leaders doubted the AK's sincerity and in particular accused it of using slogans of national unity to establish a military dictatorship. Since the underground military network was dominated by pre-war military men, the SL looked for signs of goodwill in the way the AK collaborated with other organizations. In that respect they felt much was lacking. The reports quoted instances when the AK retained parachute drops intended for the SL. Messages brought to Poland by couriers were likewise either destroyed or not handed over. The SL saw in the oath of loyalty expected from all those joining the ranks of the AK a means of unfairly binding people to the military organizations.[24]

The peasant movement was not only tormented by anxieties about the role of the AK and its conflicting loyalty to organizations created by the Sikorski government, but it was also deeply internally divided. Two years of war did little to diminish the strength of feelings that Rataj had tried to overcome in 1940. Old divisions relating to the question whether the peasant movement should have supported or opposed Piłsudski had only been papered over. Organizational unity was likewise frequently no more than an illusion. A radical youth section, which took the name Racławice, from the battlefield where in 1794 peasant battalions contributed a national insurrection led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko, retained its organizational independence from the SL. In 1941 the SL started a debate on the political and economic structure of post-war Poland. By boldly demanding land reform the authors nailed their colours to a radical programme. SL leaders in London, other parties and some within the SL disagreed.[25]

The failure to complete the incorporation of the peasant units into the AK left many issues unresolved in the process of consolidation of all military organizations. When the peasant parties and organization came together in February 1940, it was decided to assume the conspiratorial name of 'Roch'. Partisan units loyal to 'Roch' took the name Chłopska Straż (Peasant Guard), usually referred to as 'Chłostra'.

Although 'Roch' made it clear that these units were loyal to the government-in-exile, the leadership of the AK was not happy with this situation. They insisted on organizational unity, or as the 'Roch' leadership suspected, absorption into the AK. While efforts were being made to persuade 'Roch' that it should allow for the incorporation of the 'Chłostra' units into the AK, relations between local leaders and the attitude of the AK commanders of these units did not create a basis of trust. Writing to SL leaders in London in October 1942 the national commander of 'Chłostra' accused the AK of prejudice against the peasant units, which were described by AK commanders as being communist organizations.[26]

Pressure was being put on the peasants to abandon their units and in some cases the use of physical violence was recorded. In November 'Roch' informed London that the process of unification of military units was being reversed with calls for the creation of a separate peasant army.[27] Excessive closeness between the AK units and units loyal to the extreme right and members of OZON, Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (Camp of National Unity) the pre-war party of the ruling military regime, was a further cause of distrust. The impasse was not broken when the leadership of 'Roch' tried to define principles on which 'Chłostra' units would merge with AK units. On 4 December 1942 Rowecki wrote to the leaders of the peasant movement asking them to clarify outstanding areas of conflict.[28] But his letter only added to the existing stock of problems. Rowecki appealed to the 'Roch' leadership by pointing out that in the decisive stage of the war the contribution of the peasant organizations, which represented agrarian interests, was of great importance. He challenged them to state whether they intended to form their own army. He repeatedly asked why the leadership of 'Roch' and 'Chłostra' did not trust him. He finally assured them that neither he nor the leaders of AK had any political ambitions.[29]

The response of the 'Roch' leadership was detailed and pointed. In the first place they reminded Rowecki of the role of the army in the destruction of democracy after 1926, when 'peasants had been reduced to the role of second class citizens'.[30] They refused to be categorized as only representing agrarian interests. The defence of democracy and the building of a democratic system in post-war Poland were their war aims. The army's failures in September 1939 were referred to in order to remind Rowecki that the peasant movement was loyal to Sikorski and not to the military leaders, whose intrigues both then and in exile continued to be a source of national instability and weakness. Rowecki's assertion that local AK commanders felt that 'Chłostra' units stood in

the way of unity was considered too insulting to be addressed. In conclusion 'Roch' leaders stated that while they had nothing against Rowecki personally and in fact had confidence in him and respect for his efforts, the same could not be said though about his military subordinates.[31] Ultimately, in spite of these difficult exchanges, the incorporation of the peasant units into the AK was approved on 30 May 1943. Point I(5) of the final agreement between the leadership of 'Roch' and the AK guaranteed that the national army thus created would not be used for political purposes. The fact that the peasant leaders insisted on this point was telling of the relationship between the two. Furthermore, by guaranteeing that these units would be allowed to retain their commanders and that 'Roch' would remain responsible for their ideological education, the peasant movement made sure that the identity of their military units was retained.[32] In the field, where the brief of politicians based in Warsaw did not carry much weight, the situation remained far from clear.

At the same time as the government-in-exile instructed the leadership of the AK to consolidate all underground fighting units, there were no left-wing organizations worth mentioning. The situation changed rapidly throughout 1942 and by the beginning of 1943 two new political organizations emerged each with the potential to create and maintain independent military units. The motive for the emergence of these organizations was unambiguously political. The first originated from the divisions in the socialist movement. During the first two years of the war WRN, the PPS wartime organization in occupied Poland, had been weakened by internal conflicts which predated the outbreak of the war. In October 1941 the WRN leadership walked out of the PKP, the underground consultative movement, in protest at Sikorski signing an agreement with the Soviet Union. This gesture, reflecting the policy of the exiled section of the PPS, left WRN out of the main underground political organization. Into the place vacated by the WRN stepped a radical left-wing faction of the pre-war PPS which assumed the name Polscy Socialiści (Polish Socialists – PS). Until 14 March 1943 PS was the only representative of the otherwise large and ideologically varied socialist movement in the underground consultative organization.

The PPS–WRN policy of discouraging debates on potentially divisive issues such as the political repression of the inter-war period and responsibility for the September disaster, was justified by the need to foster national unity. The same attitude prevailed in relation to the armed struggle. Socialists were encouraged to join the military organizations loyal to the government-in-exile. Initially WRN planned for the creation

of a network of military units which were given the name Gwardia Ludowa (People's Guard – GL). Although successful in attracting workers to these units, WRN did not intend to pursue an independent military campaign. In January 1940 GL units were merged with the ZWZ. WRN did not retain operational control over the GL units. In February 1941 WRN published its political programme. It stated the hope that after the war Poland would become a republic with a well-functioning democratic system. General references were made to land reform, the single most important issue for the peasant community, though the criteria for deciding which landed estates would be taken over and redistributed were left intentionally vague. Industrial capacity, which was deemed 'ready for nationalization', would be taken over and handed to cooperatives.[33] WRN made clear its commitment to fighting Poland's two enemies, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. As the source of Poland's internal instability, WRN identified the Jewish community. The programme made a commitment to taking away from the Jews what was described as their excessive influence in finance and trade. In comparison with manifestos which rival left-wing factions would publish in the course of the next two years, this one lacked any commitment to the transformation of society and utilized populist slogans. Negative, and in many ways stereotypical, references to the 'Jewish Question' were most unusual in a programme presented by a socialist organization and would stand in the way of future cooperation with the Bund the Jewish Socialist Party. In a letter brought by a courier from Poland to the London representation of the Bund on 16 March, the party's representative in Warsaw reported that relations between the Bund and WRN had deteriorated after the publication of the programme. At that point the Bund made contact with the PS faction, finding that they shared the same view on 'fundamental issues'. The Bund reported that PS was the only underground organization prepared to oppose the exploitation of the Jews, who were at the time facing extermination. The PS also facilitated communication between the Bund in Poland and its representatives in London.[34]

The publication of the WRN programme in no way stemmed internal splintering. Attempts to build up a left-wing organization, separate from the PPS, had been initiated when the radical members of the pre-war PPS started talks to bring together all small radical groups, one of these being the youth organization Gwardia (The Guard) originating from the pre-war Towarzystwo Universytetów Robotniczych (Association of Workers' Universities – TUR).

The WRN policy of not admitting into its ranks anyone who had not

been a member of the PPS before the war was justified by the need to guard against informers infiltrating the underground structures. But the consequence of the policy was the exclusion of younger sympathizers. These turned to other left-wing sections, notably the Barricaders. Since November 1939 a radical section of the pre-war PPS coalesced around Stanisław Dubois. By April 1940 this group published its own newspaper which took the name *Barykada Wolności* (Barricade of Freedom), hence the name 'Baykadowcy' (Barricaders) given to this section. In addition to maintaining links with the peasant movement Dubois concentrated on building links with the workers, forming cells in the main industrial towns.[35] In November 1940 the Barricaders formed military organizations based in large industrial complexes.[36] These then became the basis of a group which in September 1941 took the name Polish Socialists. In May 1941 the Barricaders published their first declarations. Their political programme was radical, anticipating left-wing unity and the creation of a post-war order based on the rule of the toiling masses.[37] Unlike the anti-Soviet stance of the PPS–WRN the PS was pro-Soviet in its foreign policy but at the same time critical of the Soviet Union's shortcomings. In a letter conveyed by courier to the PPS in London in October 1941 the PS accused WRN of supporting pre-war members of the Sanacja. They disagreed with the PPS anti-Soviet stance and declared that the Polish–Soviet disagreements had to be resolved. At the same time the PS stated its unambiguous opposition to Bolshevik methods.[38]

The PS was nevertheless in a weak situation, as unlike the WRN, which took over all PPS funds and property, it had no source of income and had no support from the émigré community. During the period when it was part of the PKP it received some funds from the government-in-exile. Most importantly it had no access to arms. Rowecki was hostile to the PS and even during its period of membership of the PKP would have nothing to do with it, avoiding any meetings attended by them, to which he would otherwise have come. He believed them to be a communist group and would not agree to the PS military units being armed, as long as they claimed the right to stay outside the AK. This situation was remedied by skilled workers, under instruction, producing their own guns and bombs from raw materials, which were smuggled from an industrial plant near Warsaw. During 1942 the WRN and PS, while making periodic attempts to bridge the growing gap between them, vied with each other for the loyalty of the pre-war PPS membership and the support of the industrial workers. The WRN's uncompromising stance, which manifested itself in the demands that the PS abandon its claims

to organizational independence and accept the WRN programme prevented unity between the two socialist organizations.[39]

Meanwhile, in London, the PPS leadership worked to unseat the PS from the PKP. WRN members appealed to the PPS London leadership, accusing the PS of weakening the party and of playing into the hands of the communists. PS was given no option, they were to submit their organization fully to WRN and their military units were to be absorbed into the AK.[40] Not surprisingly the PS was prepared to do as it was told. The exclusion of the PS from the PKP was finally achieved in February 1943, when on Sikorski's instructions the PS was expelled.[41] Although both groups of socialists had been uneasy about their lack of unity, political differences between them had increased during this period, with the PS assuming a clearer commitment to a radical political transformation after the war. By being readmitted to the PKP, WRN gained an upper hand and was poised to destroy the PS. The leadership of the PS decided to make a break with the PPS. In March 1943 a new party was officially forced and assumed the name Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów (Workers' Party of the Polish Socialists – RPPS). Its political programme was rooted in Marxist ideology, thus bringing it close to the newly emerging communist party which had taken the name Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party – PPR). During May and June 1942 some contacts between PS and PPR had taken place, even though they appear to have been inconclusive.

One of the reasons for the failure of the WRN leadership and the PPS in London to unite the Socialist movement was their general overestimation of their strength, and their underestimation of the attraction of left-wing ideas within the working-class community. The WRN leadership greeted the emergence of a communist underground movement with derision. It was presumed that the PPR failure would expose the fallacy of the PS's ambition to represent a radical strand in the Polish left and would drive the dissidents and their supporters back into the WRN organizations.[42] The conviction that the WRN was, and would remain, the only organization representing the socialist movement in Poland was reaffirmed in January 1943 in a verbal message brought from Poland by an emissary who used the pseudonym 'Karski' . Before leaving Poland he had several meetings with the leadership of WRN. They instructed him to convey to London the unambiguous statement that 'WRN does not allow and in the future will not allow anyone in Poland to consider any political group as representing the Socialist movement. PS as an organisation, or rather a community represents nothing in the Polish Socialist movement.'[43] WRN's stance manifested

the incomprehension of the Polish Socialist leadership that there could be any desire in Poland for a radical political transformation after the war. By assuming this attitude they contributed to polarization within the left-wing movements. This in turn created preconditions for certain sections of the pre-war left-wing community and the younger generation, which had no loyalty to pre-war organizations, to develop their own groups and formulate a vision of a post-war reality, something the PPS–WRN would not countenance.

The creation of a communist party in German-occupied Polish territories introduced an entirely new element into the underground movement. From the outset, leaders of the underground movement realized that this would not have occurred without Soviet Union's involvement. Thus any communist organization which emerged was from the outset to be viewed by all other organizations as a Soviet creature. This suspicion, even before Soviet military victories brought the Red Army closer to Polish territories, determined the nature of debates within the underground.

Since Soviet decision making lies beyond the scope of this work, the present analysis will be confined to discussing what occurred in occupied Poland. Polish communists, in their attempt to build an underground movement, would be hampered, as much as they were assisted, by Soviet policies. To start with there was the thorny issue of the KPP, the previous communist party which had been dissolved by the Communist International in 1938. As a result Polish communists were forbidden to organize themselves in any form without the Comintern's prior permission. Nor were they allowed to join any other communist parties. The first group of communists was parachuted from the Soviet Union during the night of 27/28 December 1941. In January the next group arrived bringing the entire team up to eleven people. The group that brought a radio transmitter assured immediate communication with the base. First contacts were made by members of the Initiative Group visiting old comrades and those who they believed were sympathetic to the communist movement.[44] Communists in Poland were caught by surprise when they heard of the Initiative Group's arrival. They had not been consulted, nor informed in advance. That led them to conclude that this was not an initiative that had emerged from the community of Polish communists grouped around the Comintern, but a decision of the Soviet authorities.[45]

To the few leading communists who survived the Soviet purge and who remained in occupied Polish territories, the members of the group were unknown. The party that was created made no reference to the rich and varied tradition of the KPP, for the fact was it was not allowed

to make any reference to it. Nor was it allowed to appeal to old KPP members on the basis of their past membership, even if they were the obvious starting point of a new Polish communist organization. An entirely new organization was created with the name Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza – PPR). Furthermore, while other underground movements could depend on the loyalty of members of their pre-war organizations and in some cases of extensive funds and property which could generate funds, the PPR had neither a past organization nor a ready membership. However, from the outset it had in abundance real and potential enemies.

Writing in November 1957, Jakub Berman, later to be a member of the post-war Politburo and leading ideologue who was disgraced in 1956, explained how and why the decision was made concerning the new name. He stated that in the autumn of 1941 the group, which was going to be parachuted from Soviet-controlled territories into Poland under German occupation, met with Georgi Dimitrov, head of the Comintern. *The aide-mémoire* prepared after the meeting summed up all the contradictions inherent in the Soviet policy of creating a new Polish communist party. Berman thus explained that it was felt expedient not to use the word 'communist' in the new name, as it was believed that communist enemies would exploit this fact. Those, including workers, who had been distrustful of communists due to 'the KPP's mistakes and false policies' would have been put off. Furthermore, it would be easier to build a united front committed to fighting fascism if 'communist' was not used in the new party name. The final factor was that any organization using the name communist would automatically be accused of being an agent of a foreign power.[46] The new party was not to be a member of the Comintern and furthermore it would differ from other parties in so far as it 'would everywhere and always defend the working masses not by words but in deeds and will disseminate propaganda in the communist spirit and would implement the policies of the Comintern'.[47] From the outset the party aimed to base itself on a broad membership: workers, intellectuals and peasants, aiming to 'wrench them away from the influence of the PPS and other nationalist parties'.

The PPR's first leaflet proclaimed that the aim of the new party was not to compete with other parties that were fighting for national independence. It sought to cooperate with them and to create a 'National Front to fight for Poland's freedom and independence'.[48] Marceli Nowotko, the leader of the first group parachuted from the Soviet Union, identified the PPS and the SL as the two potential allies. In June 1942 Nowotko wrote optimistically to Dimitrov that contacts had been

made with the Polish Socialists and expressed the hope that joint action was possible.[49] On 29 June Nowotko reported that the Barricaders had a radical programme, 'nearly Soviet'. Initially the Barricaders attacked the PPR, and finally after a brief period when there was no contact between the two, negotiations were initiated. He noted that the left wing of the PPS, unlike the right PPS sections and the SL, did not look to London.[50] Nowotko continued in his optimistic belief that the PPR could enter into political agreements with other underground groupings. On the 31 July he reported again to Dimitrov that PPR contacts with the masses were increasing. He optimistically commented, in line with the plan outlined before the group left for Poland, that unlike the KPP which he described as '80 per cent Ukrainian, Byelorussia and Jewish', the PPR would not become a sectarian organization lacking contact with the masses.[51]

In June 1942 Nowotko reported to Dimitrov that the party membership stood at 4000, while the military organization consisted of 3000 men.[52] Neither of these figures can be verified, and must be treated with extreme caution. Władysław Gomułka who was appointed secretary of the Warsaw party cell in August 1942, suggests that these were imaginary figures based on the PPR slogan 'every party member is a member of the People's Guard'.[53] The decision to establish a party military wing was made in March 1942. In the process it appropriated the name Gwardia Ludowa (People's Guard – GL) earlier used by WRN. Two factors stood in the way of developing a Communist military underground. Comintern instructions, which left the Polish comrades with no freedom to use their own initiative, paralysed all decisionmaking. The other problem was the absence of any military tradition in the party's history and the shortage of trained personnel. The last was overcome when a group of Polish veterans of the Spanish Civil War were persuaded to make their way from France to Poland and undertook to organize and train the first units of the GL.[54]

On 28 November 1942 Nowotko was assassinated by the brother of another of the PPR leaders in circumstances that are to this day unclear. When Paweł Finder became the first secretary he continued the task of building bridges with other anti-fascist political organizations. In this he continued to be hampered by instructions from the Soviet Union which envisaged the creation of a broad anti-fascist bloc. The disparate left-wing underground groups had taken up a clearly revolutionary programme, which meant that they were dissatisfied with the reformist line taken by the PPR. In 1943 the PPR, in common with all underground movements, sought to define and publicize a programme for post-war

Poland. Since, on instructions from the Soviet Union, this was to be based on the concept of broad anti-fascist alliance, the areas of cooperation with Poland's radical left were to diminish.

As a result of the cooperation of the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany in the destruction of Poland in September 1939, the Soviet Union was generally deemed to be Poland's enemy, even though after June 1941 Sikorski had made strenuous efforts to establish some basis for cooperation. In the circumstances, any organization that either subscribed to communist ideology or received Soviet assistance, was inevitably viewed as an enemy organization. As part of the desire to limit Soviet intervention in Poland's internal affairs, sometime at the end of 1939 an organization was created within the PKP with the explicit purpose of monitoring communist activities. Initially referred to as Agency 'A', in December 1943 it was renamed Ścisły Komitet Antykomunistyczny (Direct Anti-Communist Committee) which was more usually referred to as Antyk. All parties supporting the government-in-exile, as well as the right-wing and nationalist ones, subscribed to the belief that the Soviet Union would seek to destabilize Poland by encouraging communist activities. It was also believed that, as had been the case at the end of the First World War, revolutionary activities would inevitably follow the end of hostilities. Thus preparations for the establishment of a post-war order invariably anticipated some left-wing mobilization, which had to be prevented if the Soviet Union was not to be allowed to gain a foothold in Poland.

The arrival of the Initiative Group from Moscow and the formation of the PPR was quickly noted and monitored by other underground organizations. Regular reports on the organizational progress of the PPR were sent to London. This task was made easier by the fact that the PPR had no desire to disguise its existence from the underground movement as a whole. On the contrary. Apart from the necessity of evading detection by the German occupation authorities, the PPR sought to announce its existence through the dissemination of leaflets and pamphlets and to link up with already established underground movements. The party's existence, its aims and its political programme, were an open secret. It was widely believed that the PPR was no more that a Comintern agent with little, if any, autonomy. Furthermore, a direct link between the Soviet military leadership and the activities of the PPR was assumed. As a result, although the AK and the surveillance authorized by the Delegatura provided detailed information, this was usually analysed and summarized from a predetermined point of view. This stood in the way of the development of a more sophisticated under-

standing of the possibility that the communists might in certain circumstances gain some support. At the same time, it was generally assumed by those outside the socialist and peasant movements that any desire for radical change after the war, in particular for land reform and political reforms, was communist inspiration. Thus neither the government-in-exile nor the underground organizations were fully capable of appreciating the relevance of the newly emerging communist organization to the future liberation of Poland.

The AK and its organizations were well placed to analyse the military implications of the emergence of the Soviet-sponsored new communist movement within the Polish underground. It was less capable of analysing its internal structure and its appeal to the community as a whole. This was apparent from the contents of a wide-ranging submission prepared by Agency A for Sikorski on 19 October 1942.[55] The report, entitled 'Soviet–Communist Actions in Poland', was based on intelligence gathered in Poland. It connected the activities of the Polish communists with growing Soviet diversion behind enemy lines, in this case on Polish territories. Colonel Protasiewicz, the author of the report, assumed that the role of the communist movement was to support Soviet military objectives. Soviet aims could be summed up in four points: gathering of military intelligence and preparing sabotage activities; preparing a military uprising which would take the pressure off the Soviet front; creating a pro-Soviet attitude in the community that would come to oppose all actions hostile to the communists; and, finally, to create anarchy in Poland which would allow the communists to present a case for outside intervention. The report was based on a very slight understanding of the recent history of the Polish communist movement. It assumed that the KPP was still in existence and remained a vanguard organization to which the PPR was subordinate. The newly created PPR was seen as a rank-and-file organization preparing the ground for the KPP and pursuing propaganda and military actions.[56]

In the section dealing with Soviet diversionary operations on Polish territories, the author was clearly able to draw on sophisticated military intelligence. A distinction was drawn between partisan units formed by escaped Soviet POWs and those which were parachuted into Polish territories with the aim of pursuing defined military plans, mainly to attack German communication routes.[57] According to the report, the Polish population opposed the activities of Soviet bands on Polish territories, but their response to the PPR appeared to be ambivalent. The likelihood of communist propaganda appealing to sections of the working class,

mainly in the industrial areas around Warsaw, and in the towns of Łódź, Piotrków, Częstochowa, Radom, Kielce and Zawiercie, was put down to German exploitation, low wages and the cooperation of some Poles with the German administration. Among the reasons why some sections of the peasant community turned to communist organizations, the author cited German brutality, and the corruption and opportunism displayed by some Polish estate managers as factors which drove the peasants to support communist ideas. Attacks by communist military groups on Germans and Soviet military activities were seen as dangerous because of the ferocity of German retaliation. At the same time it was recognized that the AK's apparent passivity was allowing the communists to gain popularity.

In the summary the report stated that 'Soviet diversionary actions in Poland, connected with the political activities of the PPR, were a two track but complimentary task of the Communists'. These operations could reduce the exiled government's popularity, mainly because of its preoccupation with waiting for the national uprising. In order to remedy this situation it was recommended that the Soviet Union should be approached with a request that all diversionary operations on Polish territories should cease, and that Soviet actions should be confined to German-occupied Soviet territories. A compromise solution could be put to the Soviet authorities that all diversion come under the command of the AK. Finally, radio broadcasts should be utilized to appeal to Poles to remain loyal to their leaders and to take military action only when instructed to do so by their own commander.[58]

From the end of 1942 Agency 'A' continued to send from Poland regular assessments of PPR activities and popular reaction to them. In the second report covering the period from the end of November to 15 January 1943 the tone became shriller. The authors of those reports once more noted growing support for the PPR among workers, in particular those employed in metalworks and the building industry. Warsaw continued to be the PPR's power base, though it was feared that their popularity was spreading to the Lublin and Kraków districts.[59] The most important conclusion of the reports was that PPR was gaining in popularity because of its propaganda claim to represent the broad anti-fascist block and its determination to take action against the German occupation forces. The AK's lack of response to the German atrocities was, more than ever before, causing Poles to abandon its ranks and to support organizations which appeared to be more active. Communist propaganda had undoubtedly been successful, in particular because of the PPR's policy of disguising the communist movement's real objec-

tives. These, according to the writers of the reports, continued to be the incorporation of Poland into the Soviet Union and the fomenting of a European-wide revolution. The latter was supposed to start with a revolution in Britain.[60]

Underlying these reports was an assumption that any communist activities on Polish territories would only take place if inspired by the Soviet Union. The political polarization of Polish society dating back to the policies of the inter-war regime was a subject that was avoided. This was understandable. The authors of the reports and their sources would have little sympathy with revolutionary and radical ideas, even if their intelligence were generally good. In their desire to identify the source of revolutionary and radical ideas in the Soviet Union, those who supplied the information from Poland and the author of the reports failed to address conflicts between sections of Polish society. If not tackled, these conflicts would weaken the unity of the AK and the underground organizations loyal to the government-in-exile. There was, in the circumstances, a further very good reason why little effort was made to identify the roots of political polarization in occupied Poland. Any reference to deeper causes of disunity and attempts to address them would have had an impact on the fragile nature of cooperation, on the one hand between parties supporting the government-in-exile, and, on the other hand, the civilian and military underground organizations, since the latter continued to be dominated by the military men who had been closely connected with the pre-war regime.

By the beginning of 1943 it was increasingly difficult to maintain national unity merely on the basis of nationalist and anti-Nazi slogans. As hopes for the end of war were raised, so the desire to establish a strong position, in preparation for the contest for power in post-war Poland, would become a factor in all considerations. Issues which until the end of 1942 had only been addressed vaguely, or not at all, would have to be discussed with greater clarity of purpose. The radical left-wing organizations, unshackled by discipline imposed from London, felt free to open the debate as widely as they chose. Other parties would have to follow in their track.

2
1943: The Breakthrough

At the beginning of 1943, for the first time since the outbreak of the war, the military initiative passed from Germany to the Soviet Union and its allies. Detailed plans for the European theatres of war were now being prepared by the allies. As a result, post-war territorial settlements became less a test of each ally's goodwill, and more one of the post-war European balance of power. With that came the realization that this would be determined by military realities at the time of victory. Since neither British nor US troops were likely to set foot on the European continent during 1943 the likelihood of the Red Army entering Polish territories in pursuit of German troops became a potentially embarrassing diplomatic reality. Neither British nor US politicians wanted the Soviet Union to increase its territory and with that its influence in Eastern Europe. Stalin's refusal to relinquish territories gained during his earlier cooperation with Nazi Germany was opposed. But in reality little could be done to stop the advance of the Red Army, even if this did not bode well for the future. On the contrary, in 1943 both Western allies were heavily dependent on the Soviet Union's continuing commitment to the defeat of Germany.

For the Polish government in London these developments were particularly worrying. All plans for the establishment of a first post-war government were based on the assumption that the national uprising would enable it to return to Poland in advance of, or at least together with, the allied – British and US – troops. The possibility of the Soviet Union liberating Poland had not been seriously considered. The Poles consistently underestimated the Soviet Union's capacity to mount a successful counteroffensive against the Germans. Unfortunately for Sikorski, at the beginning of 1943 all the troops at his disposal were under British command, either in Scotland preparing for the North European

campaign, or in the Middle East recuperating and training after withdrawal from the Soviet Union. The stark reality of the exile government's position was that it had ended up in the wrong place and had committed all its resources to an ally which was unlikely to be able to take military actions to liberate Poland. At the beginning of 1943 it increasingly looked as if the Red Army would enter Polish territories in advance of the opening of the Second Front in the West. As a result the Polish troops committed to the Western allies would not be in a position to arrive in Poland either in advance or, at least, at the same time as the Soviet troops would cross the pre-war border between the two states.

The political position of the government-in-exile in London continued to deteriorate, irrespective of the fact that all troops available had been committed to the British war effort. Unfortunately for Sikorski's government, it was to learn that Churchill put more store by his relations with the Soviet Union. The signal feature of Britain's relations with the Poles became the heavy use of Polish manpower resources and a bland acceptance that Britain would not be able to repay the moral debt by supporting the Poles in their dealings with the Soviet Union. After his visit to the United States in May, Churchill obtained Roosevelt's agreement that the Mediterranean theatre would be tackled next. This postponed the opening of the Second Front until May 1944. For the Poles these decisions were disastrous as they delayed further any entry of Polish troops into Poland in advance of the anticipated Soviet entry.

The exile government's ability and willingness to negotiate with the Russians diminished in the first months of 1943. After the departure of the last of the already formed Polish units from the Soviet Union in September 1942, the Soviet authorities refused to allow any more Poles to leave and stopped all recruitment by the Polish government-in-exile. Polish–Soviet talks on the post-war eastern frontier had also stalled as the Soviet authorities appeared no longer to be interested in pursuing them.

On 12 April came the bombshell in the form of a German radio broadcast that mass graves of Polish officers had been found in the Katyń forests, areas previously occupied by the Soviet Union. Since the signing of the agreement with the Soviet Union, the Polish military authorities there had been trying to trace thousands of missing officers. In spite of detailed information about their initial whereabouts, after capture by the Red Army all traces of their places of subsequent internment had vanished. The German revelations were a grim confirmation of what the Poles had already come to fear, namely that the officers had been executed by the Soviet authorities.

The breakdown of Polish–Soviet relations was inevitable. On 25 April in response to the Polish request that a Red Cross team investigate the mass graves, the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with the London government-in-exile. It would appear that only then did Stalin make the final decision to announce the formation of a new Polish organization in the Soviet Union, an idea with which he probably toyed earlier. The Związek Patriotów Polskich (Union of Polish Patriots – ZPP) was apparently formed in February. It consisted of a number of left-wing socialists and communists. Its official role was supposed to be to care for Poles in the Soviet Union although its leader, Wanda Wasilewska, in a radio broadcast on 28 April had already declared that the Sikorski government had no right to claim that it represented Polish people, thus implying that the ZPP aspired to a more important role.[1] This and the announcement that new Polish military units were to be formed in the Soviet Union under the command of General Zygmunt Berling was taken as a direct challenge to the London government-in-exile. The Polish political leaders in London and the British and US authorities tried to analyse the implications of these Soviet initiatives. They had in effect little to go on and in any case were only too well aware that they had only limited means of influencing developments in the Soviet Union.

In May Sikorski made a tour of Polish units in the Middle East. Rumours about disagreements within the officer corps and anxiety about Anders' independent negotiations with the British military leaders there, made this trip vital. At the same time there is evidence to suggest that Sikorski wanted to investigate whether there was any likelihood of re-establishing relations with the Soviet Union.[2] On 4 July 1943 on his way back to Britain the aeroplane carrying Sikorski and his entourage, including his daughter and the British political liaison officer Victor Cazalet, crashed into the sea off Gibraltar. Sikorski was killed.

The immediate consequences of Sikorski's death on the government's precariously maintained unity were immediately apparent. On the surface at least, Sikorski's death was a source of grief to the politicians of the exile government. With due pomp his body was conveyed to Westminster cathedral and then to the Polish cemetery at Newark. In reality, Sikorski's demise stripped all Polish politicians of their inhibitions, and freed the officers from their remaining moral apprehensions about taking direct action against their own government. President Raczkiewicz tried to establish his authority, something he believed Sikorski had denied him in accordance with the 1935 Constitution. But the parties which had earlier made up the Sikorski government were not

willing to be sidelined after his death. In the bitter contest which was thus fought behind the scenes Mikołajczyk secured the premiership, but Raczkiewicz was able to insist on Sosnkowski becoming commander-in-chief of the Polish forces.[3] General Anders, commander of the Polish units in the Middle East, pitched into the battle demanding that Raczkiewicz take full control over political and military matters. Anders announced that the army would follow his instructions and this was read as an assurance that it would support the president.[4]

The result of the internal squabbles and conflicts which came immediately after the announcement of Sikorski's death ultimately led to the creation of a government that was even more disunited than the previous one had been. The same four parties were represented in the new government, with the SL and PPS retaining three portfolios each and the SP and SN two each. No attempt was made to draw the leaders of the underground resistance into consultations concerning the reconstruction of the government-in-exile. In any case, it would appear that events taking place in exile increasingly bore little relevance to the continuing tragedy of occupation.

Henceforth Sosnkowski busied himself with military matters, while Mikołajczyk took charge of political issues. In reality they acted independently, failing to coordinate their initiatives. From September 1943 until Sosnkowski resigned in September 1944, they met only ten times. Contacts with the British authorities were reduced. Churchill had enjoyed a good relationship with Sikorski, something neither of his successors was able to establish. In any case the British authorities were only too well aware that, at the time of increased collaboration with the Soviet Union, the Polish government-in-exile was fast becoming a source of serious embarrassment.

Both the course of the war as well as conflicts in London inevitably accentuated differences between the leadership in exile and that in the occupied territories. As the government failed to obtain allied commitments to the restoration of Poland in her pre-war borders, it nevertheless offered up to the allied war effort all the manpower now under its command. The unexpected result of these manoeuvres was that its leadership role in relation to the whole war effort was reduced. Henceforth the government-in-exile would increasingly be confined to trying to prevent the British from making deals with the Soviet Union at Poland's expense. In reality, however, it could do little to prevent this from happening. Attempts to build up unity with other small exile governments and intrigues aimed at influencing and encouraging anti-Soviet factions within the British establishment only had the effect

of irritating Churchill. The authority of the Polish government-in-exile within the British establishment continued to diminish irrevocably.

At the same time, the London-based Polish political leadership saw the need to increase control over developments taking place in Poland. Unfortunately this proved to be a complex exercise, as the leadership of the underground movement increasingly needed more freedom to address political problems faced by them under occupation. As the end of the war became a possibility, so the underground movement became more active and less willing to subordinate itself to the demands of either the government-in-exile or their appointed agents. Information coming from Poland confirmed the growing indifference there about the fate and composition of the government-in-exile. A report from Poland dealing with the political situation in occupied Poland dated 19 February 1943 and covering the period from the end of December was very pessimistic. Its unambiguous conclusions were that Poles, in particular those not connected with any underground organization, were becoming hostile to the allies, and more likely to see the Soviet Union as a liberator. Although the propertied classes remained anti-Soviet they were also becoming less opposed to German occupation.[5] These conclusions were confirmed only a few months later by a top priority report, intended only for Sosnkowski's eyes, which summed up the underground movement's response to the most recent governmental crisis. Prepared on 19 August but only decoded on 30 November, it warned of the growing restlessness in occupied Poland.[6] While the underground sections of parties involved in the exile government appeared to be satisfied to continue supporting it, the fringe right- and left-wing parties were going on the offensive. The Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Units – NSZ), which was loyal to the nationalist movement, attacked Sosnkowski's appointment, believing him to be too heavily involved in politics. By the beginning of 1944 the nationalist movement was running out of steam and was less willing to attack the government-in-exile. The NSZ was focusing its attacks against the PPR and Soviet partisan units.[7]

On the other extreme of the political spectrum the PS was also opposing Sosnkowski's appointment, declaring his nomination to be akin to a coup d'état. The communist movement promised to fight his appointment, while the PS declared that they would resort to arms to oppose him.[8] Although these and similar reports still confirmed that the majority of the population remained steadfastly anti-German and distrustful of the Soviet Union, unity between groups and parties supporting the government was becoming looser. It was clear that the PPR and the

Armia Ludowa (People's Army – AL) military units loyal to the communists were gaining in popularity. The Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów (Workers Party of Polish Socialists – RPPS), a radical splinter group of the WRN was also increasing its support base, and its military wing the Polska Armia Ludowa (Polish People's Army – PAL) was expanding its membership. Socialist influence, mainly of the pre-war PPS, within the working-class was waning even though its leadership remained steadfastly anti-Soviet. Even the SL was showing signs of internal weakness. The London leadership's desire to retain control over the BCh units in Poland prevented their full incorporation into AK, leading to local often violent conflicts. This made it difficult to evaluate the peasants' support for the government-in-exile. More worrying was the fact that the PPR appeared to be successfully exploiting these internal dilemmas and infiltrating the BCh.

The AK leadership was only too aware of the reason for the government's loss of standing. By focusing all its plans for military action on the critical moment between the defeat and withdrawal of the German forces, and Soviet entry onto Polish territories, the government-in-exile appeared to be passive and lacking in initiative. To counter this impression and to make Poles resistant to Soviet agitation, the government was advised to publicize its programme and to be seen taking the initiative.[9] Unfortunately the decision of the Teheran Conference, to which the Poles were not invited, undermined the government's key claim to be successfully representing and defending Poland's interest within the allied community.

It was in these circumstances that the exile leadership once more addressed the issue of coordinating military action from abroad with that which was to take place in the occupied territories. At the beginning of 1943 Soviet entry onto Polish territories was a possibility, but by the summer it had become a certainty. This required a review of both the role of the AK and of plans for the national uprising. Before the matter could be addressed, however, the AK suffered a severe blow. On 30 June 1943 General Grot-Rowecki was arrested by the Germans. His deputy, General Bór-Komorowski, took over as head of AK. His priority continued to be the buildup the ranks of the AK.

Its role was expanded to provide intelligence information for London while at the same training continued in preparation for the uprising. In London politicians and military leaders, while never settling their differences, were forced to address the controversial question of what was to happen if the Red Army entered Polish territories without any prior agreement between the Soviet authorities and the Polish government-

in-exile. The result of their deliberations was an instruction to the AK that its units should concentrate on attacking German forces and installations, but only take action against the Red Army if Soviet forces attacked the Polish civilian population or AK units.[10]

Events nevertheless overtook Polish decisions. On 28 November 1943, at the Teheran Conference, Churchill accepted that the frontiers of the future Polish state would be altered to the Soviet Union's advantage. Poland would lose territories beyond the Curzon Line and at the same time be compensated by the incorporation of ethnically German areas in the North and West. As the Polish government refused to accept this decision, about which it had no prior knowledge, it was obvious that the Western allies would do nothing to assist the movement of Polish troops from the West back to Poland. The role of the AK was thus enhanced, for the duty of liberating Poland, securing its frontiers and preventing the incoming Soviet authorities from establishing a provisional administration feel upon its shoulders. The final and arguably most complex of the tasks assigned to the AK was to quell any challenge that might arise from within the underground organizations to the authority of the government-in-exile and its agencies in occupied territories.

It is generally believed that at the end of 1943 the AK numbered approximately 300 000 members. These were people who had taken an oath of loyalty to the AK but whose degree of preparedness for military action varied. The ranks of the AK contained professional soldiers who had experienced fighting in 1939, but it had also attracted new members, some with limited military experience and others who were undergoing some training in preparation for the national uprising. The AK consisted on the one hand of active and armed underground military units, and on the other of civilians who got on with daily life but who were given occasional military training. All this had to be done in extreme secrecy. According to Bór-Komorowski, one of the specialist units established in the autumn of 1943 had as it sole aim, to 'expose and counteract communist propaganda'.[11]

By the end of 1943 the process of consolidation and incorporation of military units into the AK had been completed. Outside the AK remained only the NSZ units of the extreme nationalist movement, and units loyal to the communist movement.[12] As will be shown this was an optimistic view, clearly written from the perspective of hindsight which required the leaders of the AK to present the events of the wartime as a battle between the united AK one the one hand and the Soviet-supported communist organization on the one. In reality, not only was

the process of military consolidation very patchy but those units which remained outside co-existed and overlapped with units of the AK, frequently fostering disunity in the ranks of the AK. Military and security considerations required the underground units to cooperate, but this led to conflict or cooperation in circumstances not always approved or sanctioned by the leadership. Agreements forged between the leaders of the underground organizations were not always respected in provinces where local commanders had their own way of dealing with both friendly and rival organizations.

At the beginning of 1943 relations between the leadership of AK and the NSZ were very bad. Previous attempts to establish unity had not been successful mainly because of the AK's desire to incorporate the NSZ into its ranks. Earlier negotiations which had taken place between the then ZWZ and the Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa (National Military Organization – NOW) military units loyal to the SN had been inconclusive. The SN leadership in Poland felt that the AK was withholding arms received from Britain through parachute drops and were earmarked for the SN units. At the same time there was unhappiness within the rank and file about the extent of the exile SN leadership's subordination to Sikorski's decisions.[13]

The result was that, in June 1942, those who disagreed with the decision to incorporate NOW units in the ZWZ broke away and formed a new military organization which took the name Narodow Siły Zbrojne. The NSZ leadership claim was that it had under its command at least 10 000 men, probably a vastly inflated figure.[14] These were mainly prewar officers of the reserve and non-commissioned officers. Most commissioned officers joined the AK. By its own admission, the NSZ paid little attention to the Soviet threat and concentrated its plans on preparing for battle against Germany.[15]

After the war the NSZ was accused of being involved in the killing of Jews, a subject which has been the focal point of controversies concerning the nationalist movement.[16] Its political programme which was published in February 1943 spoke of post-war Poland being built on nationalist principles. Apologists for the NSZ have suggested that its anti-Jewish activities and anti-semitic ideas were of 'marginal importance' and merely a by-product of a much stronger nationalist drive that identified the communists as the real internal threat to the Polish national state.[17] The NSZ units fought military battles with Soviet partisan units and military units loyal to the PPR as well as taking action against known communists and communist sympathizers. After the war, one of the commanders of the NSZ claimed that the AK demand

for absolute submission and incorporation of the NSZ was not a correct interpretation of the substance of agreements made between Sikorski and the SN in exile. They claimed that Sikorski had been willing to sanction a degree of flexibility which would have allowed the NSZ to retain its own command structure and identity. Not having direct radio contact with the government-in-exile, the NSZ had been duped by the AK commanders to believe that they had no option but accept incorporation into its ranks. The result was that during 1943 it chose to remain outside the AK ranks.[18]

At the outset the newly created communist movement, although organizationally weak, was far from politically insignificant. Its development was nevertheless constrained rather than enhanced by instructions from the Soviet Union. To start with, members of the Initiative Group and the communist leaders in Poland were only too well aware that Dimitrov's decision to facilitate the creation of a new Polish communist movement was a minor initiative and would only too quickly be sidelined by Stalin's own policies. This is what happened in 1943. The diplomatic break at the end of April 1943 between the Soviet Union and the Polish government-in-exile was followed by the establishment of the ZPP. Communists in Poland were not sure what that organization's ultimate role was and what would be the status of the PPR after the war.[19] Direct intervention in Polish affairs became a distinct possibility. The party thus tried to formulate its first political post-war programme at the beginning of 1943.

But when they informed Dimitrov of its outline he responded angrily by telling them to stick to the Popular Front programme which was binding on all communist parties during the course of the war. He forbade them to use the phrase 'the establishment of the authority of workers and peasants'. He instructed that the basic principles of the PPR programme should be: 1) the defeat of the enemy; 2) the winning of national independence; and 3) the establishment of genuine national democratic authority, and not that of workers and peasants.[20] According to Gomułka, two drafts of the PPR declaration were prepared and finally, dissatisfied with the results, he undertook to write the final one which was published in November 1943. That version, under the title 'What are we fighting for?' concentrated on castigating the pre-war government and on stressing the need for the reconstruction of an independent and democratic Poland. In accordance with Dimitrov's instructions all reference both to the nationalization of land and to workers' control of the means of production were left out. In their place the PPR stated that rightful owners would be guaranteed the right to

reclaim their workshops, farms and shops. Large industry, mines and banks would be nationalized and would be managed by workers' committees on behalf of the nation. Large landed estates would be broken up, and the land reform would benefit peasants and the landless.[21]

PPR followed the publication of its political programme with the declaration that it was supporting the establishment of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (Homeland National Council – KRN). This was in effect a proposal for the establishment of a network of local councils which would bring together various local parties and organizations all of which were broadly committed to a progressive programme based on the PPR's objectives. This, according to Gomułka, was his own idea, to which Dimitrov made no response.[22] For Gomułka, who became the PPR leader after the arrest of Paweł Finder on 14 November 1943, this represented a victory of the national group over those who preferred to wait for instructions from Moscow.

The independent line was further encouraged by loss of radio links with the Soviet Union, after the Gestapo uncovered the PPR's radio. According to Gomułka, at the time when he embarked on developing the idea of KRN, Polish communists in the Comintern had developed their own ideas. In conjunction with the ZPP, and encouraged by the Soviet authorities they put forward a proposal for the Polski Komitet Narodowy (Polish National Committee – PKN) which, once Poland was liberated, would form a first administration.[23] Meanwhile, in occupied Poland the new PPR secretary embarked on a policy of negotiating with other left-wing organizations to try to bring them into the KRN fold. The communists in particular hoped to benefit from divisions in the two main parties supporting the government-in-exile, the PPS and the SL.

Thus a paradoxical situation emerged. While the PPR was commonly believed to be a revolutionary party, a perception it tried to dispel, other left-wing groups were unabashed about their radical plans and post-war aims. They nevertheless stressed that the main difference between their aims and those of the communists would be that they would not allow Poland to become republic of the Soviet Union's. Whereas in due course the RPPS programme became revolutionary and socialist, the PPR was fixed firmly to the democratic popular front platform required of them by Dimitrov. The Comintern's unease at the possibility that Polish communists might set an agenda which could wrongly anticipate Soviet objectives in relation to liberated Poland was evident. It could also be argued that, after the doctrinare conflicts between the Comintern and the KPP during the inter-war period, there was a general distrust of

Polish Communists in Moscow. Although war circumstances reduced the Comintern's ability to influence policies made in Warsaw, this was a matter that neither the Comintern nor the Soviet leadership wished to leave to Polish communists.

The group that was ideologically closest to the PPR was the splinter section of the pre-war PPS which assumed the name RPPS. During the founding meeting in March 1943 its programme defined the party as Marxist and revolutionary. The RPPS paid homage to the achievements of the Soviet Revolution but disagreed with the pace of industrialization and collectivization which was criticised for having resulted in the oppression of workers and peasants.[24] The Soviet Union was castigated for having abandoned the goal of world revolution and of instead subjugating the policies of communist parties to its own needs. The RPPS programme emphasized that this policy had limited the 'revolutionary strategy of the European proletariat'. While recognizing the Soviet Union's contribution to fighting Hitler's Germany, the party clearly stated that 'it wished to take the matter of the revolution and that of the achievement of Socialism in Poland, into its own hands'.[25] The RPPS programme committed its membership to fostering a revolution in Poland. Power was to be captured in the last stages of the war and a temporary government was to be formed by workers and peasants. The workers were to be armed in order that they take over factories, which would then be run by factory committees. Committees of poor peasants and landless agricultural workers were to take over land, which would be distributed justly. A period of consolidation of power would follow during which, according to the RPPS, the government would be granted extensive powers to fight the counter-revolution. What would follow would be a socialist republic in which the power of the propertied classes and the Catholic Church would be destroyed. That republic would be classless and 'all society's efforts would be directed towards the common good'.[26]

The RPPS maintained its own military units, the PAL which drew most of its membership from the factories around Warsaw. It was hoped that units of the BCh loyal to the peasant movement would in due course unite with PAL forming a strong military counterbalance to the AK.[27] PAL suffered a major handicap in that it had no access to sources of arms, which it remedied by assembling guns and grenades from materials available in factories where most of its supporters worked. Veterans of the Spanish Civil War were believed to have been attracted to PAL units and aided them with their military expertise and knowledge of fighting.

Unlike the PPR, the RPPS played a key role in bringing together disparate left-wing and revolutionary groupings in occupied Poland. Although its membership was always small, it was respected by other socialists. For the RPPS, unity with the PPR would have been useful but was not the most important aim. Nevertheless, in spite of joint talks being held, the two parties did not agree to organizational unity. Gomułka subsequently claimed that the RPPS was anti-Soviet and that it viewed the PPR as no more than a Soviet puppet.[28] One of the ex-RPPS leaders offers a different reason for failure to unite the left wing: he explained that the membership of his party spanned a variety of attitudes towards the Soviet Union. This, according to him, made it impossible to accept the PPR's line. Possibly the real reason for the RPPS leadership's reluctance to support the PPR or to join the communist sponsored KRN was the feeling that a direct association with the PPR would discredit the RPPS at a time of deep internal ideological and leadership struggles. The RPPS was willing to consider supporting the PPR but came to the conclusion that it was necessary in the first place to complete talks aimed at establishing cooperation with the SL. These priorities were confirmed at the Third Conference of the RPPS in September 1943, and immediately caused a split in the ranks of the party. A group led by Edward Osóbka Morawski, supported direct cooperation with the PPR, but was isolated.[29] While the two parties were not able to agree on a basis of organizational unity, the RPPS made an offer to the PPR that it should join in forming factory committees and trade unions. This limited platform for joint work was accepted by the PPR.[30]

Throughout 1943 it became apparent that the SL and BCh units loyal to it were going to play a pivotal role both within the AK and in any political and military organizations that would try to challenge the AK supremacy. But while the BCh moved uneasily towards incorporation into the AK, other organizations attempted to forestall this. In one of his first reports to Dimitrov, Nowotko assessed the peasant movement as decentralized, but strong in the provinces. He wrote that their political programme was vague, 'neither capitalist nor socialist'. Although the SL made attacks on the Soviet Union, these were 'moderate in tone'.[31] This led the PPR to try and address the peasant community by printing and distributing leaflets in which assurances were made that the party stood for a free Poland in which 'land would belong to the peasants'.[32] These general appeals had no effect on the peasant community, which generally distrusted political movements dominated by workers' interests.

Towards the end of 1943, when the PPR tried to lead with a debate

on the post-war order and put forward the proposal for the creation of the KRN, the party's attitude towards the peasants altered. Attempts were now made to divide the rank-and-file from the leadership and to attract them towards cooperation with promises of arms supplies. Hoping to capitalize on BCh frustration with AK inactivity, the GL units loyal to the PPR tried to accentuate the AK's class hostility to the peasants and to present the PPR's own programme as one committed to remedying the peasant land hunger. While unsuccessful in these attempts, the PPR struck at a sensitive point in the peasant's attitude towards the AK.

The Delegatura put the activities of the communists under closer observation in 1943, continuing to view them as a foreign agency. Throughout that, and the coming, year detailed surveillance of communist organizations was instigated. There is some evidence that talks had taken place between the leadership of the AK and the PPR aimed at investigating the possibility of unity between the AK and PPR, although it is not possible to state with any degree of confidence whether the initiative had come from the AK or the PPR. What can be shown is that some talks took place around April 1943 and that both agreed on the principle of unity and consolidation of the military effort. The AK set out five conditions to which all organizations had to subscribe before such cooperation could take place. Of those points 3–5 were the most important. Point 3 demanded a declaration that the organization be totally independent of outside influence. Point 4 called for a declaration that the organization would fight against any invader. Point 5 demanded a commitment to the inviolability of Polish borders, by which it was understood to mean the border of 1 September 1939.

According to the Delegatura, the PPR had not shown a satisfactory degree of commitment to these conditions and in particular was negative towards point 5. As a result, all talks between the two were discontinued.[33] At the same time the Delegatura took the opportunity to refute any suggestion that they were preparing any lists of communist activists, and proceeded to accuse the PPR of instructing their local cells to put together lists of those involved in the fight for independence.[34] It would seem that any attempts to establish some basis for co-existence irrevocably broke down at that stage. In fact both sides henceforth kept the other under constant surveillance.

The Delegatura and the exile authorities sought to ascertain the likelihood that the PPR may ally with other political parties, most notably the RPPS. Leaflets and publications were scrutinized for indications of the PPR's organizational skills and resources at its disposal. The quality

of the paper, the print and the regularity with which their news sheets were disseminated were all a relatively reliable way of finding out how the communists were able to develop their organizational network while evading detection by the Gestapo. The party's ideological programme and its statements on post-war Poland were examined for inclinations of the post-war objectives of the party and the Soviet Union's, but also to gauge its ability to persuade members of other political and military organizations to join, or at least to support, the PPR's broad anti-fascist programme. Reports prepared by Agency 'A' of the Delegatura, which were sent to Britain and in most cases were copied to the minister of home affairs and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, suggest that PPR activities were closely monitored and files were being prepared listing all those who were members of, or had any associations with, the communist movement. The detailed nature of these lists suggests the likelihood of Agency 'A' and the successor Antyk organization, having access to pre-war police files.[35]

The exile government was informed by its agencies in Poland that at the end of 1942 the PPR had suffered arrests. Its organizational structure was supposed to have been further weakened by the Nazi extermination of Jews, who were presumed to be sympathetic towards the communist movement. Until the beginning of 1943 the PPR was believed to have been weakened by internal struggles between the members of the disbanded KPP and the new leadership. Nevertheless, the party, it was reported, had overcome those problems and throughout the year proceeded to extend its organizational base and to broaden its appeal to old PPS and SL members.[36] Evidence from the PPR, RPPS and the SL archives suggest, however, that the AK overestimated the communists' successes. This was in spite of the fact the Delegatura knew that the PPR and RPPS had not managed to establish a joint military command or to coordinate their organizations. Conspiratorial publications put out by both organizations made it clear that neither side was prepared to accept the other one's ideological supremacy.[37]

The AK was acutely aware that its apparent inactivity allowed the PPR and its military wing the GL to assume the mantle of the defenders of the oppressed workers and peasants. This and the communists' policy of infiltrating other organizations was put forward as an explanation of its apparent growing popularity. At the beginning of 1943 this extended beyond the narrow sections of the working-class community and included artisans and teachers. In the villages the communists encouraged hostility to the landowners, agitating among the landless and estate workers. This led to the rank and file of some BCh defecting to

the communist military units.[38] The AK reported ominously that the communists, in spite of their numerical weakness, were rapidly gaining popular support. In Warsaw their numbers 'were disproportionately small in comparison to their activities, mobility and influence on the masses'.[39]

After the diplomatic break between the Polish government-in-exile and the Soviet Union, the PPR initiated a campaign of attacking the London Poles. Until then the PPR had focused on the need for national unity, whereas the RPPS was more outspoken in its distrust of the AK and the government-in-exile, accusing them of harbouring sympathizers of the pre-war government. Reporting in June 1943, Agency 'A' noted that the PPR declared that the London government no longer had the right to claim to speak on behalf of all Poles. PPR was also putting forward the idea that a new government should emerge in Poland and furthermore that this one should come from within the organization that was directly involved in fighting the German occupation.[40] In December reports from Poland spoke of increased communist activities. The dissemination of the PPR programme under the title 'What are we fighting for?' marked the start of a new, two-pronged campaign. On the one hand the communists announced the creation of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (Homeland National Council – KRN), which would form the first government, while on the other hand a campaign of vilification and attacks on the London government was stepped up. The widespread acceptance of the inevitability of Soviet entry onto Polish territories, combined with war weariness, played into the communists' hands. But as the authors of the report to London also noted, the ambivalent attitude of the Western allies towards the Soviet Union further played into the communists' hands by suggesting lack of interest or even an abandonment of Poland.[41]

At the end of 1943 the Delegatura decided that the surveillance of communist organizations and of those sympathetic to it had to be conducted in a more consistent way. Thus on 1 January 1944 a new organization was created which took the name Antyk. In addition to collating information on communists it was to prepare an effective campaign to counteract the spread of communist and Soviet influence throughout Polish society.[42] The activities of the Antyk organization were to be kept very secret even within the AK and all organizations connected with the Delegatura. The net was spread widely to include people and organizations likely, through their activities or negligence, to contribute to the spread of communism. PPR, RPPS and PPS Lewica were listed as the main targets. Military wings of these political organi-

zations were also defined as hostile to Polish interests and were put under constant surveillance, as were all Soviet-led partisan units and unknown bands.[43]

Antyk activities were to extend to all walks of life under occupation. Former employees in the pre-war security, intelligence and police apparatus as well as in the judiciary were to be used to obtain information about known communists. Local commanders were to ascertain whether any of the pre-war communists were still around and were to prepare lists which included their addresses. This was extended to checking all those who were in contact with those under surveillance. All signs of military activity were of great importance. The activities of Antyk extended to counteroffensives. All political and military organizations loyal to the government-in-exile were to be particularly careful not to allow communists to find out about their existence and strength. Any communist activities aimed at the AK and the Delegatura had to be reported immediately.[44] To counteract the perceived growing appeal of the PPR it was decided to launch a propaganda campaign. In a number of instructions written at the same time when it was decided to create Antyk, methods of distracting attention from the apparent military successes of the communist military organizations were outlined. Each section of the Polish community was to be targeted.

Information gathered as part of the anti-communist campaign was both detailed and extensive. It varied from very specific to circumstantial. An example of the Delegatura's policies of surveillance appears in a report dated 21 January 1944. Its focus was the three districts of Sochaczew, Łowicz and Skierniewice where communist bands had been particularly active. The report contained a list of all people who were suspected of being members of a communist organization or who in any way assisted the communists. One of those was described as: 'Rybak Stanisław, date of birth 20.2.1908, doctor of philosophy, professor, living at Traugutta Street No 245, working in the local authority. Famous communist activist, nominated by the PPR to become the commissar responsible for the districts, alcoholic.' Another was described thus: 'Pokuta Franciszek, living at Ks. Ziemowit Street No. 6 which he owns, teacher. Arrested in April 43. Transferred to Pawiak (a notorious prison in Warsaw – author's note), released 28.7.43. Takes great care to disguise his affiliation.'

In trying to define communist influence in Warsaw the Antyk list revealed great familiarity with the ways in which the PPR and GL maintained contacts. Consider this example of a note:

> Party literature is supplied to workers' communities in the district of Powązki by Rasikon Antoni, son of Aleksander and Agata, born 29.1.1909, living on Powązkowska No. 64, flat 3, member of GL and by Mieczysław Wodyński, son of Stanisław and Katarzyna, born 1.12.1920, living on Powązkowska 52. This literature is delivered to Pfeifer factory on Okopowa street No. 72. At Powązkowska No. 62 flat 2, where meetings of a section of the GL take place.[45]

In some cases the information was not so precise, but it was no less dangerous were the information to fall into the hands of the Gestapo. Thus when commenting on a communist cell in the Hospital of the Child Jesus in Warsaw on Koszykowa Street No. 78, the report described the courier as 'Mary (not her real name), medium height, age 28–32, hair fair, face oval, medium build, wears a navy blue coat, fur collar slightly faded'.[46]

In the final tally all underground organizations knew that access to arms would give any organization an advantage over its rivals. AK had been able to make use of some pre-war stockpiles and throughout the war continued to receive further supplies through parachute drops arranged by the government-in-exile. As has been shown, this issue was a particularly sore point between the AK and BCh as well as the AK and the NSZ. The PPR, in its attempt to build up its military organizations, could only depend on supplies from the Soviet Union, and in that respect it would appear that relations between the GL and the Soviet military authorities were never clear. So much depended on the Soviet military plans and on the ability of various Polish agencies in the Soviet Union to make a case for supplying arms and ammunition to the Polish-led partisan movement in occupied territories.

The ZPP which in April 1943 brought together some of the leading communists and left-wing socialists in the Soviet Union, notably Wanda Wasilewska, Hilary Minc, and Alfred Lampe, had little, if any, influence on Soviet strategic thinking. At that time Stalin appears to have agreed with suggestions put to him by a Polish general, Zygmund Berling, who had been invited for talks with the Soviet leader. During these meetings Berling successfully argued for the creation of Polish military units. In reality the issue of Poland's future was possibly still not entirely clarified.[47]

The leadership of the ZPP did not anticipate a challenge to their authority from within the communist movement in Poland. The main thrust of its activities went in the direction of making themselves available to the Soviet authorities. They fully supported plans for the cre-

ation of fighting units, which would enter Poland together with the Red Army. At the same time ZPP leaders thought that they would be allowed to form a first provisional government which, following Comintern directives for the creation of broadly-based Popular Front first administrations, would include other parties.[48] Alfred Lampe made it clear in December 1943 that he and his colleagues did not believe that the PPR would be strong enough to implement a radical programme in post-war Poland. He calculated that as a party which only emerged after the German attack on the Soviet Union and furthermore one which was likely to perpetuate the sectarian conflict of the inter-war KPP, the new communist movement in Poland would lack the authority to have a decisive say concerning post-war Poland.[49] Clearly Polish communists in the Soviet Union believed that on entering Polish territories, the Red Army would place them in charge of liberated territories and that subsequently they would be entrusted with the task of managing the political transformation which was to follow.

Stalin's consent to the formation of a Polish division which would fight with the Red Army created complications within the Polish political community in the Soviet Union. Whereas leaders of the ZPP had thought that they would be in charge of this operation, Stalin appointed Zygmund Berling as the commander of what would soon become the Kościuszko Division.[50] This was undoubtedly a blow to the plans the leaders of the ZPP had already prepared. Berling was a professional officer and had no known association with either the communist or socialist parties. He had been interned by the Soviet authorities after the Red Army's entry into Eastern Poland in September 1939. He was one of the few Polish officers and, as a colonel, the highest ranking among them who agreed to work with the Soviet authorities. With the signing of the Sikorski–Maisky Agreement in July 1941 Berling was required to join Polish units under General Anders' command, but when these left the Soviet Union he, on the instructions of his Soviet handler, stayed behind.

On the night of 14/15 February 1943, even before the diplomatic break with the Polish government-in-exile, Stalin invited Berling for an interview, in the course of which he was allowed to put forward his proposal for an independent but pro-Soviet Poland.[51] During his second meeting with Stalin on 4 May Berling requested permission to expand the planned division into an embryonic Polish army. Stalin agreed to his proposal and Berling was promoted to general and given full responsibility for the creation of that army. That fact and a personal statement made by Stalin that he wanted an independent Poland led him to believe that this was Stalin's policy towards Poland.[52] It would appear

that after his break with the London Poles, Stalin might still have not formulated his final plans either on the future of Poland or on the question of who would be put in charge of liberated territories. The ZPP group and Berling viewed each other with hostility, each believing that it was privy to Stalin's thinking. Berling maintained that the ZPP group wanted Poland's incorporation into the Soviet Union. What both had in common was disregard for, and ignorance of, the emerging communist-led underground movement in the occupied territories. As a result, little time was spent on lobbying the Soviet political and military leadership for aid and supplies to build up the communist underground movement. It was left to the Red Army commanders to decide whether they would aid the communists in the occupied territories or whether to parachute into areas behind the German lines their own men who, in cooperation with scattered bands of escaped Soviet prisoners of war, could build up units that would harry German lines. Soviet military and political priorities meant that the GL could neither depend on Red Army support nor assume that it would be given combatant status in the fight to liberate Polish territories.

Within the occupied territories PPR proceeded with its plan for developing and extending its political and military structures. Initially it was assumed that certain elements within the AK, and most certainly the BCh units, could be persuaded to join the newly emerging units of the GL. In reality the situation was very complex. This much was admitted in internal PPR reports. It was very likely that the PPR's desire to become more assertive militarily caused other underground organizations to hinder PPR activities and prevent the communists from attracting the peasants into the GL. Outright attacks on GL units were not the norm. But it would appear that a certain degree of fluidity always prevailed in the precise loyalties of given partisan units. In August 1943, one of possibly many fratricidal conflicts resulted in a GL unit being massacred in the Lublin area. It seems that initially the unit had reached some understanding with another partisan unit active in the district, likely to have been an NSZ, but possibly an AK, group. They had agreed not to shoot at each other and had even agreed passwords. But on the night of 9 August members of the GL unit were disarmed and then finished off with axes.[53]

A summary PPR report from the Lublin district stated with admirable frankness that availability of arms would be the sole decisive factor in enabling the party to build up military units. 'The potential for expansion will depend on access to arms, if not then it will fall', was the laconic statement from the district of Janowiec. Under the heading 'Military Matters', the report stated that there was nothing to report.

They had no military problems due to the fact that there were no military men in the PPR who could build up a partisan force. Nor was the attitude of the 'reactionary forces' always hostile. The same report suggested relations with AK were good and only the top ranks were contaminated by hostile attitudes, and that was mainly due to the BCh having broken off talks with the AK.[54] AK reports confirm this state of ambivalence. Writing on 23 October to General Sosnkowski, the commander of AK reported that he believed that the attack and massacre of the GL unit in Janowiec was done by an NSZ unit. In the Lublin area AK units had no conflicts with GL partisans: 'on the contrary, they take refuge from the Germans, by staying close to our units' wrote Bór-Komorowski.[55]

In the vicinity of Kielce things were not dissimilar. An internal PPR report dated 30 May stated that both the party and GL structures were developing. The party, headed by two leaders, consisted of 96 members. The local unit of the GL numbered 35 men, though further on in the report it was admitted that only four were Poles, and the rest were Georgians, most likely escaped Soviet POWs. As the writer of the report admitted, that unit was causing him serious problems. He did not have a man whom he could appoint as commander and, as a result, he had to devote a lot of his time to dealing with disciplinary problems within the unit. In December a unit described as 'Endecja' a name used to describe the ND party which was likely to have been NSZ, attacked the GL unit but the latter did not accept the challenge and withdrew.[56]

The PPR was well aware of the fact that it was a latecomer to the resistance. The process of consolidating the underground followed the initial stages of occupation during which a varied assortment of organizations and groups emerged. An ability to survive Nazi repression, denunciation and to continue the buildup of resources and membership distinguished the viable from the ephemeral. The PPR and its military wing, the GL, were distinct for coming on the scene only after the structure of the underground structures was already in place. Inevitably it would compete for the loyalty of those who were willing to be active against the occupiers. This in turn would exacerbate political rivalries, particularly with the AK. The PPR's success, both during the war and in the critical months between the collapse of the German occupation and the establishment of the first administration, would depend not on the strength of its political programme alone, but on its military capacity to take power. The AK had already established a successful and wide-ranging network of underground units, provided training in preparation for the national uprising and, crucially, had its own stockpiles of ammunition. Furthermore, the AK's determined policy of incorporating

all military units under one banner made it difficult, if not outright impossible, for the PPR to attract to the ranks of the GL more than a few disaffected and radical elements. As a result, sometime during the late spring of 1943 a concerted effort was made to open talks with those military units which had remained outside the AK to test the resolve of the BCh in their decision to go in with the AK. The extent of the PPR's, clearly misguided, belief that it could form a military conterweight to the AK is evident in the approach made in May 1943 by a local commander of the GL to the commander of the Narodowe Oddziały Partyzanckie (National Partisan Units – NOP), one of the nationalist groupings which refused to join the AK. From the contents of the letter it is evident that these talks had been taking place for some time and had reached the point where a clear statement of political objectives was called for. Thus the commander of the GL explained that he wished to cooperate with all groupings with which the GL shared the common desire to fight German occupation. He went on to state:

> In these circumstances we consider to be our allies, partisan units made up of ex-Soviet soldiers, or Jewish units but also all possible partisan units made up of nationalist elements, even the most extreme, because all conflicts about authority (post war) we consider to be a Polish domestic affair, whereas at this moment we see these (conflicts) as inappropriate and premature.[57]

The commander of the GL gave the appearance of being willing to go to great lengths to establish some form of cooperation. He promised to investigate any complaints about his partisans committing atrocities against the local civilian population. But he also tried to explain that the communists and the radical right were united in their opposition to the bourgeois rule of the pre-war regime and stressed communist support for a programme of radical transformation after the war, in particular one which would benefit the workers and peasants.[58] Since there is no evidence of collaboration between the nationalist partisan units and the GL, it is safe to presume that this appeal fell on deaf ears.

A more realistic option for the PPR was military cooperation between the GL and PAL, the military wing of the syndicalist RPPS. While RPPS and PPR conducted what turned out to be ultimately unsuccessful talks, GL opened discussion with PAL to forge military cooperation. These opened on 20 September and ended inconclusively as the political talks which were being conducted at the same time failed to arrive at a common platform.

The result of these attempts was that at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, the left-wing movement in occupied Poland was disunited. More worryingly, it had failed to establish close links with key communists in the Soviet Union, who instead developed their own policies which were naturally more orientated towards what Stalin and his military leaders decided than towards building up left-wing unity in Poland. At the same time it was evident that, despite a general fear of the political consequences of the entry of the Red Army into Polish territories, war weariness and a desperate wish to see Germany defeated benefited the communists. Fringe sections of the Polish community and sections of peasant groups were willing to consider tentative cooperation with the communists, in particular because of a general sense of bewilderment at the apparent inactivity of the AK.

3
1944: The Soviet Entry into Poland

Both the Teheran Conference and the Soviet entry into Polish territories marked the end of any hopes that an independent government could be established in liberated Poland. Henceforth Soviet military and political priorities would dictate the course of developments in the territories of pre-war Poland. The course of negotiations and decisions made at the Teheran Conference gave the Soviet leaders added confidence to proceed as they chose, in the knowledge that neither Britain nor the US would view their actions as hostile. Attempts made by the Polish government-in-exile to reclaim authority over decision-making concerning the future of Poland failed after a painful course of negotiations in January and February of 1944.

The Polish government-in-exile had not been privy to Churchill and Eden's plans for the Three Power talks in the Crimea. Furthermore, when these were concluded the London-based Poles found it difficult to ascertain what had happened. On his way back from the Teheran Conference, Churchill succumbed to pneumonia and recuperated in Morocco before returning to London. Although Eden did broadly inform the House of Commons on 17 December of the conference decisions, only on 20 December did he see Mikołajczyk to tell him that Stalin had demanded that the Polish government accept the Curzon line as the condition for the restoration of diplomatic relations. The loss of Eastern Poland to the Soviet Union seemed inevitable, though Stalin assured his allies that the Poles would be compensated by the incorporation of Eastern Prussia and German territories in the West.[1] Only on 20 January was Mikołajczyk able to speak to Churchill only to be told that British leaders recommended that the Poles accept Stalin's conditions.[2]

As they anxiously awaited confirmation of the details of what had

been agreed at Teheran the Polish government tried to prepare its response. The situation was made much worse by the fact that, in the absence of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, they had to rely on intermediaries. While still in Morocco, Churchill met the Czechoslovak leader Edward Beneš, who had successfully completed talks with the Soviet government. On Churchill's suggestion, Beneš was entrusted with the task of persuading the Poles to accept Stalin's demands. A worse intermediary could not have been chosen as, in spite of advanced talks for the creation of a Polish–Czechoslovak union, relations between the two governments were very bad. Neither he nor Churchill was able to persuade the Poles to abandon their refusal to accept the incorporation of territories east of the Curzon line into the Soviet Union.

While the ministerial council, the president and the military leaders sought to find a way out, the Polish community-in-exile, always deeply divided, crystallized around two alternatives. The president and the commander-in-chief took a hard line on relations to the Soviet Union. Their view was that Poland should be restored to its old borders and that the authority of the government-in-exile, as the legal representative of Polish interests, could not be challenged. They distrusted the Soviet Union and believed that Soviet appetites might well grow if concessions were made at this stage. An important feature of this view, which was espoused by Raczyński and Sosnkowski, was a growing distrust of Britain and the US, which appeared to them to be condoning Soviet demands, or at least doing nothing to counter them.[3]

Mikołajczyk took a different view, believing that there was a need to negotiate with the Soviet Union. His conclusion was based on the assumption that Poland had a very weak hand with which to play against the big powers. He reasoned that Britain and the United States were committed to their alliance with the Soviet Union and would not jeopardize it by supporting the Polish government-in-exile. His analysis of the nature of the big power alliance led him to conclude that if Poland was to re-emerge as an independent state after the war, then there were only two alternatives, either to negotiate with the Germans, or to accept Soviet demands. He thus took a potentially very unpopular stance, namely that the Poles had to give up some territories to the Soviet Union in order to be able in the long term to defend Poland's independence. At this stage he was still convinced that the Soviet Union was willing to discuss compromises and that in return for a Polish renunciation of the pre-war eastern borders, the Soviet leader would guarantee Polish sovereignty. Mikołajczyk believed that Britain and the

US would support this solution and furthermore that they would be willing to be parties to it, thus in effect guaranteeing Poland's post-war status.[4] The prime minister's views were very unpopular within his own government. The military leadership, as was only to be expected, disagreed with this analysis. But dissent was equally strong in the ranks of the parties which made up the Mikołajczyk cabinet.

The nationalist parties were implacably opposed to Mikołajczyk's approach, but so was the PPS. Within the SL an opposition splinter group emerged, which threatened to break away from the main SL grouping and to bring from Poland the pre-war SL leader, Wincenty Witos, thus sidelining Mikołajczyk. While following the decisions of the council of ministers to investigate the possibility of re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the Polish prime minister knew that he had very little freedom to manoeuvre. Were he to be too flexible in his dealings with the Soviet Union he would face the threat of losing the support of the government, or dividing the very parties which made it up. In these circumstances British support for Mikołajczyk's approach to the problem was more a source of embarrassment than strength.

During the course of January and February, the Polish and Soviet governments made official declarations which defined their respective stances. In the absence of diplomatic relations this was the only way in which they could proceed, other than communicating through the British and US representatives. In the end nothing came of the Polish efforts to return to the negotiating table. The Poles refused to renounce the pre-September 1939 Polish borders, and the Soviet Union insisted that this was the minimum condition of resumption of talks. Efforts made by the US ambassador to Moscow, Averell Harriman, to re-establish talks between the two governments were not successful and instead Molotov indicated that he would be willing to negotiate with a new Polish government consisting of some of the London Poles with the addition of three Poles in the US, notably the economist Oskar Lange who was already known to Stalin.[5] The removal of Sosnkowski from his position as commander-in-chief of Polish forces was put forward as an additional condition for the resumption of talks. The Soviet leadership then refused to consider relaxing its conditions. Throughout this period, Churchill and Eden adopted the attitude that the government-in-exile was being difficult and that the onus was on the Poles to show themselves more conciliatory to Soviet demands. No assurances were given to them. On the contrary, Mikołajczyk was left in no doubt about the British politicians' irritation with the potential

that the Polish Question had for causing difficulties with their Soviet ally. This was in spite of the fact that in December 1944 Sosnkowski agreed with Eisenhower the final reorganization of the Polish Army in the Middle East so as to prepare it for action in Italy. In anticipation of action in the final stages of the war, the British had under their command no less than 70,000 Polish men.

The other problem which preoccupied the government-in-exile was the fact that on the night of 3 to 4 January 1944 Soviet troops crossed the pre-war Polish–Soviet border. Thus for the first time since the German thrust on 22 June 1941, the Red Army was once more on disputed pre-war Polish territories. This naturally raised the issue of the response of the AK to the incoming Soviet troops. The AK and the Delegatura had earlier been informed of the two alternative scenarios for the Soviet entry into Polish territories considered by the government-in-exile. In a message dated 26 October 1943 the AK was instructed to prepare plans for a national uprising code named 'Burza' ('Storm'). The underlying assumption was that the Soviet army would not be able to force a breakthrough on Polish territories and its offensive would stall and only be resumed when the allies entered Poland from the West. This option would, they believed, give the AK an opportunity to establish total control over Polish territories before the Soviet entry. In this plan allied assistance was of critical importance, as was the calculation that the Soviet army would not have the ability to complete the rout of the German forces in the East.[6] The second alternative was based on the belief that the Soviet army would successfully defeat the German forces and would thus enter Polish territories. In such an event the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Poland was assumed and the Polish government-in-exile believed that Soviet actions would be constrained by the allies.[7]

Bór-Komorowski claimed subsequently that the government-in-exile did not keep the authorities in Poland fully informed of the fact that the allies were increasingly loath to support them in their attempts to resume relations with the Soviet Union on conditions set out by the Poles. Thus when they received news of the British willingness to negotiate on the basis of the Curzon line being Poland's eastern border environed by Churchill in February 1944, he had not been prepared for it.[8] The AK had in the meantime been faced with the Soviet entry into Polish territories and had made initial contact with Soviet commanders which until April led to joint action against the German forces in the Wołynia district. The AK commanders had in any case come to the conclusion that the earlier instructions were not appropriate to the realities

faced by them on the ground. In a message despatched to London on 26 November, but decrypted on 2 January, Bór-Komorowski admitted that he had issued new instructions to all AK commanders and these were that all units were to make themselves known to the Soviet commanders. His reasoning was that this would signal the presence of representatives of the Polish government. Were they not to do so the Soviet military leaders might gain the impression that there was a political vacuum in Polish territories.[9]

At the same time Bór-Komorowski gave assurance to Sosnkowski that only the absolute minimum of units would be revealed, while as for the remainder 'I will endeavour to protect by their formal dissolution'. In the final paragraph of the message the commander of the AK stated that 'in the event of a second Soviet occupation, I am preparing a nucleus of a skeleton network of a new organisation which will be at the General's disposal'.[10] From contacts made between local AK and Red Army commanders and the NKVD officers in the Wołynia district, it was known that the Soviet military would not tolerate the continuing existence of the AK behind its lines. On completion of coordinated military activities the alternatives put to the AK at this early stage were either dissolution or incorporation into the Berling army.[11]

At the beginning of 1944 Polish communists in the Soviet Union tried to make preparations, for what they believed would be their historic moment. Their continuing underestimation of the activities of communists in occupied territories was no doubt made possible by the loss of radio contact with the PPR at the end of 1943, when transmitters and cyphers had been destroyed in a Gestapo raid on premises from which transmission had been taking place. At the same time two PPR leaders, Paweł Finder and Małgorzata Fornalska, were arrested. At the root of the continuing disregard of the Polish communists in Russia for developments taking place in Polish territories lay an absolute obedience to the Comintern's directives. Polish communists who survived the destruction of the KPP and then decided to flee East during the wartime activities, knew only too well how precarious was their existence. No decisions concerning Poland were initiated by them and when ideas were put to the Soviet political leadership, these were transmitted through the Comintern. Throughout the war they hung around the Comintern's offices, waiting for an opening which would allow them to show that they were able to anticipate correctly Soviet plans. Not surprisingly, basing themselves on the calculation that Stalin would not renew talks with the Polish government-in-exile, and knowing that outright incorporation into the Soviet Union was not being mooted, at the

beginning of 1944, they tried to form an organization that would co-ordinate communist activities in Poland with the Soviet Union.

On 10 January Polish communists in Moscow announced the formation of the Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polski w ZSRR (Central Bureau of Communists from Poland in the Soviet Union – CBKP). Its aim was to act as an umbrella organization for Polish organizations in the Soviet Union, namely the ZPP, the Polish army and the recently formed Polski Komitet Narodowy (Polish National Committee – PKN). At the end of 1943 Polish communists and left-wing socialists in Moscow requested Stalin's permission to form a nucleus of a future Polish government. Stalin initially gave his approval to the creation of the PKN, but on receiving news of the PPR initiatives in occupied Poland, the idea appears to have been abandoned.[12] It might also be possible that Stalin's willingness to approve the formation of an authority which would obviously be a rival to the Polish government in London did not fit in with the spirit of cooperation established with the Western allies in Teheran.

Thus the creation of the CBKP was a compromise. Polish communists were to be prepared for a future role in liberated territories, but whether they would be allowed to form a government was not yet decided. At the same time the CBKP was meant to impose its authority on the communist movement in Poland, most notably the PPR. The main signatories of this announcement were Alexander Zawadski, Stanisław Radkiewicz, Karol Świerczewski, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Jakub Berman, and Wanda Wasilewska.[13] Dimitrov then wrote to Stalin requesting his approval for the new Polish communist organization and for its leadership which had been carefully screened.[14] Their determination and conceit in assuming to speak on behalf of all Polish communists stemmed from their conviction that if vigilance was not exercised past ideological mistakes might infect the post-war party. The minutes of the first meeting of the CBKP state unequivocally that contact would only be maintained with a specified list of 'absolutely trustworthy members of the past KPP, those who through their activities in the country, during and after the dissolution of the party, and also through their activities in the Soviet Union had given proof of their ideological resilience and commitment to the cause of the Polish working class and to the Soviet Union'.[15] Although the founding members of the CBKP knew of the existence of the PPR they made no efforts to establish direct radio contact with its leadership, depending instead on information received from their own agents in Poland, one of whom was Leon Kasman.

The Moscow-based Polish communists who took this initiative were at the same time trying to sideline Berling, with whom they were in conflict. Berling had come to the conclusion that Polish communists gathered around the Comintern were exceeding Stalin's directives and creating circumstances for the establishment of a communist regime in Poland.[16] He believed that the army, that was in the process of being formed in the Soviet Union would assume temporary responsibility for administering liberated areas until a democratically elected government was established.[17] He believed that this government would have to be friendly to the Soviet Union and would very likely be confined to left-wing and possibly progressive parties. In his plans Berling came into direct conflict with the CBKP leadership which opposed his ideas for an interim military provisional government and instead assumed that they would be given the responsibility of establishing the first administration.

Polish communists in the Soviet Union and the Comintern both laboured under a major disadvantage in so far as they had access to little reliable information from the occupied territories that would allow them to assess the strength and nature of the communist-led underground movement. Gomułka, who took over the leadership of the PPR after Finder's arrest, was not well known in Comintern circles.[18] It is obvious that an element of rivalry dictated the responses of the Moscow-based communists to Gomułka and his initiative for the creation of the KRN and the AL. Soviet distrust of partisan units which were independent of the Soviet military leadership is not difficult to understand, but this does not explain why the CBKP tried to persuade the Soviet leadership to allow it to take over command of the partisan units established by the communists in Poland. Thus on 7 March 1944 Dimitrov acting at the request of the CBKP asked the Soviet authorities to expedite the matter of allowing the Poles to create a military staff of the Polish partisan movement. One of the reasons put forward for this new organization was the lack of coordination between the Red Army and the underground movement in occupied Poland. The CBKP claimed that it had tried to clarify 'the composition and the political character of the so called Homeland National Council, which had emerged on Polish territories(and) had undertaken a number of political and military initiatives, but to no avail'.[19] In reality the CBKP continued to oppose Berling by all available means, and in particular, his plans for the subordination of all underground units to the Polish army in the Soviet Union. In pursuit of their plans the CBKP requested that the Red Army be instructed to release to the Moscow communist leadership arms

sufficient to equip 30,000 men and authorize the use of planes to make 200 flights over Poland to make parachute drops.

One of the consequences of the rivalry between the communist movement in the occupied territories and the Moscow-based communists was that after Finder was captured by the Gestapo, a new group was despatched by the Comintern to Poland. Sometime in June 1943 Dimitrov decided that he would prefer to have a group of reliable communists in Poland. As has been shown, he too was not entirely sure how obedient the Polish communists would turn out to be. Thus a special unit of activists who had completed party training in the Soviet Union, was formed. This was then parachuted into the Białystok district.

In August 1943 a partisan unit numbering approximately 100 men emerged under the command of Leon Kasman, who also used the pseudonym 'Jankowski', one of the recent arrivals from the Soviet Union. When it moved to the Lublin district it met with an GL unit led by Mieczysław Moczar, who demanded that Kasman and his men subordinate themselves to his authority. Kasman refused to comply. The fact that he had superior weapons and maintained daily direct radio communication with Moscow and with local Soviet partisan commanders only made the situation more complex.[20] But Kasman also refused to accept Gomułka's authority, thus making it clear that Moscow approved of his independent role and furthermore that the authority of the Polish Party Secretary was in doubt.[21]

Gomułka's suspicion that the Soviet Union had no understanding of the initiatives taken by the PPR and that a general distrust of its activities lay at the root of the Soviet unwillingness to provide the GL with more arms is confirmed by the substance of an internal report prepared by the Soviet authorities on 29 February 1944. In it the desire not to make commitments to the PPR is clearly stated. Until the military and political situation was clarified, the existence of parallel, Moscow-controlled, communist-led partisan units was approved. They were to continue independent of the PPR and were to expand. For the time being the central committee of the PPR was not to be given any instructions and only asked for information, thus indicating that it was to be treated as an outside organization.[22]

The existence of independent communist organizations in Poland was a matter of concern to the highest authorities in the Soviet Union. As long as Soviet entry into Polish territories was still distant the Comintern was allowed to pursue its own plans. After the Teheran Conference this is likely to have changed in so far as the Polish Question, much more than before, had acquired the potential to affect the course of

Soviet relations with the other two allies. Stalin's interest in the administration of the liberated territories had a direct bearing on relations between the Polish military and party organizations in the Soviet Union and the underground in Poland. This explains Stalin's meetings with General Berling and his requests for information on the state of affairs in Poland.

On 23 March 1944 Lavrenty Beria, Commissar for State Security, conveyed to Stalin a Report on the Activities of Political Parties and Partisan Movement in Poland.[23] This report was prepared by commanders of Soviet partisan units operating in the Ukrainian area, and therefore followed their likely contact with AL units. While not commenting directly on the PPR's political and ideological profile, the general evaluation of its composition and that of the GL/AL units was positive. It was thus reported that the membership of the newly formed communist organizations was mainly made up of workers and peasants, with some white-collar workers. Most PPR activists were described as young. Units of the GL were reported to be militarily active. It was estimated that the GL had a standing membership of approximately 5000 men, but could at any given time call on additional trained personnel thus increasing its fighting potential to 10000. The report described the PPR as the only counterweight to the consolidated reactionary forces of the AK. Its initiative to form the KRN was reported as aiming at the creation of a broadly-based democratic system, a policy in line with stated Soviet objectives.[24]

It is evident that Stalin had information about the PPR even before the PPR delegation from Warsaw arrived in Moscow on 16 May 1944. Headed by Marian Spychalski, a member of the central committee of the PPR, it also included Edward Osóbka-Morawski, a member of the RPPS section that had decided to throw in its lot with the PPR. Unfortunately for the PPR's efforts, Spychalski brought from Poland a letter which Bolesław Bierut, a member of the central committee of the PPR and chairman of the KRN, had secretly entrusted to him with instructions that it be handed to the leadership of the Comintern. Bierut's letter contained a damning denunciation of Gomułka.[25] He was accused of being dictatorial in his approach to party matters, of not being up to the task and, critically, of 'veering from sectarianism to extreme opportunism'. The secretary of the PPR was accused of trailing behind reactionary groups and thus endangering unity with the peasant and socialist parties. The background to these intrigues was Bierut's disagreement with Gomułka's continuing attempts to build organizational links with the Centralny Komitet Ludowy (Central People's Committee

– CKL) an organization bringing together disparate trade union, syndicalist and socialist groups and dominated by the RPPS. Writing fifty years later Gomułka still maintained that he had been right in concentrating on talks with the CKL, mainly because he did not believe that talks with the SL and the PPS were likely to succeed.[26] In any case he had been following the communist policy of building broad unity with anti-fascist parties. Bierut had taken a different view, believing that such talks should be confined to the SL and PPS.[27]

The arrival of the Polish delegation in Moscow only confused what already were very complex issues within the community of Polish communists in the Soviet Union. Stalin's decision nevertheless determined what was to happen next. In the first place he was willing to consider the PPR's plans for the creation of the national committees and with that the emergence of a first administration from within Poland. This meant that both the delegates from Poland and communists in Moscow were obliged to bury their own ambitions and to act in accordance with Stalin's preferences. On 2 July Radio Kościuszko, the Polish language radio which broadcast from the Soviet Union, announced a ZPP resolution to recognize the KRN as a true representative of the Polish nation.[28]

The agreement between the ZPP and representatives of the KRN had implications for the development of the Polish Army. Acting very much in response to Soviet expectations and directives conveyed to them through Osóbka-Morawski, who had had meetings with Stalin, it was agreed that the Polish Army Corps in the Soviet Union should merge with the AL to form a new Polish Army. Rola-Żymierski, the commander-in-chief of the AL, who in the meantime had also managed to reach Moscow, was nominated its commander, while Berling was to continue as commander of the Army in the Soviet Union. On 15 June the KRN delegates and ZPP officially wrote to Stalin requesting that the provisional government should be formed before the liberation of Polish territories. But the impression that the CBKP had bowed to the political supremacy of the KRN was illusory. The PPR delegation was not allowed to return to the occupied territories, and instead stayed in Moscow, becoming party to the debates concerning the post-liberation administration.

Stalin was not willing to approve their use of the term provisional government, as this would have caused complications in his still ongoing talks with the US and British on the subject of the government-in-exile. This nevertheless did not stop the representatives of the ZPP and CBKP from considering that this was exactly the role for which they

were being prepared. The issue of a Polish administration of liberated territories became much more pressing when on 23 June the Soviet counteroffensive in Byelorussia commenced. As the Red Army crossed the river Bug it entered territories which were ethnically Polish and to which the Soviet Union did not lay claim. Therefore, between the 18 and 22 July, key decisions concerning the formation of the provisional authority, to be named the Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Polish National Committee of Liberation – PKWN), were made by the Poles in Moscow and were then given Stalin's approval. The official manifesto announcing the KRN decision to form this authority in Chełm, (shortly to move to Lublin) the first major Polish town west of the Bug, was dated 22 June 1944.

Having secured Stalin's approval, the Poles proceeded to give the fiction substance. They prevailed on the KRN delegates not to return to the occupied territories and effectively used the KRN as a smokescreen for their own policies.[29] In accordance with Stalin's stated policy of establishing in Poland a broadly-based first administration, they needed to co-opt members of other parties into the PKWN. Gomułka was asked to come over and to arrange for all important members of the KRN and activists to assist in the formation of the first administrative structures.[30] Oskar Lange was likewise invited to join from the US.[31] The fiction of a broadly-based coalition administration was further encouraged by the inclusion in the PKWN of members of the peasant and socialist parties who were at that time in the Soviet Union. The PKWN manifesto, broadcast by Radio Kościuszko, contained a commitment that post-war Poland would be based on democratic principles. An assurance was given that a parliament would be elected, land reform would be implemented and peasants would have the righs to individual farms. Other than giving assurances of full employment, no commitments were made as to the nature of post-war economic reforms.

Gomułka and members of the central committee of the PPR only found out about the KRN's supposed nomination of the first administration from radio broadcasts. When the KRN delegation set out for Moscow they had not meant to allow the Moscow-based communists to assume responsibility for forming the first post-war authority. In any case the KRN delegation had not been empowered to make any such decision.[32] The PPR had no alternative but to accept what had happened. Nevertheless, in the occupied territories the PPR faced continuing problems, one of which was lack of Soviet logistical support and in particular, arms. Kasman's belligerence and his negative reports in which he accused the PPR of 'sectarianism', an unspecified but as

damning an accusation as could be made by one communist against another, lay behind the Soviets' continuing unwillingness to supply the AL with ammunition, thereby decreasing its effectiveness. These problems were the reason why Gomułka had in the first place decided to send a delegation to Moscow to explain to the Comintern and the Polish communists there the PPR's aims.

Throughout the first half of 1944 the PPR continued to make its own political and military decisions without much reference to what was happening in Moscow. At the beginning of the year the Gestapo had identified and arrested many activists. Most of these were summarily executed. The party central and provincial structures were severely depleted and in most cases had to be built up again from scratch. Lacking contact with the Comintern the leadership of the PPR tried to follow what they believed to be ideologically correct policies of building broad anti-fascist coalitions. But practical considerations played an important role in the PPR's continuing search for allies. The party and its military units, always weak, but now further depleted by the Gestapo's actions, simply had to find allies. Two alternatives faced the PPR. One was to continue talks with the SL and PPS–WRN in the hope that they would break their links with the AK and join the PPR. The second was to accept that this policy was unlikely to succeed and to instead concentrate talks with the CKL, which offered a narrower, but more realistic, prospect of left-wing unity. The latter aim was nevertheless fraught with complexities, not least because RPPS, the main part of the CKL, had split on the issue of talks with the PPR. Gomułka nevertheless persisted, as he wanted the majority of the RPPS, which opposed the PPR on the critical issue of excessive subordination to the Soviet Union, to resume talks.

In March 1944 the RPPS majority group published a programme which suggested that the London government should be reformed by getting rid of the extreme right. The aim was the formation of a centre–left coalition with a radical economic and social programme. The interesting question is why Gomułka persisted in keeping the doors open for the majority RPPS to join the KRN, even though this led to a serious split in the ranks of the PPR. The answer was provided in a precise and self-critical analysis made many years later in his autobiography. Gomułka stated:

> The political, but also the organisational weight of the groups with made up the CKL, was insignificant. Nevertheless, these groups were of a defined value, organisationally and politically. These were not

fictitious (organisations), like some of the groups, signatories of the KRN Manifesto.[33]

Thus during the two months while the PPR delegation was making its way to Moscow, talks between the PPR and RPPS continued, even if inconclusively. The critical moment came in May when the majority RPPS asked PPR to consider joining the Rada Jedności Narodowej (Council of National unity – RJN). This was established in Poland on the instructions of the government-in-exile. RPPS hoped they would jointly with PPR form a left-wing opposition in the RJN. The idea was unrealistic as the main section of the PPS–WRN made sure that the radical sections of the PPS were kept out of all organizations connected with the government-in-exile.

Decisions made in Moscow, in particular Stalin's approval for the creation of a first administration consisting of members of the CBKP and the new arrivals from Poland, tipped the balance in Warsaw in favour of those who did not approve of further talks with the majority group of the RPPS. Moscow's decision not to continue talks with the Mikołajczyk government meant that henceforth Stalin wanted the Polish communists to be able to show that they had put together a government consisting of representatives of other parties. He did not wish to recognize the government-in-exile nor would be approve the inclusion of pro-Soviet parties in that governments, where they would be easily outmanoeuvred. The fiction of a broadly based, but in reality communist-led, administration had replaced the earlier strategy of negotiations for organizational unity. As one of the members of the central committee summed up, the aim was to help the RPPS (minority group) and the pro-PPR faction in the SL which used the name Wola Ludu (People's Will) to become independent of their parties and thus willing to uphold the fiction of a broadly-based pro-Soviet grouping. Both groups were no more than minority factions of larger political parties. Since both the RPPS and the SL were unwilling to support the KRN programme, the communists from the end of May 1944 lost interest in the unity of left-wing parties and instead worked towards attracting to the KRN dissident factions from all parties.[34]

In June 1944 those in the RPPS who disagreed with Osóbka-Morawski's cooperation with the PPR decided to change the party's name to PPS–Lewica (PPS – The Left-Wing Faction). An 18-point programme published to mark this historic point reaffirmed the PPS–Lewica's commitment to the establishment of a workers' and peasants' state after the war.[35] In addition to making references to parlia-

mentary institutions guaranteeing equality of political and civil rights, the programme referred to local self-government and factory and village councils and co-operatives as organs of people's power. The destruction of the capitalist system was identified as the most pressing objective of socialist Poland. The expansion of co-operatives was seen as a way of securing supplies without allowing exploitation. Compared with the earlier programme of the RPPS, the PPS–Lewica was even more precise in its political credo. It was Marxist and internationalist in a clear and uninhibited manner, in contrast with the programmes put forward first by the KRN and then by the PKWN, that were merely reformist. Until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in August, the socialist movement continued to splinter, with the PPS–WRN remaining loyal to the government in London and deeply hostile to the RPPS. Warsaw remained the socialists' stronghold.[36]

Unlike the political talks between the various left-wing parties and organizations, which failed mainly due to ideological factors, talks for military cooperation continued throughout 1943 and 1944. In January 1944 Armia Ludowa (People's Army – AL) came into being. The claim made was that this would bring together all left-wing and progressive forces in a common military endeavour. In reality the already existing GL units were henceforth to be known as units of AL, into which it was hoped to draw the BCh and PAL. But the initiative was closely connected to the creation of the KRN. A directive of the central committee of the PPR defining the aims and duties of members of the party who were working in the AL stated:

> The development of the AL is the Party's key aim. Military work has been and will continue to be the most prominent of the party's tasks. The Party conducts its military work within the context of the AL, which is to be built on non party principles and which is subordinate to the KRN. The KRN political control of the AL does not release members of the Party who have been delegated to military work in the ranks of the AL from duties and obligations which are binding on all Party members. The Party is always their superior.[37]

From the outset the AL had as much a military objective as a political aim. The political nature of the AL was outlined from the start. The aim of its military activities was the establishment of an independent and democratic Poland. An awareness of these objectives was supposed to motivate its soldiers. AL was from the outset supposed to reflect its democratic aspirations, with relations between officers and soldiers

based on mutual respect, with the prevailing mode of address being 'citizen'. Mindful of the officer cast's involvement in reactionary politics during the inter-war period, AL aimed to create opportunities for talented soldiers to rise through the ranks and thus to avoid the creation of a closed officer community.[38] The AL aspired to becoming a national army, hence the declared intention of incorporating in its ranks all Polish military units formed and fighting abroad, the Kościuszko Division under General Berling, military units in Britain and the units under General Anders in the Middle East. According to the outline of the future role of the AL it was to represent the interests of the nation. The contribution of Polish men to allied fighting in the West was dismissed as being of little consequence. The new national army was to be subordinated to the political authority of the KRN, thus making the primacy of political decisions over military ones clear from the outset.

Order No. 5 issued on 10 February 1944 and signed by Michał Rola-Żymirski, the commander-in-chief of the AL, made it quite clear that all commanders in the field had a duty to encourage the creation of national councils which they were to ensure included representatives of all democratic political organizations, mainly the PPR, socialist and peasant parties.[39] Commanders had the duty to personally participate in the meetings of the councils. That very point was reinforced in Order No. 8 issued on 26 February which dealt with fighting taking place in the Lublin district. The role of the commanders was not only to conduct intensive military activities but also 'through military action to create conditions and to make it easier for their own authorities (a reference to PPR aims – authors' comment) to conduct their political work in the area'.[40] In relation to the civilian population AL units were to protect them from repression but also to do this in such a way 'that this should create opportunities for recruitment'.

Order No. 10 issued on 8 March proclaimed 'In this area of battle, propaganda is our weapon. Propaganda work is as important to the outcome of the fight as is military action.'[41] Thus the PPR's political aim was simultaneously to build up the KRN and AL as organizations representing the broad spectrum of society, but at the same time to retain absolute control over these organizations, and finally and most importantly, to retain absolute control over party members whose loyalty was on no account to be transferred to the KRN or their military commanders.

All evidence suggests that at the beginning of 1944 communist tactics in occupied territories had focused on two objectives: the building of

the network of KRNs and the AL. From the outset these were meant to be organizations which, while claiming to be broad in their membership and reformist in their principles, would in reality act as organizations through which the communists would implement their policies, hence the stress on the loyalty of the membership to the party while doing all in their power to facilitate the expansion of these two organizations. After the Moscow talks between the PPR, CBKP and the Soviet leaders another element was added to communist policies in Poland and that was the establishment of the PKWN as the first post-war administration. Thus by the end of July 1944 the basic framework of communist control of liberated policies was put in place. The PKWN was to be transformed into a central authority, the KRN into local administrations, or possibly into some form of consultative fora, and finally the Polish army, which would emerge from the merger between the AL, the Polish army in the Soviet Union and all other Polish units abroad. All partisan units were to be absorbed into the army. The Army like the KRN would be part of the communist policies for post-war Poland. In all three organizations the communists aimed to expand the membership to include all but the extreme right and nationalist groups, but at the same time Party members had to remain loyal to the PPR and implement any change of policy.

In those circumstances and as the military initiative increasingly passed to the Red Army, without waiting for instructions from the Soviet authorities the communists tried to increase pressure on those whom they believed to be their natural allies. This was motivated in equal measures by military and political objectives. Earlier attempts to loosen ties between the AK and BCh continued in particular because of the obvious conflicts between the two. In one instance, a commander of a GL unit in the district of Kraśnik reported that members of the local BCh unit which had earlier been incorporated into the AK were willing to come over to the GL unit, but only if they were supplied with arms. Their grievance against the AK commanders was that they kept all arms for their own fighters: 'Whoever gives the BCh arms will have them, and we can do it' was the optimistic statement.[42] The point that were the communists able to provide arms and equipment they would successfully attract to their ranks considerable numbers of disaffected members of not only the BCh but also the AK was repeated frequently in reports from the outlying areas. District AL/GL commanders believed that unity forged by the AK was fragile and likely to be further loosened by promises of arms, explosives and training. This was confirmed by a report covering the period 15 March–15 April 1944 which summarized

the military and political situation in the districts where AL units were established. Its authors stated that AK claims to organizational unity were merely policy statements. In reality in nearly 80 percent of cases BCh had not fully subordinated itself to AK and furthermore, within the PPS–WRN disaffection was increasing.[43] A report which dealt with the period 15 April–15 May again repeated this point. AK officers were allegedly viewed by workers and peasants as hostile and likely to seek the reinstatement of the pre-war regime. They were being accused of turning a blind eye to German actions against left-wing movements and of collaborating with the NSZ.[44]

Assertions about divisions within the ranks of the AK were substantiated when AL commanders reported successes in their policy of opening talks with disaffected groups. In some cases AL was able to drive a wedge between the AK and other organizations by exploiting the AK policy of maintaining strict control over arms and its preoccupation with the forthcoming national uprising. In others, cases matters came to a head when AK tried to act as a police force, for example enforcing a ban on peasants producing illicit alcohol. The BCh and AL were more tolerant, since they accepted that this was a way of increasing peasant income. BCh and AL only approved the destruction of stills when their owners were involved in speculation. AL willingness to allow BCh units to retain their organizational independence and to supply them with automatic rifles was on more than one occasion enough to distract the peasant organizations from their tacit agreement for incorporation into the AK.[45] AL required commanders of BCh units to become part of the AL for the purpose of joint military action and to become part of the KRN. They were nevertheless more tolerant, and possibly also more respectful, of the BCh organizational independence.

Local cooperation between communist partisan units was not confined to BCh. There is evidence of commanders of AL and AK units reaching agreements which went beyond declarations that they would not attack each other. One such example was cooperation confirmed by commanders of an AL and AK units in the district of Kraśnik near Puławy, where both sides agreed to assist each other in the event of a German attack. They also agreed to disarm any suspicious people and to return arms thus confiscated to the commanders of either unit. In the event of any misunderstandings or conflicts between members of the two units, commanders agreed to consult. Members of NSZ groups were specifically excluded from this agreement.[46] Reporting from the district of Kraśnik on 18 April 1944, the commander of the local AL units explained that as a result of a joint conference between the local

AK and AL units, AK had instructed a NSZ unit to leave the district. Unfortunately the NSZ refused to obey this orders and the commander of the AL reproached the AK for not having done more. Both sides had been brought together by their distaste for NSZ actions against peasants, but also because they were alive to the threat that the Germans may benefit were they to allow differences between the two units to go too far.[47]

The increasing likelihood of Soviet entry into Poland and the mobilization of communist forces in occupied territories had the inevitable consequences of increasing the vigilance of the anti-communist forces at the beginning of 1944. The AK and the NSZ stepped up their surveillance of communist activities and the latter in particular took action to eliminate known and suspected communists. Talks which the two organizations had been conducting during 1943 for the incorporation of the NSZ into the AK had been broken off inconclusively, but the leadership of the NSZ still retained contacts with both the AK and the government-in-exile. The entry of Soviet units into pre-war Polish territories drew the two together once more. On 15 January 1944 the leadership of the NSZ issued their Order No. 3, which defined the response of units to the Red Army. Soviet troops on Polish territories were to be treated as hostile. The primary aim of concentrating on fighting the Nazis meant that all conflicts with Soviet units were to be avoided. In those circumstances the NSZ units were to be guided by orders issued by the government-in-exile and the commander-in-chief of Polish Armed Forces. No cooperation with Soviet units was to take place until prior political agreements were completed.[48]

At the same time this still left open the question of cooperation with other military units. Thus in a clarification of Order No. 3 the commander of the NSZ stated that local commanders had the discretion to agree on joint action but only with 'Polish, patriotic associations and military organisations, irrespective of their political colouring'. Excluded from this were the AL, the GL and PAL.[49] The Gestapo was keenly aware of the political complexity of the underground movement and tried to exploit the NSZ anti-communism for its own purposes. In principle the command of the NSZ opposed cooperation with the German authorities. To that purpose an order was issued to all NSZ units in March, after the Gestapo had tried to establish contact with nationalist underground movements in the Radom and Lublin districts to agree on joint action against the communists. Anxious that some local commanders might succumb to the temptation of treating the anti-communist crusade as a priority, the command of the NSZ forbade,

under threat of court martial, any cooperation with the Germans soldiers of the NSZ.[50]

In April 1944 talks for the incorporation of the NSZ into the AK were resumed. The commanders of the NSZ agreed to nominal incorporation only if their units retained their own commanders and the structure of the NSZ remained unchanged. At the same time an order addressed to all commanders of the NSZ units made it clear that they were forbidden to divulge any details about the organization to the AK leadership. These were to remain secret even from the NSZ's closest allies.[51] In the meantime the NSZ continued its extensive surveillance of all suspected communists and communist sympathisers. In 1944 this became a well-planned operation. Once information was received by commanders of the NSZ a full investigation was conducted, usually resulting in the execution of the suspect.[52] So seriously did the NSZ take the threat of communist activities in occupied Poland that they did not hesitate to kill all those suspected of membership of either the PPR or AL. Any Poles who were suspected of assisting or aiding the communists were likewise executed on grounds that they were 'worthless elements'.[53]

Messages exchanged between agents conducting these investigations and commanders of the NSZ would suggest that outside informers were paid for details supplied. By all accounts the NSZ was successful in penetrating left-wing and communist underground movements as internal reports are detailed and correct. Thus, writing probably in the spring of 1944, the NSZ was able to acertain that relations between the RPPS and PPR were cooling. It was known that the RPPS was unhappy about the PPR's apparent opportunism and that it supported a programme more radical than the one put forward by the PPR. It was also known that relations between the AL and PAL were close and that they cooperated but had not been integrated. Left-wing influence on the BCh was known to be increasing, in particular in the Lublin district. Although no figures were given for PPR and AL membership, the NSZ believed that the RPPS had a membership of approximately 10 000–12 000, mainly confined to the working-class districts of Warsaw. The NSZ repeated a rumour already referred to by the AK, namely that the PPR had been given military training by veterans of the Spanish Civil War who came to the occupied territories from France.[54]

The issue which did preoccupy the NSZ was the possibility of cooperation between AL and AK, as it was reported that in the countryside this was on the increase. The NSZ remained anxious that the AK would try to destroy its power base. The sense of rivalry and jealousy permeated relations between the two even after the NSZ had joined the

AK. Since the NSZ viewed the communists as traitors, it was particularly stung by rumours of talks between the AK and PPR in July 1944. The commanders of the NSZ believed that the initiative had come from the AK and had been motivated by a misguided patriotism. They also reproached the AK for being dilatory in their stated objective of keeping an eye on the communists, whom they would only execute when accused of banditry.[55]

One of the difficult issues to resolve is that of the relative strength of each of the underground groupings. To the NSZ and the AK, anxiety about Polish communists, whose actions they saw as nothing less than a Soviet Fifth Column, was of crucial importance. In analysing reports provided by the underground movement it is important to ascertain the purpose for which this information was assembled. The case of the AK reports prepared for the London government-in-exile provides an illustration of the way in which these were not necessarily attempts to provide objective information that would enable the government to plan military and political strategies. In fact, at every level attempts were made to inflate or deflate figures on the manpower and arms each group had under its control. Thus, writing after the war, the commander-in-chief of the AK stated that he knew that AL was numerically insignificant but that its actions, due to recklessness, were dangerous.[56]

This is contradicted by an Antyk report for the period January–May 1944. It claimed that the relative strength of PAL and PPR for Warsaw was estimated at 5500 and 10 000 respectively. In the main areas around Warsaw the figures seem to be equally high. For the town of Błonie it was 300 for PAL and 1750 for PPR; Skierniewice and Łowicz were believed to harbour 500 communists each and the town of Rawa, 700. Sochaczew was thought to have 229 members of PAL and 1000 of PPR, while Grójec had 700 and 1700 members respectively of each organization. But even those figures were to be treated as a conservative estimate of communist strength, as the authors of the report warned 'in the event of the Communists causing an uprising, these figures could increase threefold'.[57]

These data can be set against information contained in an internal report dated May 1944 which was prepared for the central committee of the PPR by a newly appointed district party secretary of the same area covered by the earlier referred to Antyk report. In the PPR's report the membership of the RPPS and PPR are quite different from the figures provided by the enemies of the communist movement. It was reported that the party structure was only just emerging from the wave of arrests and executions which had taken place at the beginning of the year. In

some cases the party had barely survived and was still only functioning intermittently. In the Włochy, Ursus and Piastów industrial suburbs of Warsaw it was admitted that the party was only just starting to function again and that factory and district committees were once more coming into being.

The district secretary was nevertheless not able to ascertain the party's membership. She had been unable to get to Błonie. Nevertheless contact had been made and the news was that the existing units of the GL had little contact with the partisan commanders. In any case the secretary admitted that she too had very little contact with the GL commanders. In Skierniewice things were improving. A national council had been established consisting of twelve people, but its effectiveness was reduced by members of the RPPS holding back from cooperation It was reported that contacts had been made with nearby villages and she was optimistic of the further growth of the local KRN. In Łowicz four councils had been established within the town and in the districts, mainly attracting workers from local steelworks. Here the RPPS and SL were willing to work with the PPR. Recent arrests of members of the AK by the Gestapo had caused anxiety as one of the PPR activists had also been imprisoned.

In Sochaczew a district national council had been established and the party was active, drawing into KRN the rank and file of the SL. In the Gróject district the picture was not dissimilar. The party was being organized and in the nearby town of Góra Kalwaria the party consisted of 20 people. The newly appointed party secretary, who used the pseudonym 'Irena', summed up her report by stating that there was still a lot to be done in the building and establishing of the local KRNs. The military units were disintegrating as they lacked leadership, since the party activists were mainly workers and not entirely suited to military work. She was also very short of funds and urgently requested a subsidy.[58] A similar report for the towns of Rembertów, Kawęczyn, Mińsk, Legnica and Dęblin suggest that the maintenance of the conspiratorial party structure was very difficult and that the strength and activities of the units of the GL varied from district to district. In this particular case the internal report summed up the party membership at 134 and the GL units at 403. The party only developed well in industrial areas, while the growth of the GL was held back by lack of arms.[59]

It is thus apparent that in their official reports, and in particular in those submitted to London the various agencies loyal to the government-in-exile overstated the importance and possibly even the successes of the communist movement. This was in spite of the evident continuing and very detailed surveillance of all communist activities. Antyk

files undisputedly show that the AK and the Delegatura retained control over towns where then were able to observe all suspicious activities and continue to assemble very detailed personal files on those who were in any way involved in left-wing politics.[60] The divergence between the Antyk's detailed understanding of how left-wing organizations operated in occupied Poland and the staggering overestimates of their final tally of its membership is most likely due to the desire to provide the government in London with information that could be used to persuade the British and US government to retain an interest in developments in Poland. The hope that both would show a larger degree of vigilance were they to fear that the entry of the Soviet Union into Poland would amount to letting communism into Western Europe must have played an important role in this exercise. For this argument to hold it was necessary to show how communism had already inexplicably taken root in Poland. This was undisputedly a point which the government-in-exile frequently used in its attempts to persuade the British and US government to take a more direct interest in the future of the liberated territories.

At the same time, tensions increased between the government-in-exile and sections of parties which supported it, but which functioned in the occupied territories. On 12 March 1944 the Rada Jedności Narodowej (Council of National Unity – RJN) was constituted in Poland. Its function was supposedly to act as the representative and voice of those in the occupied territories. In reality this was an attempt by the government-in-exile to strengthen its claim to be acting on behalf of all Poles. Communist activities no doubt had spurred the government in London in that direction. On 15 March the RJN published its manifesto entitled 'What is the Polish Nation Fighting For?' It remains unclear whether the RJN was intended to become the nucleus of the first post-war government, though clearly the rapid advances of the Red Army into Poland would in due course force it to assume this responsibility on behalf of the government-in-exile. If the creation of the RJN was an attempt to give the parties in occupied territories a forum, which the government-in-exile would consult, this was a very dubious gesture, as it was dominated by the four parties which supported the London government. Although the extreme right and the RPPS supported the initiative, there was a great degree of reluctance in allowing representatives of either to join it. In reality, as a message to London revealed, the RJN would have been happy to give the nationalist right seats on the RJN too, but was fearful that this would have caused the left-wing parties to expect the same rights. Since there was no desire to allow the commu-

nists and the RPPS membership of the RJN, the nationalists were kept out so as to give the impression of fairnness.[61] Nevertheless, the RJN was increasingly consulted by Sosnkowski and Mikołajczyk on a number of particularly thorny issues. On 20 March the RJN and the Delegatura made it quite clear that they would not accept any territorial concessions made by Churchill in the course of his talks with the Soviet Union. In the East they insisted on the pre-war borders. While claiming the incorporation of East and West Prussia in Poland and the extension of Poland's Western borders up to the Oder, they refused to view it as a compensation for areas in the East which the Soviet Union refused to relinquish.[62]

The way in which the RJN was constituted ensured that no new ideas emerged from within the ranks of the underground movements and that the government-in-exile's increasingly untenable blanket opposition to the Soviet Union was not challenged. The lack of realism which characterized the government-in-exile's negotiations with the wartime allies was thus compounded by the AK and RJN's conviction that they could keep the left parties at bay and that the Soviet Union could in some way be prevented from or constrained in entering Polish territories in their pursuit of the Germans. At the same time the RJN assessment of the degree of political unity and the AK evaluation of its military strength was far from optimistic.

Writing to Sosnkowski in March, after the completion of talks for the incorporation of the NSZ into the AK, the AK drew attention to the patchy results of the consolidation process. The main problem continued to be the unwillingness of the peasant movement to abandon its independence. Although the BCh had officially been merged with the AK, the SL withheld its arms and resources. The AK went further in accusing the SL of creating new units which would enable the party to capture power after the war. The AK estimate of the BCh strength was 50 000 men, mainly concentrated in the Lublin, Warsaw, Kraków and Radom districts. This state of affairs reflected the SL's unwillingness to abandon its own political ambitions, but according to the report it might have been caused by failure of the party leadership to control the dynamism and radicalism of the young party members.[63] The conclusion drawn from the patchy evidence was that the shared military effort would dispel these differences and 'accommodate individual and group hopes and ambitions'.

Writing to Sosnkowski in May, Bór-Komorowski continued to stress the illusory nature of national and military unity. Again he focused on the peasant community as the one most likely to demand radical

reforms after the war. The peasants and white-collar workers were the two social groups most committed to a programme of increasing state involvement in the economy and the introduction of social justice: 'Any authority which would try to limit these processes, would expose the country to great traumas', wrote the commander of the AK.[64] So strong were demands for commitments to reforms within the peasant community that a failure to respond to it raised doubts about the BCh willingness to support the AK and the government-in-exile. But within the working-class community, traditionally loyal to the PPS, the situation was becoming equally bad. The party's effectiveness was decreasing and it was concluded that with the exception of Silesia it was already negligible. The increase in the influence of the radical left was a serious cause for concern. Even though Bór-Komorowski cast doubts on the PPR's claim to establishing a network of KRN, he repeatedly stressed that both the working-class and peasant communities were willing to support the KRN programme and that furthermore they were positively inclined towards Soviet troops in areas where their links with the SL and PPS–WRN had broken down. In conclusion he stated that 'attempts to isolate the PPR by consolidating all parties and by drawing the centralisation into the RJN had not been successful. The various members of the RJN do not have a common political line.' Thus it is apparent that as the Red Army stood poised to enter ethnically Polish territories, attempts to forge political and military unity among the underground parties and their military sections had not been successful. While pre-war grievances were an issue which none of the parties had overcome either in exile or in the occupied territories, to the rank and file the need to plan for post-war reforms had become more important.

AK military plans had concentrated on preparing to take action against German units in the critical moment between their withdrawal and the entry of the Red Army. The aim was to establish military control before the Soviet authorities could do so. Thus the defeat of the German armies was to be guaranteed by the Soviet armies, and the AK planned to pursue mopping-up operations which would enable it to claim responsibility for the defeat of the enemy. The operation, codenamed 'Burza' ('Storm), approved in October 1943, presupposed that the Poles could establish an administration in the brief time when a state of 'no man's land' prevailed between the defeat of the Germans and the Soviet claim to control by virtue of victory.[65] This operation was to be followed up by the AK revealing its presence to the Soviet armies. A first attempt to implement this policy took place in Wołynia in March. During mil-

itary engagements between the AK and combined German and Ukrainian units on 24 March a Soviet unit which was nearby offered to assist the Poles. Although this was declined, briefly the two cooperated. This situation only prevailed in battle and once the situation was stabilized AK units were promptly disarmed and their commanders detained by the Red Army officers. The rank and file were given the option of joining the General Berling's Army.[66] This swift turn of events appears to have caught the local AK commanders by surprise. They had hoped to establish a local administration and to define the basis on which the Red Army would be allowed to pass through Polish territories. Instead they found themselves sidelined and phased out of existence. As a result an urgent appeal was made to the government-in-exile to arrange for allied representatives to be despatched to supervise the liberation of Polish territories.[67] This issue had in fact been broached by the Polish government-in-exile in 1943, but had not been taken up by the allied powers which only planned for the establishment of allied control commissions on ex-enemy territories.

Another attempt to establish control over pre-war Polish territories was made in Wilno in June. When the town was captured on 14 June this was due to the combined AK and Soviet military effort. Although the AK suffered heavy casualties, the Red Army commanders tolerated the Poles' claim to the town very briefly. On 17 June the commander of the AK units, Major Kulczycki, was called to the Soviet command and after, as requested, disclosing information about the AK units he was disarmed. His troops were then also disarmed, though the NKVD noted that many of the AK solders, being local men, merely returned to their homes.[68] These initial failures in establishing the authority of the government-in-exile required a different approach to the issue, and would from then on be pursued with the knowledge that the Red Army would not allow the AK to remain operational once the Germans were defeated. This had a knock-on effect on plans for the AK to secure liberated territories in anticipation of the government-in-exile's return to Poland. The other stark fact which had to be fully taken into account was the unwillingness of the Western Allies to take action against the Soviet Union in Poland, a point which though in retrospect might have appeared obvious at the time, was not fully take into account either by the government-in-exile or the AK in Poland.

4
The Liberation of Poland

June 1944 marked the opening of the last, and most intensive, stage of the war in Europe. On the morning of 6 June the Normandy landing signalled the opening of the Second Front. Polish soldiers fought in most of the main theatres of the war. The Polish 2nd armoured division under General Stanisław Maczek was part of the Canadian army corps which engaged German troops in battle around the towns of Caen and Falaise in August. It had always been the intention of the Polish commanders in London to expand the armoured division, which had been formed from troops, which were evacuated from France in 1940. Initially Sikorski and later Sosnkowski hoped that Polish units that went into battle in northern Europe, would then proceed to liberate Poland. Unfortunately constraints on access to manpower made it impossible to realise plans for the buildup of Polish units in Britain. At the time when General Maczek's division landed in Normandy it numbered 25 000 men.

Polish units that had been evacuated earlier from the Soviet Union were reorganized under British command and went into action in Italy. Initially called the Polish Army in the East, it then became the 2nd Polish army corps under the command of General Władysław Anders. When the corps landed in Italy it was part of the 8th British Army under Montgomery's command, until he was later to be replaced by General Oliver Leese. To the Italian campaign the Poles were able to commit over 65 000 fighting men. In March, the 8th Army received the task of opening the route to Rome, and the duty of capturing the mountain ridges, and the Monte Casino monastery fell to the Poles. During those battles in May the 2nd Polish Corps was decimated, although it then proceeded to fight around Piedmont. As the main allied thrust into Italy ended in June 1944 Polish troops were sent to recuperate to

Campobasso. In April 1945 when the last stages of fighting in Italy were resumed, Polish units once more went into action in fighting around Ankona and Bologna.

The opening of the Second Front and military action in Europe increased the government-in-exile's hopes for access to Polish manpower. Since the military contribution to the allied war effort continued to be the main argument in the Polish claim for being treated as a key ally, it was essential that the Polish units in the West continued to expand.[1] The only source of manpower available to the government-in-exile in the West was Poles who had been liberated from German camps and compulsory labour. Among German prisoners of war, Polish officers were able to identify ethnic Poles who had been forcefully conscripted into the Wehrmacht. The desire of the Polish commanders in Europe to facilitate the continuing buildup of Polish units led to the widespread suspicion that they were willing to overlook some of the dubious military careers of the recent new conscripts as the hoped for war against the Soviet Union became a priority. At the same time diplomatic efforts continued to persuade the Swiss government to free soldiers from the Polish 2nd Infantry Division formed in France in 1939, which had crossed into Switzerland when France fell. Numbering nearly 12000 men this would have been a very valuable contribution to the Polish war effort in the West. Nevertheless, under pressure from Germany, the Swiss government refused to allow the Polish soldiers to be transferred from neutral Switzerland to Polish units either in Britain or the Middle East.

The Polish government and military leadership were on the horns of a perpetual dilemma. On the one hand there was the need to be seen making a direct military contribution to the allied war effort, while on the other, they wished to retain Polish units for action in establishing control over liberated territories in what was assumed would be a time of social and political turbulence. The conflict between these two priorities was most starkly highlighted when, at the beginning of 1944 Sosnkowski was approached by the British war office with a request to allow the use of the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade during the invasion of Europe. This was the elite commando unit of approximately 2000 hand-picked and well-trained men, which their leaders hoped would parachute into Poland, to assist a general uprising in the wake of German withdrawal, and to establish Polish authority in advance of Soviet entry. The Polish commander-in-chief had pointed out to the British that of all the units outside Poland this was the only one that was designated solely for action in Poland.[2]

Sosnkowski was reluctant to consider the British request at a time when its Polish objective appeared imminent. But similarly he did not want to miss the opportunity for Polish soldiers to participate in a potentially high profile military operation, which would reaffirm Poland's commitment to the allied cause and also reinforce Britain's debt of gratitude towards the Polish government-in-exile.[3] He therefore permitted the brigade's use but qualified this by presenting complicated conditions, all of which were rejected.[4] As a result Sosnkowski made the final decision to place the parachute brigade at the disposal of the British without any pre-conditions.[5] The most painful aspect of these negotiations was the fact that when in June Sosnkowski agreed to place the brigade at General Montgomery's disposal, plans for the national uprising had not been finalized. Nevertheless, it was still hoped that it would be available for use in Poland.

When the Warsaw Uprising started in August, the Poles were not able to reclaim the brigade and in spite of requests that it should be parachuted into Warsaw the request was turned down by the British military authorities who proceeded with advanced planning for continental action. On 23 November the Polish parachute brigade, together with other British units, was dropped near the Dutch town of Arnhem. The operation was reckless and in any case had been badly thought out. The casualty rate was very high among the Poles who participated in the operation. When it was decided to withdraw, Polish losses amounted to 23 percent.[6] For the Polish military leaders this was a salutary lesson, confirming their worse suspicions of British and US policies towards the Polish question. Their anxiety, that Britain would willingly use Polish manpower, but make neither political commitments in return nor provisions to compensate the government if military action went wrong, was to linger throughout the remaining months of the war.

While in the military arena, the Poles seem to have at least been given the opportunities for which they had been asking throughout the war, namely for joint action with British and US forces, the Polish government-in-exile felt itself to be increasingly marginalized in diplomatic talks, in particular those conducted with the Soviet Union on the subject of post-war settlements. Agreements reached at the Teheran Conference and subsequent talks between Mikołajczyk, Churchill and Eden only served to confirm the Poles' suspicion that the Polish issue was an obstacle to Britain's closer collaboration with the Soviet Union. Polish politicians were left in no doubt that they were expected to come to terms with Stalin's plans, and that meant acceptance of the incorporation of the areas East of the river Bug into the Soviet Union.

Mikołajczyk's response to this situation was first to seek a direct meeting with Roosevelt, no doubt in the hope that he would be more supportive than the British had been. During his stay in Washington the Polish prime minister had several meetings with the US president, although the results were meagre. He was earnestly advised to ask for a meeting with Stalin, an idea that clearly appealed to the Polish prime minister. The Polish government delegation's visit to the USA also led to a meeting between members of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and General Tatar, deputy commander of the AK, recently flown from Poland to London, and accompanying Mikołajczyk on his visit to the USA. Tatar, together with Leon Mitkiewicz, the Polish liaison officer to the CCS, appears to have decided to use this opportunity to secure US and British support for the national uprising. Mitkiewicz had already tried to draw the CCS attention to the proposed Polish uprising. But, by the end of 1943, he had concluded that neither the British nor the US military leaders had any interest in supporting it or in co-ordinating their military plans with Polish plans. Fear of offending the Soviet ally appears to have been the main reason for their lack of commitment.[7]

Since 1943 the situation in Poland had developed further and AK leaders and the Polish political and military authorities in London stressed more forcefully than before that, unless British and US support was secured quickly, the Red Army would proceed into Polish territories and disarm the AK units. Tatar's statements to the CCS have to be seen as part of the effort to prevent the Soviet thrust into Poland, which threatened to obliterate the carefully prepared plans for the reinstatement in Warsaw of the government-in-exile. Thus speaking to a meeting of the CCS on 12 June Tatar pointed out that Germany would continue to pose a serious military threat and the Soviet Union, though ultimately able to secure victory, would not find the task easy. His argument was that Germany's military might was concentrated in Polish territories and it was there that the main battle to defeat Hitler would take place. The AK was thus of critical importance to the allies and their joint effort to defeat Germany. He informed the CCS that the AK had under its command 250 000 men, but only 32 000 of those were armed. In order to bring the AK to full operational competence 1300 supply flights with equipment would have to be made to Poland.[8] Tatar was clearly playing to his audience as this information was not corroborated anywhere else. He was asked by General MacReady, head of the British delegation whether the AK would cooperate with the Russians when staging the uprising. Tatar told him that the AK would cooperate with

any of the allies who approached Polish borders. Inexplicably he then assured MacReady that relations between the Red Army and the AK were good. Mitkiewicz knew already this was not the case, as in Wołynia the Red Army had disarmed AK units and arrested their leaders.[9]

Politically Mikołajczyk's visit was a failure. No assurance of support against the Soviet Union was secured, but in relation to the planned national uprising the results were more encouraging. Roosevelt, impressed by Tatar's exposé, allocated $10 million in gold for the AK's use. Unfortunately, this unexpected largesse could not be utilized, as the purchase of necessary arms was not possible nor would the Polish government have been able to divert scarce planes to the Poles to make the drops over occupied Poland.[10] The visit nevertheless stimulated Mikołajczyk to proceed to Moscow.

On 26 July Mikołajczyk flew to Moscow for talks with Stalin. The period between his return from the US and his departure for Moscow was crowded with events that increasingly accentuated the Poles' limited options. The Red Army had started a new offensive on 23 June. Its outcome seemed obvious. In these circumstances the commander-in-chief and the prime minister remained divided and, furthermore, Sosnkowski appeared to be increasingly also at odds with the AK leadership in the occupied territories. Mikołajczyk decided to play all on the re-establishment of relations with the Soviet Union. The entry of Soviet troops into Polish territories, at a time when no diplomatic relations existed between the Soviet government and the Polish government-in-exile was damaging enough, but added to that was the worry about how the Red Army would respond to the presence of the AK in liberated areas. Thus while the military leadership in London exchanged increasingly acrimonious messages with the AK, Mikołajczyk, without proper consultation or authority, flew off to Moscow, hoping to break the diplomatic stalemate.[11] By the time he arrived there, Stalin had agreed to the creation of the PKWN, which although not accorded the title of Provisional Government, was assured it would be allowed to establish control over all liberated territories. As Mikołajczyk proceeded to Moscow, he left in London a government and military leadership bewildered and ultimately angry about his decision.

Sosnkowski, who was visiting Polish troops in Italy that were recuperating after the capture of Monte Casino, appealed to the president to form a new government. He hoped this would be based on all parties, with the exception of the communists. Sosnkowski knew from Poland that Soviet troops were disarming AK units and imprisoning their commanders. He feared that Soviet actions would lead to the outbreak of

a national uprising, which in the circumstances he felt would be a disastrous decision. He also attempted to alert the president that Mikołajczyk's actions would demoralize the Polish soldiers in Italy who had participated in their first major battles.[12]

Henceforth the civilian and military authorities more than ever before proceeded along a number of distinct paths. While the prime minister focused all his energies on obtaining British and US support for reaching an agreement with Stalin, Sosnkowski had to consider the implications of the uprising which broke out, against his explicit wishes in Warsaw, on 1 August. In any case there are suggestions that Sosnkowski had already decided earlier that the AK could be put to better use in a different way. In May he had sent to Poland Colonel Leopold Okulicki to act as the AK Deputy Chief of Staff with special responsibilities for operational matters. Okulicki was supposed to have been given verbal instructions to persuade the political and military leadership in occupied Poland to oppose Mikołajczyk's conciliatory policy towards the Soviet Union. Sosnkowski thus hoped that the planned national uprising would not only prevent the Soviet authorities from forming a first administration, but would also establish a first government from within the political leadership in Poland.[13] Initially the AK was unwilling to contemplate this change of plans, but Soviet hostility towards the AK units in Wołynia made them change their views and might have encouraged them to be bolder than Sosnkowski had hoped and more reckless than was advisable.

Mikołajczyk defined the purpose of his visit to Moscow as twofold: to agree joint action against Germany, and to consider long-term Polish–Soviet relations.[14] The Polish government had met briefly before his departure and authorized the delegation to discuss the Eastern Front with the Soviet Union but not to agree to the permanent inclusion of the areas east of the Curzon line in the Soviet Union. Nor were they to make any agreements with the PKWN.[15] Once in Moscow, Mikołajczyk received news of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising and was given the additional task of ensuring that the Red Army continued its offensive against the Germans, clearly in order to assist the Polish attempt to capture Warsaw.[16]

In spite of Mikołajczyk being willing to make the bold move to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the results of his visit to Moscow were very meagre. In the first place, Stalin informed him that the issue of Poland's Eastern border was non-negotiable. These territories were already incorporated into the Soviet Union. Of greater immediate importance, however, was Stalin's suggestion that the prime

minister of the government-in-exile meet and discuss issues with the PKWN. While the latter was treated by the Soviet authorities as an official Polish delegation, Mikołajczyk and the Polish minister for foreign affairs who accompanied him were treated as incidental visitors. Nevertheless the Polish prime minister went along with Stalin's proposal. During the course of his meetings with the PKWN and ZPP representatives Mikołajczyk agreed to discuss the establishment of a government in liberated Poland. The PKWN members took the lead and were able to insist that this would mean the inclusion of possibly four members of the government-in-exile into the PKWN. Stalin's guidance and insistence that PKWN be enlarged to include members of the government-in-exile, and not the other way round, determined the course of action.[17]

Mikołajczyk's negotiating position was weakened by the fact that he was simultaneously pleading with Stalin to authorize relief flights over Warsaw, and to supply the insurgents in the city with arms.[18] When he returned to London, the government-in-exile predictably disagreed with his negotions with the PKWN. Mikołajczyk reasoned that once the Russians had liberated Warsaw, the government-in-exile should return to Poland and undertake to form a new government that would consist of all but fascist parties and those linked to the pre-war regime. His opponents led by the PPS argued that his would be dangerous as it would expose them to the possibility of arrest. They advised that the government-in-exile should remain where it was until Poland was liberated and the Soviet troops had departed. In the end it was decided to send Mikołajczyk's plan and that of his opponents to Poland for comment by the RJN.

Thus while the uprising raged in Warsaw, with no assistance coming from any of the allies, and the German counteroffensive inflicting heavy casualties, the RJN in Poland was asked to adjudicate on a political programme that closely mirrored internal government conflicts.[19] Not willing to miss an opportunity to pursue their own points, the PPS delegates in London radioed their counterparts in Poland with their interpretation of the two options,[20] while the president informed the government Delegate in Poland of his disagreements with Mikołajczyk's proposal.[21] In the circumstances the Delegatura and the RJN did not respond until 3 October to inform London of the collapse of the uprising. After a government reshuffle which resulted in Sosnkowski being relieved of his duties, Mikołajczyk concentrated on negotiating the way forward first with Eden and Churchill, and then together with the British prime minister and his foreign secretary during his second trip

to Moscow with Stalin. It was apparent that, by this stage, Churchill took it upon himself to persuade the Polish prime minister to bow to the inevitable shift of Polish territories to the West. During the course of very turbulent exchanges between Mikołajczyk and Churchill during 13–16 October, followed by a meeting between Mikołajczyk and Stalin on 18 October, the matter ended with Churchill and Stalin insisting that the Curzon line should be treated as a Polish–Soviet border, while the Poles still insisted that it should be deemed to be no more than a demarcation line.[22]

When the Polish prime minister returned to London, he knew that his government would not support his increasing willingness to accept the Soviet conditions. It would appear that from his meetings with Stalin he had emerged with a conviction that the final decision on Poland's future had not been made. He thus hoped that by being supremely realistic he would be able to reconstruct a sovereign Poland, even if in changed borders.[23] He was, however, not able to persuade the government-in-exile to support him and, as a result, on 24 November he resigned. He was replaced by Jan Kwapiński from the PPS. When a few days later a new government was formed, it was headed by Tomasz Arciszewski, a PPS leader. The SL refused to join the government, which now depended on the PPS and the SN. Churchill's visible irritation with the new government and its unwillingness to pursue talks with the Soviet Union along the lines preferred by him, meant that henceforth contacts between the Polish government-in-exile and its hosts rapidly decreased, though at the same time Poland's military contribution continued to be very significant and was expected to increase. On 4 January 1945 the Soviet Union recognized the PKWN as the provisional government of Poland.

In the meantime policies in Poland were increasingly determined not by the government-in-exile, which focused on diplomatic efforts and on internal squabbles, but by the AK's own vision. In July, on Okulicki's suggestion, Bór-Komorowski decided to change the AK original objective for operation codename 'Burza' from that of a general national uprising to plans for the capture of key towns, and eventually for the fight for Warsaw.[24] The commander of the AK appears to have been motivated by the desire to establish Polish control over the city in order to prevent the Red Army from liberating the capital and then putting in place an administration of their choice. The AK decided to capture Warsaw and to act as hosts, determining conditions on which the Soviet army would be allowed to proceed through Poland. The second and no less important motive was the desire to make an impression on the

Western Allies, presumably with a view to obtaining their immediate assistance for the Polish cause. Sosnkowski, although wishing to see the AK assume an active role in the formation of the first government, believed that Warsaw should have been excluded from plans for an uprising.

Although the government-in-exile, the Delegatura and the leadership of the AK had made extensive plans for the end of the war, these did not include the precise definition of what were to be the respective responsibilities of the skeletal government organizations on which the Delegate had been working. The uprising was a military decision. Although the Delegate and the chairman of the RJN together with the commander of the AK made the decision for the uprising to commence, they were badly prepared for any other than the military consequences of fighting on these organizations and on the civilian population.

Military plans were made on the assumption that the German troops and administration were on the verge of departure and would be unwilling to return and fight to re-establish control over the city. The second assumption was that the AK would be effectively able to capture most of Warsaw including the vital bridges across the Vistula. Finally, in spite of the desire to forestall Soviet entry into Warsaw, the continuation of the Soviet offensive against German units was a vital element of the AK military calculations. None of the three preconditions for the uprising's success was realized, leading to 63 days of fighting in the city which resulted in over 100 000 civilian and military casualties. The commander-in-chief and five AK generals were taken prisoners as were 17 443 members of the AK who as a result of surrender agreements were accorded prisoner of war status.[25] Warsaw was devastated during savage fighting and later by German reprisals. Once German units re-established military control over the city, all its inhabitants were forcefully removed and the destruction of all buildings proceeded until the winter when the resumption of the Soviet offensive forced the Germans to abandon Warsaw.

The decision to start the uprising on 1 August was made suddenly and without proper consultation. Although the city was in a high state of anticipation throughout July the creation of the PKWN and Mikołajczyk's decision to visit Moscow galvanized all resistance organizations in Poland. This led to a change of plan for the uprisings that would put in place local administrations, the role of which was to signal to the incoming Red Army that the Polish community was in charge,[26] to plans for an uprising which was to establish a central authority in

Warsaw. Mikołajczyk's government in fact had absolved itself of responsibility for the uprising by devolving to the authorities in Poland the right to make the decision for the uprising. This was conveyed in a message to the delegate dated 26 June and merely stated that 'the government had made the decision to authorise you to announce the uprising at a time chosen by you'.[27] This was done a few hours before the prime minister's departure for his talks with Stalin in Moscow. Sosnkowski was absent, having gone to Italy to inspect Polish troops. His opposition to the Warsaw Uprising was well known though it remains unclear whether his views on the forthcoming uprising were fully communicated to Poland.[28]

The leadership of the AK in Poland claimed that it had been given the authority to decide on whether and when the uprising was to commence. A small coterie led by Okulicki took over decision making. Nevertheless they were supported by the Delegate Jan Stanisław Jankowski and the chairman of the RJN, Kazimierz Pużak.[29] Once the uprising started the two handed over responsibilities for civilian and administrative matters to various deputies and joined the AK leadership. This confirmed the lack of any plans for the establishment and functioning of any administrative organizations. Furthermore, it was not clear just how government offices were to emerge once Warsaw had been secured. Although the Delegatura had claimed that a skeleton central administration was in place, no one had planned for these to assume responsibilities in the absence of a government.[30]

When the uprising broke out, AK believed that it had at its disposal in Warsaw 50 000 men. Since the decision to start fighting was made suddenly, local commanders were caught by surprise and it is estimated that only 22 000 members of the AK were actually involved in the uprising, the rest either being outside Warsaw or on the wrong side of the Vistula. The AK was woefully short of ammunition and it was estimated that what it had amounted to no more that 10–12 percent of its needs.[31] The Germans were not caught by surprise, in fact they had been aware of the AK plans for an uprising and in July had reversed earlier plans for the withdrawal of troops from Warsaw. Of critical importance to the ultimate outcome of the uprising was the Red Army's decision not to continue its offensive. Thus the uprising which always anticipated that the full force of the Red Army's military campaign would be maintained, developed quite differently from the way it was supposed to have progressed according to initial AK plans.

The Germans brought back troops and fought the insurgents. The AK leadership urgently asked the government-in-exile to put pressure on

the British and US governments for them to prevail on Stalin to resume military action against the Germans. In his conversations with Mikołajczyk Stalin argued that for military reasons this was not possible. Nor would he, in spite of initial promises, make ammunition drops to the insurgents. These were done later, though they did not affect the course of the uprising. When the Red Army resumed the offensive, this was not to relieve Warsaw but in accordance with wider plans for the prosecution of the war against Germany. Soviet attitudes towards the uprising made it clear that there was no commitment to allowing the AK to capture Warsaw, and while never stated explicitly, its defeat by the German forces made the task of bringing the PKWN much easier. On 10 September Red Army units accompanied by the First Polish Army approached the district of Praga on the right bank of the Vistula. By 14 September the Russians were in possession of parts of Warsaw on the right bank. On 16 September General Berling attempted to establish a bridgehead on the left bank of the Vistula, but a few days later had to withdraw. Berling had always maintained that he had taken the initiative and that he had been given Marshal Konstanty Rokossovski's approval, though it would appear that little was done to help him.[32] Soon after Berling was dismissed from his post as commander-in-chief of the First Polish Army.

The outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising was an event that made diplomatic relations between Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union somewhat more difficult at a very sensitive time. During the past two years, in their dealings with the government-in-exile and through the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the British repeatedly stated that the planned national uprising would not form part of the West European war plans. Increased awareness that the Soviet authorities would treat the Polish areas as their sphere of influence reaffirmed the wisdom of this approach to the Polish question. In the last few days before the outbreak of the uprising, the Poles made attempts get the British to support it actively. But Eden refused to make any commitments, arguing that the flight range of British planes was too limited. Nor were the British military authorities willing to assist in dropping the Polish Parachute Brigade into Warsaw.[33] Subsequently, as a result of Polish pressure on Eden and Churchill, a number of flights were approved initially from the British Isles and later from Italian bases. This did not alter the fact that the most effective way of helping the Polish Uprising would have been a major offensive on German positions in the West and bombing raids on German military objectives and communication links in occupied Poland. The Royal Air Force was, however, not able to undertake this

type of operation, and the parachute drops, when they landed in those parts of Warsaw controlled by the insurgents, which was not often, were of limited help.

The painful truth was that the AK authorized the outbreak of the uprising when it should have known that Western help would be limited. Most importantly, while aiming to forestall the installation of a Soviet-sponsored government in Poland, the AK plans for the uprising anticipated continuing Soviet military activities against the Germans. The latter assumption had not been thought out clearly. One of the factors contributing to the decision to start the uprising was information that the Red Army was arresting AK commanders and disarming the units in the recently captured Lublin district. This would suggest that far from being a mere attempt to have a government installed in Warsaw before the Red Army took control of Warsaw, the uprising was a final gamble and a desperate bid irrespective of the consequences to forestall the increasingly inevitable rout of the AK and hopes for an independent Poland.

The unexpected haste with which the AK leadership made the final decision to mount the uprising caught many of the unit commanders by surprise. Thus many AK units had to be reassembled and brought up to strength in the course of fighting. The AK contribution to the Warsaw Uprising is difficult to calculate, though historians seem to agree that by the time of surrender the numbers of those who joined the AK could have been anywhere in the range of 30,000 to 40,000. The PPS–WRN contributed its own military organization, Organizacja Wojskowa PPS (Military Organization PPS–OW PPS) and its militias. Although subsequently PPS tried to suggest that these mustered over 5000 men this is unlikely to have been the case, as both organizations were skeletal structures with only the potential to expand. But PPS and RPPS militias were, however, very important in maintaining law and order as they consisted mainly of Warsaw workers who acted as a disciplined force.[34] In the case of units which were not part of the AK their lack of preparation was compounded by the AK's unwillingness to draw them and their leaders into the final planning stages. This was particularly the case with the PPS–Lewica and RPPS. Though all gave their full and unconditional support for the uprising, in virtually all cases none of the left-wing units fought in their original composition. The outbreak of the uprising found many of their commanders unable to reach their units or to arrive at congregation points. All made the decision to join the nearest AK units. These stragglers were not always welcome as they brought with them no arms, and the AK was short of guns for their own trained men.[35] The

number of PAL fighters who thus participated in fighting in Warsaw amounted to possibly no more than 500.[36] Relations between PAL and the AK were generally good as in the first stages of the uprising national solidarity prevailed. Likewise members of AL who had not managed to join their designated units at the time of the outbreak of the uprising joined local AK units. The AK welcome did not extend to all Poles as AK commanders in most cases refused to incorporate in their units Jews who had emerged from hiding or been liberated from German compulsory labour at the outbreak of the uprising.

As fighting continued and hardship and the brutality of German retaliation hit the civilian population, divisions appeared among the organizations participating in the uprising. Towards the end of August representatives of the CKL, which by then had secured the allegiances of all small left-wing and trade union groups, appealed to the RJN. They put forward a suggestion that all units fighting in Warsaw should subordinate themselves to the Polish Army led by General Berling and the Red Army. PAL and AL also increased cooperation. On 12 September AL, PAL and another military organization calling itself the Korpus Bezpieczeństwa (Security Corps – KB) jointly recognized the PKWN as a national executive.[37] But, at no point did the AK or any of the organizations of the extreme right and left that had not been incorporated into the AK, engage in fights with each other. All underground movements in the city loyally and actively supported the Warsaw Uprising.

The Warsaw Uprising was the longest of the urban battles of the Second World War. The insurgents' determination to fight heroically could not disguise shortcomings in the original plans and limited military successes. The Germans were determined to resume control over the city and to that purpose poured into Warsaw experienced units, and used the artillery, aerial bombing and flame-throwing equipment. In addition to units trained and experienced in anti-insurgency action, the Germans brought in Ukrainian SS units, Russian Vlasov units and Cossacks. Unlike the insurgents, the Germans had no concern for the civilian population trapped in the city. The uprising was fought by the methodical destruction of each district and the removal or execution of its population. In the case of Wola district mass atrocities followed the re-establishment of German control.

The insurgents' main problem had been the failure to capture the bridges. This confined the uprising to the left bank. By 11 August the two districts of Wola and Ochota were lost. From then on the main fighting was increasingly confined to the two central districts of Śródmieście and Starówka which the Germans managed to isolate in

the early stages of the war. Contact between the two was only maintained through the sewer system. Without an attack by the Red Army the outcome of the uprising was merely a matter of time. Although Bór-Komorowski called on AK units to converge on Warsaw and to attack the German rear, these were ultimately unsuccessful in either breaking the German stranglehold over the periphery of the city and or relieving pressure on the insurgents in inside.

On 8 September commanders of AK decided to open talks with representatives of General von dem Bach. Initially efforts were made to allow the civilians to leave. Talks were broken off by Bór-Komorowki when the Soviet offensive resumed and the Red Army occupied the right bank of the Vistula. His hopes of deliverance were nevertheless thwarted. In his memoirs the commander-in-chief of the AK links his decision to reopen talks with the Germans with his failure to make contact with the commanders of the Red Army. Although radio links had been established between the two forces the Soviet commanders refused to enter into talks with the AK.[38] The AK leadership was also demoralized by news from London of the ongoing political crisis in the government-in-exile and of Sosnkowski's imminent dismissal.[39] On 2 October AK commanders capitulated. In accordance with the agreement signed by both sides, members of AK units were accorded prisoner-of-war status and the civilian population were not to be punished but would have to leave the city. Bór-Komorowski and the Delegate appointed successors and proceeded into captivity.

During the last days of the Warsaw Uprising General Berling made radio contact with an old friend of his, Colonel Julian Skokowski, commander of one of the PAL units in Warsaw. He earnestly advised that the PAL and AL units should on no account surrender but instead try and leave Warsaw and head West for the Kampinosy forests. If this was impossible, he assured Skokowski that any of his men who managed to get to the pillars of the two bridges in the district of Żoliboż and made agreed light signals, would be conveyed by waiting boats across the Vistula to safety.[40] On the day when the uprising ended, Rola Żymierski sent an order to all AL, PAL and smaller left-wing units still in Warsaw forbidding them to capitulate. They were to hide or destroy all arms and head out of Warsaw towards a congregation point near Częstochowa.[41] Although it is difficult to ascertain how many AL and PAL fighters survived the uprising, those who were able to receive instructions from their commanders left Warsaw as civilians and not combatants with the aim of continuing the fight.

As the German plan for the destruction of the city and the dispersal

of its inhabitants was implemented, all underground organizations and the tenuous links between people working in circumstances that required extreme conspiratorial methods, were destroyed. For the AK, the Delegatura, the RJN and the embryo administrative structures maintained throughout the war, the Warsaw Uprising was a double tragedy. By assuming leadership during the uprising the structure of these organizations was revealed, in effect compromising their continuing existence. At the same time there was a desire to reconstruct them in the desperate hope that something could still be saved from the tragic circumstances. Some AK units, mobilized by the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, were able to return to their bases and resume the fight against German occupation, others melted into the civilian community and then tried to rebuild the partisan units. In reality the underground resistance's rationale had ceased. The conviction that the underground movement's role was to secure the field for the government-in-exile's return to Poland was in doubt. The idea that the London Poles would still return was no longer viable as, in particular after Mikołajczyk's resignation, the full force of British and US efforts went towards finding a compromise with the obvious Soviet desire to place the PKWN in Warsaw. Nor was it any longer possible for the AK to argue that it was preparing to assume a major role in the liberation of Poland. Soviet military progress through Poland made it only too clear that it was the Red Army that would deal with the Germans. Thus, though it would still be some time before this was accepted, the sole function that the AK and the remnants of the Delegatura could still assume was the fight against the Soviet Union.

From September territories of pre-war Poland were administered by three distinct authorities. Areas east of the Bug, earlier claimed by the Soviet Union in September 1939, once liberated by the Red Army were treated as territories incorporated into the Soviet Union and no Polish administration was permitted there. In territories between the Bug and the Vistula, to which the Soviet Union did not lay claim, PKWN was ostensibly in charge of all administrative matters. Accorded the status of a provisional government by the Soviet authorities, the PKWN was nevertheless entirely dependent on its backers as it did not have direct control over the army, and more critically it had no power base in the liberated areas. Finally, areas west of the Vistula remained under German occupation. In January 1945 the Soviet offensive was resumed and within the next three months previously Polish territories as well as those it was accepted would be granted to Poland, were freed from German control. With the liberation of Polish territories, the Soviet

Union was militarily in control of all areas that would form the territory of post-war Poland.

When Mikołajczyk resigned as prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile, and a new government was formed under Arciszewski, the British response to this diplomatically undesirable development was to ignore the latter and to continue treating the former as a lynchpin of Britain's plans for post-war Poland. Critical decisions concerning Polish territories and the post-war government were nevertheless made by the three allies at the Yalta Conference on 10 February. In a paragraph which consigned the government-in-exile to oblivion the communiqué from Yalta stated 'The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should . . . be reorganised on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.'[42]

The declaration then proceeded to announce that the Curzon line was accepted as Poland's Eastern frontier with the Western one still to be decided. Until 5 July 1945 the London Poles continued to be recognized as the legitimate government of Poland after which the British and US government transferred their recognition to the one now in Warsaw. Relations between Britain and the exile community were nevertheless not terminated. They could not have been in view of the continuing British use of Polish troops on various theatres in Europe. While Churchill remained personally very committed to making full use of the Poles' military potential and in return was determined that they would not be forced back to Poland, he and his successor took care not to offend the Soviet Union by according the exile community anything other than displaced persons status. This was due to the fact that Britain still required the Soviet Union's cooperation concerning the future of post-war Europe, in which the Polish question still had the potential to cause discord. In the background of all British contact with the Soviet Union was now the question of how the war with Japan would be concluded and what role the Soviet Union would be willing to play reduced Britain's freedom of action.

In liberated territories confrontations between the PKWN on the one hand and the Delegatura and AK leadership on the other appeared inevitable. As the Soviet Government recognized the PKWN as the true representation of the Polish nation all responsibilities for the civilian administration of Polish areas was handed over to that authority. At the same time the Soviet authorities reserved the right to take action against all those who were deemed to have, or were likely to commit, crimes against Soviet troops on Polish territories. For the foreseeable future

Poland would act as a Soviet security zone. The Soviet security authorities therefore claimed for themselves sweeping rights to take action against not only those deemed to actively assist the Germans, but also those who might endanger the security of the Red Army.

Two decrees defined the PKWN and Soviet attitude towards the wartime underground resistance. On 15 August legislation was introduced obliging all those eligible for military service to register. Mobilization to the Polish Army followed. On 24 August 1944 PKWN decreed that all wartime conspiratorial organizations were dissolved. Ostensibly the Polish Army took over all military action against the Germans. Nevertheless, NKVD's activities suggest that the destruction of all organizations which could pose a challenge not merely to the continuing Soviet war effort, but also to the PKWN, was its true aim.[43]

The AK, the Delegatura and all skeletal government organizations put in place by the government-in-exile faced very limited choices. They could try to reconstruct what was destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising and attempt to assume responsibilities for the administration of liberated territories. This is what the Delegatura tried to do while preparing to go underground, if circumstances so required, to prepare future action against the Soviet Union. Thus in November 1944, most officials connected with the Delegatura did not disguise their status to the Soviet authorities. At the same time, and with the government-in-exile's approval, a network of underground cells was to be maintained. A new bureau was established within the Delegatura to coordinate action against Soviet occupation.[44]

The Soviet authorities were not, however, prepared to tolerate the continuing existence of any of the Delegatura organizations. In March 1945 the Delegate, commander-in-chief of the AK, and leaders of all the parties that had combined to support the government-in-exile were arrested by the Soviet authorities. It was difficult to find replacements and in London differences between the parties which formed and supported the government-in-exile stood in the way of arriving at a consensus on the way forward. Each of the parties which had throughout the war supported the government-in-exile and its policies had by the spring of 1945 arrived at its own conclusions in relation to the rapidly evolving international and domestic situation. Hit by Soviet actions and unable to find a way forward each sought to formulate a response. In a message to Arciszewski dated 1 July 1945 the new chairman of the RJN explained what was happening in the Polish territories. Mikołajczyk's SL had withdrawn from supporting the Delegatura and the RJN and was 'realising its own decisions', which meant that it was trying to rebuild

the party in the hope that it would become the main legal and parliamentary political force after the war. PPS–WRN declared that it had no choice but to recognize the provisional government. In fact the PPS, like the SL, hoped to be able to reclaim its place in post-war Poland in particular because of continuing support for the party in trade unions. In both parties factions emerged that disagreed with this policy and advocated continuing resistance to the Soviet Union. Only the SN continued in its policy of opposition to the provisional government and supported the government-in-exile. The result of this painful reassessment was that each party decided to go it alone, each determining how it would continue the struggle for democracy and independence.[45] The RJN did not make any decisions or recommendations concerning the AK, leaving that matter for the government to decide.

As has been shown, relations between the political representatives of the government-in-exile and the leadership of the AK in the occupied territories were never easy. Sikorski's desire to constrain the military leaders' freedom to make political decisions lay at the root of the tensions. But neither during Sikorski's lifetime nor after his death was it possible to prevent the AK from taking the lead in matters relating to events unfolding in Poland. The outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising manifested fully this contradiction. After the AK revealed itself to the incoming Soviet army, and during the uprising, the extent of the AK network and plans became known. At the beginning of 1945 a decision had to be made whether to dissolve the underground army, because it could not make any further contribution to the liberation of Poland, or to rebuild it in a different form and with the only remaining aim of preparing for the future war against the Soviet Union.

During the second half of 1944 the question of AK actions against the Red Army became an issue between the Prime Minister Mikołajczyk, the President Raczkiewicz and the Commander-in-Chief Sosnkowski. In July Sosnkowski suggested that the time had come to prepare plans for conspiratorial organizations to oppose the Soviet presence in Poland, although he did not agree with the idea of staging the last stand in Warsaw.[46] Events nevertheless overtook Sosnkowski. In his opposition to the Warsaw Uprising he was outmanoeuvred. Due to the fact that he was in Italy at the time when the issue was being discussed between the AK leadership in Warsaw and the military leaders in London, the messages he sent from Italy in the hope that they would be forwarded to Bór-Komorowski were censored so as to minimize the extent of his disapproval of the Warsaw Uprising. In October his alienation from the government and leadership of the AK was increased when Stalin directly

attacked his presence in the Polish government-in-exile. This caused the British authorities to put pressure on the prime minister to sack him. Arrangements for Sosnkowski's replacement were confusing. At the very point when Bór-Komorowski was dealing with the last minute negotiations for the signing of an armistice in Warsaw to protect the AK fighters from being treated as criminals, he was informed that he was appointed commander-in-chief of Polish Forces and was required to come to London.

Bór-Komorowski refused to relinquish his moral responsibilities and went into captivity together with his soldiers. In the meantime the issue of the command of the remaining AK units in Poland was left unclear. General Okulicki had been nominated by Bór-Komorowski to take over as commander of the AK in Poland. This plan did not meet with the president's approval. Instead Raczkiewicz divided responsibilities for the AK between himself and General Kopański, chief of staff in London.[47] This state of confusion, which took no account of the difficulties in Poland, was resolved by the remaining Delegatura and AK leaders in Poland who insisted on Okulicki assuming full responsibilities for the AK. On 12 January 1945 Okulicki gave an order dissolving the wartime AK.[48] In reality the organization had not recovered from Soviet arrests and the Warsaw Uprising. War weariness threatened the AK with further disintegration. The focus of the debate concerning the future role of the remnants of the AK moved towards the formation of an underground structure, which would form the embryo of a new anti-Soviet Polish army. The AK had never been a cohesive organization. In spite of claims that it was the military wing of the government-in-exile, this clearly had never been the case. With the collapse of the authority of the government-in-exile and the increased stress on events taking place in Poland, the leaders of the AK appropriated the moral justification to determine what was to be the future course of action.

NSZ had earlier decided to break away and seek absolute freedom to concentrate on fighting the communists. Like all underground organizations in Warsaw, the NSZ had joined in fighting during the uprising and in most cases NSZ fighters had been incorporated into AK units. The collapse of the uprising meant that those who had survived went into captivity. The district organizations had to re-evaluate the situation. The most prominent of the surviving NSZ units was the Świętokrzyska Brigade in the Kielce district. There it took action against all known communists and fought against AL units. In December 1944, anticipating the opening of the Soviet offensive, the commander of the NSZ, General Bogucki, instructed the brigade to save itself by heading

West. The audacious plan to position itself in advance of the Soviet thrust but just behind the retreating German units worked, and in the Czech territories the brigade made contact with US and British troops. From there it was moved to Germany where in Fermant it was used in guard duties. Although the Soviet authorities had requested the extradition of the brigade, General Eisenhower refused to comply and it was believed that General Patton had decided to protect it.[49] The remaining NSZ units in Poland had in the meantime concentrated on fighting against the Soviet Union and its agents. While in relation to all other still existing military units the NSZ was to be helpful, instructions concerning communists and all those employed or serving in the new provisional government were unequivocal. They were to be liquidated.[50]

During the period immediately following the Yalta Conference all matters relating to the future Polish government were handed over to the Committee of Three which continued its deliberations in Moscow. This consisted of US Ambassador Averell Harriman, the British Ambassador Archibald Clark-Kerr and Molotov, Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs. The three powers were in agreement that the Polish provisional government should consist of representatives of the PKWN, London Poles and Poles in Polish territories. The latter point was never clarified as to whether this was meant to include the RJN and the AK or only the Soviet-approved political organizations. The Polish government-in-exile and the underground movement had assumed that the British and US would press for their inclusion in the provisional government. This explains why, in spite of arrests of those connected with the government-in-exile and the disarming of the AK units, they hoped that the non-communist underground parties would be allowed to emerge and participate in the political life of post-war Poland. Two events destroyed these hopes and tipped the balance irreversibly in favour of the remaining option, namely underground opposition to the Soviet Union and the post-war regime.

On 22 June 1945 the Committee of Three agreed on the composition of Poland's Provisional Government of National Unity. Having initially fought for the inclusion of some politicians from the Poles in the West, the US and British governments then realized that the best they could hope for was that a number of politicians no longer connected with the London government join the provisional government. Neither Western government would allow for their relations with the Soviet Union to be affected by the Polish issue. In the diplomatic battle which was fought for Poland's future in Moscow, the Soviet Union held all the trump cards: it had already recognized the PKWN as the legitimate represen-

tative of the Polish people, it had agreed for the inclusion of the German territories into Poland's border and had taken action to eliminate any challenge from within the underground movement by arresting the leaders of the RJN, the AK and other key parties. The trail of the sixteen Polish underground leaders took place in Moscow parallel with the final stages of the Committee of Three debates on Poland.[51] The final composition of the government was announced on 28 June. This was agreed by representatives of the PKWN and invited democrats from Poland and abroad. In effect Mikołajczyk was the only émigré politician of any standing to be involved in the government. The two others, Jan Stańczyk, and Antoni Kołodziej were relatively unknown. The left-wing PPS leader from Poland, Edward Osóbka-Morawski, was appointed prime minister with Gomułka and Mikołajczyk acting as deputy prime ministers.

While the Soviet leadership was pursuing talks with British and US delegates on the constitution of the future Polish government, action taken by the NKVD belied any suggestion that representatives of organizations other than those which were part of the PKWN, would be allowed to take part in the political life of post-war Poland. The role of the NKVD was given the veneer of legitimacy with the appointment of a NKVD general, Ivan Alexandrovich Serov, to act as advisor to the Polish ministry of public safety.[52] Serov had been responsible for the arrest of Polish underground leaders in liberated territories, and had in fact become a NKVD specialist, reporting directly to Beria. His new appointment was no more than a gesture as he appears not to have taken any orders from the PKWN and continued to report directly to the Soviet authorities.

On the basis of arrests in the Lublin district and interrogations of AK leaders there the NKVD knew that parallel with the policy of coming out to the Soviet authorities the AK was trying to reorganize its structure with the aim of creating underground anti-Soviet groups. In March 1945 the whole leadership of the Lublin AK had been arrested during a meeting in the Warsaw district of Praga. During interrogation they admitted that the meeting had been called to receive instructions from the commander-in-chief of the AK. Of great significance to the Soviet interrogators must have been an admission that although the AK was dissolved, in reality district leaders were instructed by Okulicki to remain active in the underground so that, if the need arose, AK units s could be reassembled.[53] On 25 March Serov was able to report to Beria, and he in turn to Stalin, that a group of AK leaders had been arrested in Łódź. Among them was Colonel Rudkowski, commander-in-chief of

the newly formed AK airforce and air communications section. Rudkowski and his arrested radio operator when searched provided the NKVD with copies of telegrams from Okulicki to local AK commanders and to General Anders, acting commander-in-chief of Polish Forces. Serov was thus able to report that the AK policy was to pursue two policies simultaneously. One was to try and influence the choice of prime minister and to secure a majority in the new government. 'If we do not succeed at that, the only option left to us, will be a long a torturous existence in conspiracy', Okulicki wrote.[54] Stalin was told that Serov found out from Rudkowski that the London Poles suspected that Bór-Komorowski inflated the AK membership fourfold, thus overstating its military preparedness for the uprising.

The fact that the AK continued to plan for its new underground role was confirmed when, as a result of arrests of AK members in Łódź it was found out that, as recently as December, money had been sent from London to the AK. This amounted to $7200 in gold, $66 000 in notes, 80 000 Polish złoty and 400 000 German marks.[55] The information the NKVD had at its disposal revealed the double game, which was being pursued by the AK and the rump organizations of the government-in-exile. As a result the NKVD attitude towards the AK and other underground organizations, including the BCh, was that they were, if not active enemy groups, at least had the potential to become so. The opening paragraph of Serov's report to Beria dated March 1945 said: 'In accordance with your directive on the arrests of the leaders of the underground AK and other movements in Poland . . .'[56] This made it quite clear that the NKVD's internment of AK leaders was not a response to incidental events, but a premeditated policy. Undisputedly the extent of information which the Soviet leadership had on the underground's plans lay at the background of the decision to arrest and put on trial leaders of the AK and the Delegatura.

It is unclear whether the Delegate and the AK leaders were approached by the Soviet authorities, or if it were they who first sought contacts at the highest level. Some accounts suggest that the Soviet NKVD had approached both Okulicki and the Delegate Jankowski sometime in February.[57] They appeared to have hoped that by coming into the open they would be able to secure the legalization of the underground movement and that would enable them to implement the first part of their plan, namely legal participation in the political life of the liberated territories. This explains why Jankowski, Okulicki and the leadership of the wartime underground parties were willing to meet with the NKVD. The government-in-exile disagreed with this aim, considering the with-

drawal of the whole underground command structure to the West. The only reason why a degree of unease prevailed in London on giving instructions to that effect was disquiet that they would be telling their commanders to abandon Poland. Nor was it clear whether AK units were to withdraw to the Western occupation zones.[58]

In Polish territories the underground leadership took a different view and once they were led to believe that a dialogue could be opened with the Soviet security service on the cessation of diversionary tactics, they indicated that they wanted to meet the NKVD representatives.[59] The AK, the Delegate and all leaders of the non-communist underground movement believed, or at least hoped, that they were protected from Soviet action by the fact that decisions concerning the Polish provisional government had been made by representatives of the three wartime allies, and that as a result their participation in post-war institutions, would to some extent be supported by Britain and the US. This hope had been encouraged by earlier British requests to the government-in-exile for a list of the most prominent underground leaders. Before the Yalta Conference and then again in March Eden made it clear that he hoped that by having such a list and presenting it to Stalin he would protect the Poles.[60] The Poles never provided the British Foreign Office with this list, but Eden's initiative naturally encouraged the London Poles and those in Poland to presume that some protection could be expected from the British.

On 27 and 28 March virtually the whole leadership of the Polish non-communist underground movement presented itself at a prearranged villa in the town of Pruszków near Warsaw. The group included Okulicki, Jankowski, the chairman of the RJN and member of the PPS–WRN, Kazimierz Pużak, leaders of the SN, SL, SP and a number of other men prominent in the underground. They were immediately spirited away to Moscow, while the leaders of the PKWN were told that the talks with the underground had failed and that Jankowski, Okulicki and the other leaders had gone underground.[61] In spite of enquiries conducted in Polish territories and increasingly anxious demands in the West as to their fate, the Soviet authorities kept the matter secret. On 6 May a TASS communiqué announced that the Poles had been arrested and that they were being interrogated. Although the British and US governments both lodged complaints, in reality little was done and in due course talks on the composition of the Polish government were resumed with only Mikołajczyk remaining as a candidate for inclusion in the first Polish government to be established after the final liberation of Polish territories.

The show trial of the 16 Polish underground leaders opened on 18 June and was concluded on 21 June in Moscow. The Soviet procurator put the case for their trial on the grounds that after the liberation of territories by the Red Army, the accused had engaged in subversive activities behind Red Army lines. When the sentences were announced they were, by Soviet standards, mild. Okulicki was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, Jankowski to eight, Pużak to one-and-a-half years. All other sentences ranged between one year and a few months. Nevertheless Okulicki died in unknown circumstances while in prison. Soviet documents suggest that this was due to medical complications caused by a hunger strike, though there are suggestions that he might have been murdered. Jankowski died two weeks before he was due to be released at the end of his sentence. Others either died while in Soviet penal camps, had their sentences extended, or returned to Poland broken men.

In the meantime in Poland painful decisions had to be made as to whether to continue the buildup of anti-Soviet conspiratorial structures, in particular because of the intensification of NKVD actions against the non-communist wartime resistance organizations. Nevertheless, the weakening of political links between the London government and the destruction of the AK command and Delegatura organizations in the Warsaw Uprising and by the NKVD would have implications for the effectiveness of the anti-Soviet opposition in Poland. Throughout the war the pre-war political parties had never been united or consistent in their support for the government-in-exile. It nevertheless provided a focal point for all political debates. Whatever were the differences between the various parties, the legitimacy of the government was not seriously challenged. As the German occupation ended the wartime allies reached an agreement with the Soviet Union on the thorny Polish issue, that made them less willing to support the Polish government-in-exile. Henceforth political organizations in Poland, rather than those in exile, determined the response to events unfolding under Soviet control. At the same time, each party and organization came to assess the likelihood of being able to retain a place in the post-war political order. The uneasy consensus that prevailed during the war, broke down. The anti-communist opposition in Poland proved weak and divided. It lacked not merely unity, but perhaps more importantly, direction.

5
The Establishment of Communist Control in Poland, 1944–1947

On 31 December PKWN transformed itself into the Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej (Provisional Government of National Unity – TRJN). Only parties that had been part of the PKWN were accorded legal status. This immediately created problems even for those parties that had cooperated with the PPR. Although PPS and SL were included in the PKWN and then the TRJN these were splinter groups from the main body of the parties, whose names they had appropriated without any authority. The wartime parties had to decide whether to remain underground or to seek legalization, a decision that required them to consider their relations with those splinter groups. Their considerations were affected by an unwillingness to apply to the TRJN for legalization, which in many ways implied recognition of the government's status, a matter that still needed to be fully considered. The existence of a leadership-in-exile added to the confusion. Although the TRJN claimed that legalization was decided by the provisional government, in reality it was the central committee of the PPR in consultation with the Soviet authorities that had the final say in these matters.

Polish communists in the Soviet Union had always assumed that the first government would be dominated by PPR and that the coalition administration was a cosmetic disguise for their objectives. Nevertheless, decisions made at the Yalta Conference which spoke of broadening the base of the Polish government by including leaders of democratic parties gave all but the extreme right and nationalist parties the hope that they would not merely be allowed to emerge as legal political organizations, but also that their existence and security would be guaranteed by the Western Allies. That gave them an impetus to regularize their legal status in relation to the TRJN. Each party had to contend with different problems. In the process of reassessing the

likelihood of succeeding in establishing themselves in Poland, the parties had to re-evaluate their relations with the émigré leadership and government. Yet as long as the political situation appeared to be still unclear, they also had to consider whether to retain any underground organizations and thus, if discovered, risk the accusation of preparing to take hostile actions against the new regime.

The final composition of the TRJN was announced on 28 June 1945. It remained in power until 5 February 1947, after the announcement of the results of the general elections. Osóbka-Morawski was appointed the first prime minister, and Gomułka and Mikołajczyk both were deputy prime ministers. The remaining responsibilities were divided in such a way as to give the communists and their supporters majority control over the government and over key areas of responsibilities. Effectively 17 out of 21 portfolios were in the communists' hands, and these included national defence, national security, industry, supply, recovered territories, foreign trade and foreign relations. In all cases where the PPS or SL which now took the name Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Alliance – PSL) held the portfolio, a communist deputy minister was appointed. All parties henceforth focused their attention on the forthcoming general elections.

In ascertaining how the communist system was established in post-war Poland, it is important to consider whether this was done entirely by the Red Army and the NKVD or whether it was a process that also involved Poles, both as active participants and collaborators. At the same time it is important to investigate how the non-communist parties responded and, indeed, if they had any freedom to formulate their own policies. These dilemmas are made more interesting by the fact that, although there existed no genuine opportunity for the establishment of any other than a pro-Soviet regime in Poland after the war, during the period immediately after the end of the war the war-time SL and the PPS still retained the loyalty of wide sections of the population. How and why this was destroyed is of relevance in the process of investigating how the communist system was established in Poland.

The moment of capture and the establishment of authority took place at the point when the German enemy withdrew and before the Soviet Union could fully concentrate on the long-term future of the liberated territories. This had been anticipated by the government-in-exile, which had made extensive preparations for that moment. Nevertheless, it was the communists and their allies who were allowed by the Soviet authorities to step into the administrative vacuum created by the defeat of the German forces in Polish territories. The government-in-exile and the

various underground organizations were deliberately prevented from asserting themselves. Nevertheless, the communists knew that they would have to contend with lack of trust and political and military opposition to any administration they would put in place. In his autobiography Gomułka makes it clear how deliberate were the preparations made prior to entry into ethnically Polish areas. Following the Red Army were special operational groups. Their role was to 'create the foundations of state administration, assist workers in taking over and restarting places of employment, build and extend the party organisational network, prepare the land reform and propagate the programme of the Provisional Government'.[1] The buildup of the security apparatus and of a police force naturally figured as a high priority in this plan, but some time would elapse before both were ready. In the meantime 'the most authentic expression of the new authority was the Polish Army'.[2] Its role, according to Gomułka, was political.

During an interview conducted during the 1980s Edward Ochab, who was the minister of public administration first in the PKWN and then the TRJN, stated that in 1944 among many of the PPR's tasks 'it was necessary to build the foundation of a new, people's state administration, (by) boldly putting forward to managerial posts, leading workers and peasants and officers of the political apparatus of the 1st Army'.[3] Within this formulaic statement is hidden an admission that the Army's role extended beyond securing military victories in conjunction with the Red Army. As an active member of the KPP since 1929 Ochab knew that communist influence among the working-class community in Poland had always been weak. Nor had there been any significant support for communism within the villages. In this context, therefore the sentence contains an admission that the PKWN had from the outset set out to dominate public administration and that the political sections of the incoming Polish Army and the war-time AL had been given the key role of establishing and guaranteeing the political character of the government institutions.

As the Red Army crossed into ethnically Polish territories, areas to which the Soviet Union did not lay claim, first decisions concerning civilian administration were taken on behalf of the PKWN. Nevertheless, the issue which would create problems both for the Soviet authorities and the Polish communists was their obvious lack of a power base and the apparent strength and popularity of the wartime underground movements, most notably the AK and the BCh, while the NSZ continued to be a force to be reckoned with. While the war against Germany continued, Polish territories were treated by the Red Army as a zone in

which the army took responsibility for security. At the same time there would have been a unwillingness to devolve troops for maintaining civil order in Poland, as the military priority remained the defeat of Germany, while politically cooperation with the Western allies was a matter of critical importance to Stalin. In those circumstances the essential question which has to be asked is how were the Polish communists able to capture power in the countryside and what efforts did they make to separate the population there from their commitment to non-communist wartime organizations? Finally, in the absence of a network of communist supporters who formed the first administrations, local security and law enforcement agencies?

The building of the new administration was initiated by the Soviet authorities after the PKWN was granted the status of a representative of the Polish nation on 1 August 1944. Deliberately ignoring the Delegatura and the structures which the Polish government had prepared in the occupied territories, the Soviet military authorities set out to create an entirely new framework. General Nicolai Bulganin became the official Soviet representative to the PKWN. His duties were extensive. His task was to create new governmental and administrative structures in Poland. A Soviet-trained Polish independent special battalion and the first units of the Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska – MO) usually formed from ex-AL members provided the security service and the police force.[4] Stanisław Radkiewicz was put in charge of internal security. In the government of national unity he became minister for public security. Radkiewicz's efforts did not impress his handlers, hence the appointment of Serov to act as advisor. The buildup of the MO proved to be a difficult problem and with time these difficulties did not go away. The central committee of the PPR on more than one occasion tried to find a way of making the new police force more efficient and accountable. Attempts to strengthen party cells within the MO, approved on 15 September, were followed up by a decision to sack over 50 percent of the new police force and replace them with military men. Still the situation did not improve. On 9 November the central committee heard an accusation from the head of the district council of Warsaw that PPR had attracted criminals to its ranks and that the worst were in the MO who were involved in selling state property.[5] Acting on Bulganin's behalf Serov took over responsibilities for NKVD activities in Poland and for the buildup of the Polish internal security system. Under his supervision was established the Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego (Ministry of Public Security – MBP) with the local offices Urzedy Bezpieczeństwa (Security Offices – UB). The latter came to be feared for

its arbitrary actions. The local UB officers were directly accountable only to the MBP which caused conflicts with the local administration and MO. Under Serov, counterintelligence activities were concentrated not in the hands of the obviously unreliable and inefficient PKWN appointees, but in special section of the NKVD. On Serov's suggestion, the earlier policy of co-opting AK members into the MO and Polish Army in the interest of social reconciliation, was discontinued and ex-AK and BCh partisans were arrested and incarcerated in specially designated penal camps.[6]

The ostensible recognition of the PKWN's role as the future government of liberated Poland gave the Soviet authorities the basis for signing several agreements. One signed on 4 August regulated the conditions under which the Red Army was to be maintained while on Polish territories. The feeding and maintenance of the Red Army became the responsibility of the Poles. All currencies used until then in Poland were abolished and replaced with a new one.[7] The Soviet authorities provided PKWN with loans to finance the first stages of its functioning as an administrator of liberated territories. As communication, and in particular the railway system, was of critical importance to both the Polish and the Soviet authorities, the latter took a great interest in the way in which the railways were run. Early on PKWN had to admit that railway workers could not be trusted to do their work properly and were replaced by Soviet staff. A Red Army representative was also attached to the ministry of transport.[8]

While the Polish communists who dominated the PKWN lacked a power base in Poland, they nevertheless had at their disposal the Polish army formed in the Soviet Union. This, rather than the PPR party structure and the MO became, the most important mechanism for the imposition of the communist system on Polish society. Yet even within the army there was a shortage of those who could be considered politically reliable. When the Kościuszko Division was first established, there were no problems in recruiting soldiers from among the remaining Polish population in the Soviet Union. These were mostly Polish citizens from the Eastern areas, which had been incorporated into the Soviet Union in September–October 1939. During the winter of that year many ethnic Poles were forcefully moved into the Soviet interior, many ending up in camps, work battalions and distant settlements. After General Anders evacuated to Iraq the first Polish units raised in the Soviet Union, the remaining Poles' only hope for survival and return to their homeland was through joining the Berling units. Problems in the Polish units were compounded by the fact that among the Poles who presented them-

selves at the camp in Sielce where the division was first formed, few had any military experience and even fewer had officer rank. There was thus a great shortage of officers. The uneasy compromise of appointing Soviet officers to Polish units was militarily an expedient decision, but politically it compounded areas of possible conflict between the Soviet authorities and the Polish ranks. As the army was moved into pre-war Polish territories, it was, perhaps naively, hoped that the underground units would be incorporated into the ranks of the Polish army and would thus add officer material. The two first mobilization decrees announced on 15 August and 30 October 1944 gave limited results, and desertions and avoidance were frequent. In spite of the continuing war against Germany, the Red Army and the Polish units were viewed with distrust. In areas where Red Army units had been based, atrocities committed by Russians against the civilian community, in particular rapes and wanton destruction of Polish property, fostered feelings of anger. Hostility to the PKWN and continuing support for the wartime underground manifested itself in all liberated territories.[9] Serov and the NKVD agents came to the view that the policy of absorbing the underground groups into the rapidly expanding Polish army created an internal threat. The PKWN's initial strategy of absorbing the AK into the army was thus in conflict with Soviet policies of treating all ex-AK members as effectively or potentially hostile. At the beginning of 1945 NKVD arrests extended to ex-AK members in the Polish army. At the same time, the army was being prepared to assume the key role of imposing reforms, which would destroy the credibility of the London government and secure support for the PKWN. This meant in the first place the conduct of land reform but extended to educational and propaganda activities, which were supposed to persuade the Polish community in the liberated territories of the need to support the PKWN.

From the outset, in line with Soviet practice, Polish communists sought to have in all army units their own political representatives. In that respect the Poles faced the same problems which beset Red Army officers in their attempts to define the function and precise authority of the political commissers during the formative period of the creation of the Red Army in the Russian Civil War. Polish communists in the Soviet Union wanted the so-called political–educational officers to have the same authority as all other officers, but to be accountable only to party authorities. This irritated Berling, who fought off demands from Alfed Lampe and later Jakub Berman's that these agents should be given officer ranks without being accountable to their military commanders.[10] This conflict was not resolved by the time the Polish army moved

into the Polish territories and possibly lay at the root of Berling's dismissal.

At the end of 1944 the Polish army acquired new multiple roles in relation to the Soviet Union and that required it to be come a reliable tool in the PPR's hands. If the army was to assist in land reform, secure supplies for the Red Army, maintain political and economic stability, assist in the fight against political enemies, and finally persuade the population of the benefits of supporting the new pro-Soviet regime, the political apparatus within it needed to be motivated and politically reliable. This is what Stalin told the PKWN delegates during a meeting in October 1944. The international situation which allowed Stalin to conclude that the British and US governments would allow him to proceed in accordance with his own wishes in Poland, and the ineffectual attempts of the PKWN to establish its leadership in the liberated territories, caused Stalin to change his attitude towards Poland and to become less conciliatory. This moment, described by Polish historians as the 'October Turn', explains the instructions he issued to the Polish communists.[11] They were expected to be more decisive in rooting out enemies and in pressing on with the destruction of the vestiges of the old system. Stalin mocked the Polish communists during an October meeting with the fact that although theirs was to be no less than a revolution, there was nothing revolutionary about their actions.[12] He warned the Poles that once the Red Army proceeded West, thus leaving the liberated territories in the hands of the PKWN, their enemies would take action. The PPR had to tackle the internal opposition and that meant in the first place strengthening the party and army ideologically.[13] During this period the Polish communists were to learn the limits of their own successes and that in turn forced them to reassess their relations with other parties, most notably Mikołajczyk's PSL and the PPS.

Unfortunately for the Poles, all attempts to build up a national army which would incorporate wartime partisans proved to be more than a disaster. Whole units were liable to desert, taking with them ammunition and equipment given to them. When in October a special school was opened to train political officers, it was revealed that of the first intake of 700, only 100 could be relied upon to be sympathetic to the communist party and 22 were immediately expelled for trying to form a 'an enemy nest'.[14] The situation in the army was so serious that the central committee of the PPR decided there was a need for a new and drastic initiative. Stalin gave his approval and the Poles were told that a Red Army delegation would arrive to investigate problems in the Polish army.

The result was a wide-ranging admission and self-criticism that concluded that political control over the army had to be re-established. At fault was not only the policy of employing AK officers but also the dissolute and corrupt behaviour of the Red Army officers in the Polish army. The latter had to be replaced by Poles, either retrained AK men or young party activists. The party structures in the army were to be strengthened. Within the Central Committee of the PPR a military section was established to oversee political work within the army.[15] On 25 November 1944 new rules and regulations concerning political–educational officers were published. These defined the political–educational officer as subordinate to the decisions of the unit officer, but together with that officer responsible for the soldiers' moral and political awareness. Although regular officers were in charge of all decisions, the political–educational officers were accountable for their work to other political–educational officers. This confirmed the existence of a parallel command structure in the army.[16]

During 1944 when the initial Soviet thrust into Polish territories stalled and then was resumed in the winter, the PKWN saw an opportunity to pursue policies that would be both revolutionary in their aim and also improve the communists' popularity. The tasks in which the army was involved certainly required strong leadership, in particular because these brought the regime into conflict with vested interests. This was the case with land reform, which PKWN hoped would garner it quick popularity, but to its surprise found that the wartime underground movement and its leaders still held sway in the countryside and towns. One of the communists' biggest disappointments had been the unwillingness of the peasants to embrace the PKWN's first measures of land reform. Initial reports from attempts to induce the peasants to take land were fragmentary. To start with the political–educational officers in the Polish army, who had taken the lead in staging first redistribution of land, reported successes. Thus writing on 6 September 1944 from the hamlet of Rejowice the political officer gushed: 'the estate workers are genuinely connected to us. Each step taken by us is enthusiastically greeted, our actions, in particular those relating to land reform give them irrefutable proof of our aim, which they understand fully'.[17] But even he noted an undercurrent of anxiety about the consequences of accepting land from the break up of the estate, when two peasants refused to accept land allocated to them. They were asked to leave the meeting.

In another report the political officers admitted that AK influence remained strong in the villages, in particular in the more prosperous ones. Nor were the local landowners ready to accept the PKWN deci-

sions. In one case Count Potocki's emissaries warned the peasants not to accept land given to them as part of the reform and to avoid military service.[18] These were just a sample of problems faced in the opening stages of PKWN rule.

In October the CK of the PPR admitted that piecemeal attempts at implementing land reform were not successful. There was a need to build bridges with the war-time SL and to be more decisive in dealing with the vested interests in villages. Neither the security service nor MO had been much help, refusing to arrest landowners and releasing them 'unnecessarily'. Furthermore, instability in the villages had an impact on the supply situation. The communists and army leaders were only too well aware that the peasants continued to shoulder the economic burden of providing food for the Red Army, the expanding Polish army and the civilian population. Requisition quotas, which had been imposed by the Germans, had not been abolished and in some cases had increased. Thus the new regime was dependent on the popularity it could garner by implementing land reform. In November the army became fully responsible for extracting all food supplies from the peasants. Special provisioning units were despatched to the countryside. The army was in effect used for policing duties.[19] Although anxious about the consequences of such policies on the village, the PPR had Stalin's full support as he warned them not to be too perturbed by disaffection among the peasants, for the communist movement according to him, had to base itself on the workers.[20]

During November and December the Politburo frequently returned the MO's general unreliability. It continued to be corrupt, inefficient and was infiltrated by enemies of the new regime.[21] The security situation had not improved, becoming, in fact, more difficult after the AK officially disbanded. The proliferation of various bands, some politically motivated and others of unclear loyalties, required a strong internal security force. The PPR clearly knew that it had not been able to build up a reliable MO force, nor was it able to call on the loyalties of any particular social group. The army, for all its shortcomings, remained the only organized military force that could in part be utilized for internal action. Thus the overlap between the continuing military activities against Germany and internal policing duties continued until Germany's capitulation, when sections of the army were used to maintain internal security.

In areas inhabited by a Ukrainian community conflicts with the Poles increased dramatically. These had been exacerbated by the wartime German exploitation of Ukrainian nationalist aspirations and the use of

Ukrainian units in policing duties in the Jewish ghettoes and concentration camps. Ethnic violence overwhelmed whole areas, creating a situation comparable to that of a civil war. Even before the end of hostilities, the 9th Infantry Division was withdrawn from Germany and placed at the disposal of the ministry of national security. In due course it was then renamed as the Korpus Bezbieczeństwa (Security Corps) and sent to the Reszów district to deal with Ukrainian bands. When the Polish units entered these areas it found a number of disparate Ukrainian groups, as well as the remnants of the Polish underground. The fact that the Red Army generally mistreated the local population made it difficult for the Polish units that followed to obtain support in their efforts to eradicate lawlessness. To the Polish units fell the task of rounding up the Ukrainian population living in areas designated as Polish territories and implementing a forced exchange of population with the Soviet Union. The Ukrainians fought back, presenting the Poles with a multiplicity of difficulties for which they were scarcely prepared.

Within the Przemyśl district the army faced a complex situation which the army commanders and the political officers tried to tackle but, for which they had been badly prepared. Reports from the political–education officers suggest that in the first place the soldiers and their commanders were not up to the task. This was an area inhabited predominantly by Ukrainians. The Ukrainian underground groups were well armed and even possessed typewriters, which facilitated dissemination of information and propaganda. Most importantly, the Ukrainian bands, as the Poles referred to them, had the full support of their community, which protected them, conducted intelligence on their behalf and, if the need arose, fought together with them.

This extremely volatile situation was compounded by the Polish soldiers' mistreatment of the Ukrainians. Writing on 25 June 1945 Major Gutaker, acting political–educational officer with the 9th infantry division admitted that even the commander, Colonel Zurko, although good in battle, was of 'low moral and ethical quality'. He was a drunkard, kept the company of women with loose morals and generally gave a bad example. The local Polish community created further problems, offering no support to the division's attempt to eradicate the Ukrainian bands. On the contrary they exploited the army's actions to plunder Ukrainian villages.[22] The result was that the Ukrainian bands were neither captured nor destroyed. As a result, hostility caused by the soldiers' vindictive behaviour towards the Ukrainian villagers ensured that future actions would be equally unsuccessful. The

educational–political officers undertook to conduct training work to prepare the troops and ensure that their hatred was channelled in the right direction, namely at the Ukrainian nationalist bands and not the villages.[23] In August, at the peak of the forceful reallocation of the Ukrainian villages to the Soviet Union, an operation for which the army was responsible, the political–educational officers were given the added responsibility of explaining to the Ukrainians and to the soldiers why these operations were taking place. The consolidation of areas inhabited by the Ukrainian community was given as the main rationale for the re-settlement, though the political officers were to explain that the amicable resolution of the Ukrainian issue would foster pan-Slav solidarity. The political officers were thus given the thankless task of reducing the extent of anti-Ukrainian sentiments among the soldiers assigned to the task.[24]

Summing up the situation in the Białystok region, the political–educational inspector reported in June 1945 that neither the security service nor the MO had any control over the areas outside the main towns.[25] To all practical purposes no local administration had been established and where an attempt had been made to do so, local bands had murdered those appointed. The MO units were in fact responsible for many of the problems and were demoralized and corrupt. In one case an MO unit had disarmed a military unit. In another case, the community of the town of Ciechanowiec had come to fear the MO to the extent that it supported local AK units as the only way of guaranteeing security in the locality. Attempts at holding meetings to explain the nature and objectives of the TRJN had very limited, if any, effect, mainly because any good work was quickly undone by the bad behaviour of the Soviet officers and the corruption of the MO.[26]

Writing a few months later, the political–educational commander of the same infantry division noted the extent of anti-semitic sentiments expressed by the liberated Polish communities and the conscript soldiers. AK and NSZ leaflets and pamphlets were finding their way into the units. Although the political officers wanted to tackle this point, they were only too aware that this would have increased the local communities' suspicions of their motives. It was noted that a high proportion of the political–educational officers was Jewish and this was generally seen as an obstacle to their being able to act as good propagandists in units and a communities saturated with anti-semitic sentiments.[27]

In all their efforts, the new regime was to find that it had multiple enemies and few friends upon whom to base itself. Even a conciliatory

policy of allowing the AK to come out of conspiracy and integrating it in the new state organizations merely confirmed the absence of popular support for the new government, without necessarily overcoming it. Thus the army unit forcibly removing the Ukrainian population to the Soviet Union from Lubaczew near Rzeszów district reported great difficulties with the local MO units. The political–educational officers reported that in the whole of Lubaczew the AK had taken over the MO. 'The local militia is an AK unit', wrote Captain Baczko, the political–educational divisional commander on 10 October.[28] In this particular case he had to admit that the MO unit was disciplined and controlled the area successfully. TRJN representatives had little influence and were ineffectual. More worrying for the army was the fact that the local AK had reached agreements with the Unit of the Ukraińska Armia Powstańcza (Ukrainian Insurrectionist Army – UPA). Both benefited from the state of mobilization, which prevented the local authorities from taking action against either. This situation allowed the local economy to be dominated by speculators who took control of recently arrived UNRRA aid. Captain Baczko concluded by earnestly asking for assistance in destroying the AK, UPA and the NSZ bands that completely dominated Lubaczew. This state of affairs was of particular concern as it had a demoralizing effect on the soldiers involved in the resettlement of the Ukrainians. Captain Baczko admitted that the morale in his unit was low and there was widespread irritation with the authority's inability to guarantee simple services. His own programme of giving lectures and propaganda talks was nullified by the authorities' visible inability to tackle the AK and NSZ.

When on 15 August 1944 the PKWN announced the call-up of men from the liberated territories, AK responded with a call to boycott it. During the period until the opening of the Soviet offensive in January 1945 the political–educational officers noted that the army had not been successful in its attempt to incorporate men into its ranks. Furthermore, desertions took place on a scale that drew Stalin's attention to the problem. During this period, even though the political officers generally warned that the hardships of army life and anxiety about families usually caused desertions, the military and political leadership and the NKVD tended to put it down to AK influence.[29] The PKWN and later the provisional government thinking behind the efforts to neutralize the influence of both the AK leadership and the government-in-exile proved to have been a naïve assessment of the relationship between the Poles under occupation and the underground structures. This led the PKWN politicians to come round to the Soviet view of the

inevitability of conflict with the remnants of the AK. By October 1944 the Politburo of the PPR instigated reforms of the army, which were to give it a more prominent role in the establishment of the new regime. As a result of extensive discussions and acting on Stalin's explicit instructions that the problem should be addressed, a military section was established within the CK of the PPR. As the role of the army was enhanced it had to become a tool in the political transformation which lay ahead. The army was therefore purged of ex-AK members, many of whom were then transported to camps in the Soviet Union. In January 1945 the next stage of purges and arrests of ex-AK members was instigated by the NKVD. This was caused by anxiety about the underground opposition's potential to disrupt the war effort.[30] As the front moved West, repression against the opposition in the Polish territories increased. Irrespective of whether they were captured in action or had been arrested after having declared their earlier membership of the AK, all those detained were treated as arrested in action. Recently a Polish historian researching the Soviet archives estimated that between the autumn of 1944 and spring of 1945 the NKVD arrested 61 729 Poles in the military zone behind Soviet lines on grounds of having belonged to hostile organizations. Of those, only 10 751 remained in camps in Poland, but over 50 000 were transported to the Soviet Union.[31]

While the PPR was battling to establish its authority on the newly liberated territories, other parties, notably the PPS and PSL, both of whom cooperated with the PPR in forming the TRJN, also addressed the issue of rebuilding their power base in Poland. The war had left deep divisions within their structures. Previous loyalties held sway in some places, while in others the parties' organizational structuring had to be rebuilt. Age and pre-war work and political experiences affected the workers' and peasants' attitudes towards both parties. The pre-war generation tended to remain loyal to pre-war parties, while the younger generation, unfamiliar with politics in a country not under occupation, tended to support new parties with radical solutions.

Before the war, the PPS represented the interests of the skilled and traditional working class. The war, however, accentuated and compounded old divisions while adding new ones. When in November 1944 Mikołajczyk resigned from the government-in-exile, the London PPS together with the nationalists took upon themselves the responsibility of continuing to maintain it. Arciszewski's decision to become the prime minister was supported by prominent pre-war PPS leaders, namely Jan Kwapiński, Adam Ciołkosz and Adam Pragier. Another group, lead by Jan Stańczyk, Ludwik Grosfelt, Jan Szczyrek and Julian Hochfeld decided

to return to Poland and rebuild the PPS.[32] Those who remained in London declared the Warsaw government to be illegal and furthermore refused to accept the legality of the reconstructed PPS which had joined the new administration.[33] The émigré PPS leaders disapproved of all attempts to conciliate with the Soviet Union, believing that it had never abandoned its aim to capture the whole of Poland. The PPS party organization, which was rebuilt in liberated Poland, was disparagingly referred to as the 'concessionary' or 'false' PPS. Most of the émigré socialist leaders were wary of the British Labour government's arguments that the degree of Soviet control could be checked by the strengthening of non-communist parties in Poland and rejected Hugh Dalton's suggestions that they return to Poland.

In the liberated territories, the reconstruction of the party was undertaken by Osóbka-Morawski who in May 1944 had decided to lead a section of the RPPS towards cooperation with the communists. His position had been strengthened by Stalin's suggestion to the ZPP activists that Osóbka-Morawski should head the PKWN. This group was joined by other PPS members, namely Bolesław Drobner and Stefan Matuszewski who had spent the war in the Soviet Union. Neither group contained any of the prominent ideologues or leaders of the inter-war period. The radical wing of the RPPS, which took the name PPS–Lewica, had suffered heavy casualties during the Warsaw Uprising that reduced its effectiveness during the internal party conflicts in the last months of 1944. The PPS–WRN remained associated with the remnants of the underground structures and continued supporting the London government.[34] The leader of that group, Pużak, was captured by the NKVD and together with other underground leaders was tried in Moscow in the infamous 'Trial of the 16'. The PPS–WRN continued to be active in the liberated territories, but on 11 February 1945 the remaining WRN leadership decided that the wartime organization should be dissolved. Individual members were thus free to decide whether they wanted to join the recreated PPS. They were nevertheless advised not to put themselves forward for party posts. However, a 300-strong conspiratorial leadership was established at the same time. This was done in anticipation of the moment when genuine parliamentary democracy would be established. This led the pro-communist PPS members and the PPR to view WRN with suspicion and to doubt its concession to the post-war PPS organization.[35]

The first post-war PPS party conference took place in Lublin on 10–11 September 1944. The meeting was named the XXV PPS Congress. Initially the RPPS dominated all decision making. The congress, attended

by 200 people, mainly supporters of the RPPS and the PPS–Lewica, declared that its aim was to build a powerful new socialist party. Its programme was to be based on the wartime RPPS radical declarations and made references to the pre-war calls for left-wing unity. The right wing of the PPS was condemned and a policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union was approved.[36] The congress appointed Drobner to head the newly formed party council and Osóbka-Morawski as chairman of the central executive council. Matuszewski became the PPS secretary.[37] From the outset doubts were cast on the legality of the congress, the organizers of which had no authority or mandate to make decisions on behalf of the socialist movement in Poland. The tenuous nature of the claim made by the leaders of the new PPS to be speaking on behalf of the socialist movement in Poland was even noted by the Soviet agent who had attended the congress and provided detailed information on its deliberations and the composition of the newly-elected leadership.[38] As further territories were liberated, more of the old party local leaders were co-opted into the newly formed organization. From the outset it continued to be dominated by those who were in favour of cooperation with the communists and supported the idea of left-wing unity. The wartime PPS–WRN was defined as right wing and hostile to the new order in Poland. Within the reconstructed PPS a number of prominent personalities had spent the war period in the West, but supported collaboration with the communists. This group was headed by Henryk Jabłoński who had been in France and Oskar Lange, a prominent economist, who on Roosevelt's behalf had arrived in Moscow from the USA in 1943 and in 1944 associated himself with PKWN.

It has been asserted that among the prominent parties of the inter-war period, PPS suffered the largest losses during the course of the war. Over 39 percent of its leaders died in tragic circumstances, at the hands of the German or the NKVD authorities.[39] The annihilation of the Jewish community had effected on the Polish socialist movement, as the Bund had always been a strong fraternal party. Furthermore, throughout the war members of the PPS were attacked and killed by the NSZ, who made little distinction between the radical RPPS and the PPS–WRN who supported the government-in-exile.[40] During the war the party succumbed to deep political divisions in a way that no other party had done. Whereas during the inter-war period PPS had been a party which accommodated a variety of socialist ideas, from radical and revolutionary to moderate and democratic, at the end of the war the party reconstructed in the liberated territories was led by the pro-Soviet grouping, which distrusted the wartime leadership. Exile politics and their attitude

towards the government in London accentuated these dilemmas. Nevertheless, the key task which faced the PPS at the end of the war was of rebuilding the party and of finding for itself a role in the new political order.

At least initially, Osóbka-Morawski was willing to accept the role assigned to the PPS by Stalin and the ZPP leadership in Moscow, namely that of a junior but prominent partner in the establishment of the PKWN. In due course, as Stalin and the Polish communists tried to exercise more control over PPS, this caused a reaction. PPS leaders started thinking in terms of a reconstructed party, incorporating supporters of the PPS–Lewica programme and the wartime WRN membership. This met with PPR objections and signalled the limits of the PPS's voluntary subordination to the communists.[41]

Once Warsaw was liberated and became the seat of the provisional government, PPS extended its activities. In the drive to attract pre-war members and recruit new ones, the leadership faced a challenge. As it sought to build a mass party, calls for it to become a truly independent organization increased. This in turn led to an acrimonious debate on a number of related subjects: the party's character, its programme, the degree of Polish subordination to the Soviet Union, and, most important, cooperation with the PPR. Until these fundamental points were resolved the party's effectiveness in national and local politics was limited. Nevertheless, discussion of unity with the PPR could not be avoided. Divisions which had occurred during the inter-war period, the decision to support the Piłsudski coup in 1926, earlier ideological divisions which had been consolidated during the war, all in turn affected debates on the subject of cooperation with the communists after the war.

By the beginning of 1945 the tone of discussion within the leadership changed. During the meeting of the party's central council in February 1945 it was decided to allow ex-members of WRN to join the newly reconstructed PPS. The reasoning behind this decision was that individual members could not be held responsible for complex political divisions that had developed during that time. In reality it must have been realised that the exclusion of WRN members would have destroyed all attempts to build a post-war PPS.[42] The possibility of these pre-war members forming a rival organization must have also occurred to party leaders. Nevertheless, by allowing members of WRN to join the new PPS, the leadership renewed debates on a number of painful subjects and with that the likelihood of internal divisions.

By the time of the second post-war congress (officially designated as

the XXVI Congress) in June 1945, these dilemmas became more pronounced. The influx of new and the return of old members into the party had opened old wounds. Whereas Osóbka-Morawski's keynote speech signalled the need for unity and forgiveness, others did not agree. Osóbka-Morawski tried to reaffirm the PPS's commitment to Polish nationalism, pointing to the positive interpretations of the idea. A new feature was his desire to put a distance between the PPS and the RPPS radical wartime programme. In his speech the PPS leader made no references to the socialization of the means of production and merely spoke of recovery and national wellbeing. Tackling the thorny question of Poland's past relations with the Soviet Union, he skirted over sources of conflict and expressed the hope that misunderstandings could be overlooked.[43] While Osóbka-Morawski sought to confirm that the party supported national reconciliation and reconstruction, that was not a view taken by all the leaders. Matuszewski, representing a pro-communist group, challenged the anodyne programme thus outlined by calling for the party to assume a leadership role, to forge closer relations with the PPR and to close ranks against the reactionary social and political elements. He advocated the nationalization of banks, mines and major enterprises, a process which be believed was already well advanced in fraternal democracies such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.[44] At this stage the conflict of ideas within the party leadership was expressed openly and in a robust fashion. Nor was the fact that diverse ideas were held by members of the party a cause for concern.

During 1945 party discussions in the PPS focused on the general elections, which it was hoped would take place in the spring of 1946. The leadership was tormented by the realization that the party might be too weak to win a majority. While some favoured an electoral pact with the PSL, others disagreed with this proposal, believing that the party should look to other left-wing parties and organizations, notably the Stronnictwo Ludowe (Peasant Alliance – SL) a communist sponsored peasant party, or the Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Democratic Alliance – SD). Drobner, who was identified by the PPR as the leader of the anti-Soviet faction, called for the party to go into the elections on its own. He viewed too close an association with the PPR as fatal to the future of the PPS, since workers in factories were already expressing their distrust of any organizations, including the PPR.[45] It was also noted that during elections to factory committees workers supported independent representatives, avoiding those who were too obviously connected with the PPR or even the PPS.

During the autumn of 1945 PPS sought to investigate two alternative

possibilities. One was whether closer collaboration with the PPR was possible, the second was on what conditions would Mikołajczyk's PSL join an electoral bloc. A joint PPS–PPR forum was established to discuss the issue. But the debates in this forum went beyond the expediency of the forthcoming elections. They were rooted in ideological debates that pre-dated the Russian Revolution and the break-up of the Second International. The communist analysis was articulated by Gomułka, who took the view that the Polish working class was still too weak and politically too naïve to appreciate how the opposition would use their genuine grievances to rally trade unions, factory committees and members of workers' cooperatives to attack left-wing parties. The communists were unwilling to credit these organizations with any degree of political maturity. Stanisław Szwalbe of the PPS strongly disagreed with this interpretation. He insisted that working-class organizations would play a crucial role in educating the working class and suggested that the government should base itself upon their support. During joint meetings of the two parties' executives, the PPR accused the PPS of not doing enough to end workers' strikes that had brought production to a standstill in the industrial town of Łódź. PPS believed these to have been caused by the difficult economic situation, whereas PPR focused on the likelihood of reactionary forces exploiting genuine problems for their own political end.[46]

In the course of these meetings when attempts were made to get down to practical issues such as worker representation in factories, differences between the two parties became more pronounced. The PPS leaders accused the communists of consistently sidelining the socialists who had historically dominated the trade union movement. Drobner tried to insist on separate lists for elections to factory committees suggesting that in the first place both parties should develop their own organizations and only then proceed to agreeing joint lists. The PPS leaders already knew that the party's hitherto strong base among skilled workers was suffering due to the party's close association with the communists. The PPR's aggressive attitude towards members of the wartime WRN and AK caused widespread hostility in the factories.[47] Reports from Katowice and Warsaw confirmed this state of affairs. Generally, reports coming from the provincial PPS organizations confirmed the party membership's commitment to working-class unity, but cautioned against excessive organizational dependence on the PPR.

Paradoxically, as communist control over the economy increased, so the working class came to view such control as injuring workers' interests. On 12 December 1945 the PPS leadership discussed reports which

suggested that both pre-war members of the PPS and those who had joined since the end of the war were generally hostile to the communists. In most cases the reason for this was that the difficult economic and living conditions were associated with the communists' monopoly of all decision making. Factory committees, the internal security apparatus and state functions were increasingly being taken over by members of the PPR. As a result they were blamed for all setbacks. Attempts by PPS activists to persuade the workers of the need to accept working-class unity were not successful, in the first place because the communists were by then accused of having failed to protect the workers' interests.[48] These factors rather than ideological differences precluded further collaboration between the two parties.

Within the PPS the left was critical of the PPR preoccupation with control of the security apparatus, state functions and means of production. When on 30 November 1945 the PPS leadership discussed the forthcoming general elections the left rather than the right wing of the party insisted that socialists should take a more active role in opposing communist policies. Henryk Wachowicz, who is identified as belonging to the left wing of the PPS and who increasingly distrusted the PPR, called for the arming of workers in factories. 'Every party member should be a member of the party militia. We should capture the street and control it' was his rallying call. The other extreme of the party spectrum manifested itself in Kazimierz Rusinek dissociating itself from the communists' failures and concentrating on securing the votes of the disaffected workers, the petit bourgeois and intellectual elements.[49]

At the beginning of 1946 the party membership changed. During the first months after the Soviet liberation of Poland the PPS had been no more than a rump of the pre-war organization. The rebuilding of the party had been hampered by uncertainty as to who among the pre-war leaders would return to Poland and what would be the party's role in post-war politics. By the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946 those leaders who disagreed with the government of national unity stayed in exile, while those who returned reaffirmed their commitment to the recreated socialist party. Whereas in the initial phase the leaders of the pro-Soviet faction of the PPS dominated the PPS, a year later they had ceased to be the driving force of the party. In the spring of 1946 the appointment of Józef Cyrankiewicz to the post of secretary general of the PPS consolidated the centre–left profile of the party. Cyrankiewicz was the most prominent of the pre-war leaders of the PPS to return to Poland after the war. His power base was in Kraków, where the PPS–WRN had been particularly strong. In April 1941 he was arrested by the

Gestapo and experienced the full traumas of imprisonment in the concentration camps of Oświęcim and Mauthausen. He owed his survival to the fact that by the time he arrived in Oświęcim, the lowest ranks of the camp administration were controlled by German political prisoners. On being informed that a prominent socialist was being sent to the camp they were able to secure for him employment which increased his chances of survival. When Cyrankiewicz returned to Poland he was firmly committed to left-wing solidarity and organizational unity. Thus in spite of his earlier membership of PPS–WRN, in 1945 he came to represent the section of the party which worked towards unity with PPR.[50] During the period from the XXVI PPS Congress in June 1945 Cyrankiewicz gradually overshadowed Osóbka-Morawski, who, in the course of the next few months, was sidelined.

In the case of the war-time SL, the Moscow-based communists tried in the first place to take advantage of the divisions which existed in the party to assert their claim to leadership to the peasant movement. In March 1944 a section of the SL which took the name 'Wola Ludu' (People's Will) claimed to represent the SL within the KRN. Divisions within the SL went deep and the puppet group in the Soviet Union was strengthened by genuine conflicts between the majority SL 'Roch' group and the radical SL 'Wici'. In October 1944 a leader of a breakaway SL section in occupied Poland sent a message to the SL group in the Soviet Union. The author suggested that excessive subordination to the AK and the government-in-exile was causing a reaction within the SL and that a new democratic SL was emerging.[51] Later on this group was to meet with the SL within the ZPP which was led by Andrzej Witos, brother of Wincenty Witos, chairman of the pre-war SL. The first congress of this reconstituted SL took place in September 1944 in Lublin. Nevertheless, nothing could disguise the fact that this group was no more than a small and unrepresentative faction of a much more powerful and numerous party which existed in Poland and which would have to be drawn into a dialogue with the PKWN. The irrelevance of the 'Lublin' SL was sealed when Mikołajczyk, as leader of the SL in exile and prime minister of the government-in-exile, opened talks with Stalin. The wartime SL in common with the PPS–WRN would henceforth look for ways of emerging out of conspiracy so as to have a chance of participating in the political life of liberated Poland.

On returning to Poland Mikołajczyk changed the name of the wartime SL to Polskie Stronnictow Ludowe (Polish Peasant Alliance – PSL). The exile party retained the old name and, to add to the confusion, the communist-sponsored peasant party also used the old name

of Stronnictwo Ludowe, (SL). The peasant party's role in post-war Poland was guaranteed on account of the importance of agriculture in the period of reconstruction. The peasants constituted a majority of the population and this inevitably highlighted the need for land reform. The PPR and PPS were acutely aware of the critical importance of the peasants and the agrarian question to all political debates. At a time of increasing polarization between supporters of the new regime and those still loyal to the government-in-exile on the one side, the peasants loyalties could not be taken for granted by either side, while their support would make a great difference to both sides. But the peasants had no automatic loyalty to either side. In fact a strong distrust of the communists and fear of collectivization was mirrored by an equal anxiety about the return to power of the supporters of the pre-war government and in particular of the military. Even though the SL was active in exile politics throughout the war and the movement agreed for the BCh to be incorporated in the AK, the party was never willing to give up its independence and the BCh units did not give up their own identity.

The SL's vision for post-war Poland had been already outlined even before the liberation. As hopes for the war's end were raised in 1943, SL considered the need to put in place the principles on which a post-war government should be based. In August 1943, emboldened by the fact that both in the government-in-exile and in the underground political structures, the SL held a pivotal role, the party outlined its programme. Clearly the leadership was anxious that through its contribution to the liberation of Poland it should secure for the peasants economic reforms and the establishment of a political system which would no longer be dominated by the landowners.[52] Pre-war politicians, particularly those connected with the Piłsudski regime were not to be allowed to hold posts in the new government. In order to make sure that the peasant movement was not sidelined once German forces were defeated, SL delegates were to be attached to all underground political structures, in particular where other parties might have been dominant. Implicit in the outline was a statement that while the wartime conditions required national unity and the leadership of military men, during the transitional period from war to peace, these men should not be allowed once more to establish a monopoly of power. More than any other statement this one defined the extent of distrust that existed between the SL and the AK.

The leadership of the SL identified the security apparatus as obliged to play a key role during the critical time between the end of occupation and the establishment of a post-war administration. It therefore

discussed the character of the first police force and that of the local authority militias. The first would secure key installations and facilities, while the second would act as a local police force, protecting private property. It was the SL's intention that the peasant community should be well represented in both.[53] Clearly it was the SL's fear that the peasant community might not be able to put forward sufficient numbers of skilled and knowledgable experts to participate fully in the establishment of the new state administration. Thus the search for appropriate people, those who could be put forward to work in the central authorities, was to start early. At the same time, the SL was to investigate how it could make sure that people of a suitable quality could head local administrations. Plans for the implementation of land reform, according to the SL the most important of the peasant movement's post-war aims, were to be prepared at a local level. The peasant leaders did not trust the central authorities to formulate land reform legislation that would then be handed down to local authorities for implementation. They hoped that the local authorities would prepare detailed outline projects to be handed over to the government. The central authorities would thus act on information coming from the grass roots and would undertake to implement their proposals.[54]

The SL, in spite of its commitment to upholding the government-in-exile and its apparent cooperation with the underground structures, remained profoundly distrustful of its wartime partners, and in particular of the military leadership and the landowners. In plans for post-war reforms repeated references were made to 1918, when it was believed the peasants who had made a full contribution to the liberation of Poland, were sidelined. Hence their determination that after the war a robust democracy should be supported by strong local authorities.

The establishment of the PKWN created a dilemma for the SL. The emergence of a rival SL within the PKWN, ranks and open splits in the ranks of the party threatened to undermine the party's aims. At least initially the problem was confined to the making of painful decisions in relation to the London leadership. The fact that the prime minister of the government-in-exile was a member of the SL guaranteed the continuing loyalty of the party membership in occupied Poland. Nevertheless, as the liberation of Polish territories became a reality, this loyalty clashed with a desire to become directly involved in the building up of the first post-war administration. The defeat of the Warsaw Uprising and Mikołajczyk's willingness to participate in negotiations with the Soviet Union opened a further round of internal party debates.

A resolution approved at a first post-war SL conference on 4 November 1944 reflected the old, still unresolved dilemmas, and new ones. Thus, while claiming that it did not wish to prejudge the issue of whether the uprising had been a prudent decision, resolutions dealing with the AK made the SL's attitude toward the military men who dominated it, only too clear. It was stated: 'we want to see the activities of the AK closely tied and unified with the work of the Delegate. The two track (approach) to the fight for independence, must cease and the civilian authorities must have an influence on the ideological profile and the activities of the AK.'[55] Aiming to reverse the AK domination of all underground military activities the SL intended not merely to subordinate the AK to stricter political control, but planned to have the post-war army based on the BCh. For the time being, the SL still tried to maintain the unity of the underground movement, but Mikołajczyk's policies increasingly alienated him from the core of the London exile community and had the effect of putting a larger than hitherto distance between the SL and the underground movement loyal to the London government.

In its attempt to follow a middle line between the PKWN on the one hand and the London government on the other, the SL in Polish territories faced the problem caused by the communists encouraging and facilitating the emergence of the rival SL, which was part of the PKWN. For the SL, which believed that it had a strong chance of winning any future general elections, the problem became one of how to regularize its political statutes, while not recognizing the Lublin SL. The executive committee, at its February 1945 meeting, condemned the PKWN for its willingness to accept the alteration of Poland's Eastern borders, but the meeting's full fury was focused on the AK. Comparing the present situation to that which prevailed in Italy after the First World War, where the army's actions were seen to have led directly to the establishment of fascism, the SL accused the AK of harbouring dictatorial aspirations.[56] The AK was accused of trying to drag the SL and its BCh units into conspiratorial activities, while at the same time executing peasants accused of collaboration. Leaders of the SL once more articulated the wish that the party should take a more active role in determining the political profile of the post-war government.

The SL's loyalty to the government in London ceased with Mikołajczyk's decision to leave the government-in-exile. The SL withdrew from supporting the Arciszewski government. The decisions of the Yalta Conference increased the desire to legalize the party's status. Finally, the voluntary dissolution of the underground RJN released the

SL from any lingering obligation to the wartime agreements. In the meantime Mikołajczyk, in his talks with the Soviet Union and the PKWN was able to insist on the participation of democratic parties in the provisional government. Between 16 and 25 July 1945, the Lublin parties, Mikołajczyk and a number of politicians from Poland arrived at the final composition of the TRJN. Henceforth the PPR, SL, PPS and the newly formed Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Democratic Alliance – SD) were deemed to be legal parties. Mikołajczyk fought for the rights of the opposition parties, but failed. It was nevertheless agreed that the nationalist movement could combine with the Stronnictwo Pracy (Labour Alliance – SP) to form the Stronnictwo Demokratyczne (Democratic Alliance – SD). In June leaders of the peasant movement came together to form a new post-war party. The party which then took the name Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Alliance – PSL) became the successor to the deeply divided pre-war and wartime SL. An effort was made to overcome these earlier problems by bringing together various sections of the party. Wincenty Witos became the chairman of the party, but on Witos' death in November, Mikołajczyk took over. Henceforth two peasant parties continued to exist, the SL, which emerged in Lublin, and the Mikołajczyk-led PSL. In reality the first continued to be a weak structure dominated by the PPR, whereas PSL hoped to become the majority party after the next elections.

For the time being, the legal status of the BCh units remained a problem. During the period between the entry of the Red Army onto ethnically Polish territories and the establishment of the TRJN, some BCh units came out, others remained in conspiracy. Although technically part of the AK military structure, the BCh units that had always maintained their right to retain their own commanders felt free to make their own decisions. In some case BCh units had joined the AL and then were incorporated into the Polish Army. BCh units were also directly transformed into local militia units, though BCh partisans were not known to go into the security services.[57] Those units which made the decision not to come out, and the disincentive to remain in conspiracy was very strong in view of Soviet arrests and reprisals, either voluntarily disbanded or continued to exist as conspiratorial units. In August 1945 talks were conducted with General Spychalski, the political–educational commander of the Polish Army to agree conditions for the remaining BCh units to come out of conspiracy. Clearly in order to protect the BCh partisans from reprisals, but also to gain recognition for the peasant movements' distinct contribution to the underground movement, the PSL stressed that no anti-communist peasant organiza-

tions had been sanctioned. Where peasants had, after the end of hostilities, taken to the forests, this had been entirely due to indiscriminate reprisals against them by the Red Army and the security service. BCh partisans were to have the years of participation in fighting Germany counted as active service and their ranks were to be confirmed. Of importance was also a request that Spychalski recognize that the BCh 'had been an army of a revolutionary character'.[58]

In the initial stages of the establishment of the provisional government it would appear that the communists had outmanoeuvred the peasant movement. Mikołajczyk was appointed deputy prime minister and minister for agriculture, Władysław Kiernik was given the ministry of public administration and Czesław Wycech the ministry of education. At the same time, four portfolios went to the rival SL. Nevertheless, in the first months of the existence of the TRJN, the peasant movement managed to gain full approval for its social and economic programme. Land reform was approved, as was legislation that would facilitate the creation of peasant cooperatives. Of equal importance was the government commitment to the establishment of elementary schooling in all villages.[59] Mikołajczyk nevertheless felt frustrated by the lack of genuine political power. His aim was no less than an electoral victory that would give the two peasant parties 75 percent of seats in the first elected chamber. His efforts went in the direction of building a party structure that would secure for the peasant movement this victory.

In the meantime in the countryside relations between representatives of the three main parties varied. In some instances they cooperated successfully, establishing the first administrative structures, securing public buildings and restarting production. In others, the PPR and PPS worked well together, viewing the PSL as a rival. Elsewhere the PSL and PPS activists found they had more in common and were both hostile to the aggressive policies pursued by the PPR. Local matters such as law and order tended to depend largely on the political setup in the given district. It would still be some time before the government would genuinely be able to impose its will on areas outside the main conurbations. In the meantime the remnants of the wartime underground still held sway.

6
The Opposition

The British and US decisions to withdraw diplomatic recognition from the Polish government-in-exile and treat the TRJN as the provisional government in Poland dramatically altered the relationship between the exile civilian and military authorities. This led the military leaders to believe themselves to be free from previous constraints on planning and authorizing military action against the Soviet Union. Inevitably the changing international situation also had an impact on relations between Polish political and military leaders in Western Europe and the leadership in Poland. In London and in Italy and Germany where Polish troops were based, various commanders took it upon themselves to investigate means of freeing Poland from Soviet domination. In the meantime in Poland, ex-partisans, frequently bewildered by the collapse of the underground leadership, either dispersed or stayed in their units awaiting the next stage of the fight, this time against the Red Army. The precarious unity forged by the AK leadership during the course of the war collapsed and gave rise to a bewildering variety of units, bands and groups which, depending on circumstances, their own political objectives and the nature of their leadership, took whatever action they thought appropriate. General demoralization and insecurity were further accentuated by the low quality of the army, police and security service. Not until the end of 1946, arguably even later in some outlying areas did the state establish its full authority.

The state of insecurity persisted in Poland far longer than in other European countries. Unlike France, in Poland the pre-war administration did not survive German occupation and therefore was not in place to continue the task of local and central administration. Although the Polish situation might be compared to that of Yugoslavia, the similarities are superficial. In Yugoslavia, the partisans held and administered

territories before the end of the war. Thus as the partisans' control was expanded so the already prepared administrative structures were put in place. In Poland the incoming provisional authority had no experience of administering liberated territories. The PKWN and then the TRJN had to put together new structures. In the absence of reliable personnel the communists initially co-opted members of the PPS and PSL into local councils, though in reality they were never sure of their loyalty. Only after the end of the war, were unreliable, inappropriate and outright hostile people removed from government and local authority posts through verification processes.

The TRJN task was made much more complex by the fact that during the war the Delegatura and the AK had prepared the basic framework of post-war civil administration, but these had been destroyed through the failure of the Warsaw Uprising. Thus as the war drew to a close and Polish territories were liberated, the underground anti-communist opposition would have wanted to build up an underground state, but in reality was not able to do so due to its own gradual collapse, disintegration and finally defeat. Until the TRJN, with Soviet aid and the use of reliable troops made available by the end of war activities in Germany, was able to establish physical control over territories outside the main town and communication routes, a state of flux prevailed. Neither the communists nor the underground opposition had the ability to outright control and administer Poland in 1945.

The defeat of Germany and the establishment of three-, and then (with France assuming the role of occupying power in Germany) four-, power control over enemy states, gradually led to the reduction in the movement of populations which was a feature of the last months of war and the first months of peace. The Poles in exile were made to realize that, as their importance to the British and US was dramatically reduced, the freedoms and privileges accorded to them during the war were likewise soon to be reduced. During the first months of 1945 Polish politicians and military leaders in the West were able to travel to inspect Polish units in Europe. General Anders and General Maczek could come to London and then go back to the Polish units in Italy and Germany. Radio links between the various Polish organizations were maintained, as were those with Polish territories. Prisoners freed from German camps, in particular those who had participated in the Warsaw Uprising, initially gravitated West to join Polish units. The wartime leadership once liberated contacted the government and military staff in London. Each of these men had their own undisputedly tragic experiences which led them to assume that they would be allowed to take the

initiative in defeating Poland's enemies, whoever they might be. They were rarely willing to accept that with the defeat of Germany, the victors would concentrate on peacetime policies.

In the West the allies wanted to restore order and to reduce the movement of whole communities and individuals across the continent. The Western powers no longer had any reason to take into account Polish sensibilities. Ideally, foreign troops, displaced people and ex-prisoners of war were to be swiftly returned to their country of origin where, it was hoped, they would take their place in the process of post-war reconstruction. Thus, the Poles, from being Britain's, admittedly difficult, but valued, allies became a post-war problem. Their various plans for fomenting instability behind Soviet lines and preparations for a future war against the Soviet Union met with little interest in British circles where it was feared that they would have an adverse impact on Britain's relations with the Soviet Union. Initially Polish military leaders who proceeded to make plans for ridding Poland of Soviet tutelage and their own victorious return to the homeland were unable to understand that war weariness and a general desire for reconstruction meant their plans would have only a limited appeal to those in recently liberated Poland. In Poland the population might find some aspect of the TRJN economic and social programme appealing was as unthinkable to the émigré leadership as was the possibility that the NKVD would successfully root out underground organizations and destroy them. The destruction of the underground resistance during the post-war period can be in equal measures attributed to the unrealistic plans hatched by the émigré groups in the West and to the successes of the NKVD and the security services. While the community remained generally hostile to the new regime, in Poland reconstruction became a priority. The desire to continue fighting and to materially support the units decreased with time.

When Germany had been defeated there were no plans to utilize Polish units in the West, the Pacific, or Asia. Other than forcibly returning them to Poland, the only alternative was to use them for policing duties. Churchill would not countenance the first and ultimately it was concluded that the Poles would not be appropriate for the second. Demobilization was thus inevitable. Polish commanders, however, disagreed with the British assessment that war in Europe was finished and instead embarked on an ambitious programme of expanding the Polish army in Britain and Europe. A plan prepared by the operational section of the general staff, dated 11 August 1944 anticipated a British–Soviet war within the next ten years. The Poles in exile thus intended to build up their fighting forces to the maximum possible in anticipation of that

event.[1] The British disagreed and refused to support these projects. Undaunted, Anders pushed on and by September 1945 the number of men under Polish command in the West had doubled to reach the figure of 250 000. The British authorities had no control over who was incorporated into the Polish units. The general attitude among the Polish commanders was to focus on expansion and not to pay too much attention to some of the recruits' past activities. This enabled some ex-citizens of the Baltic States who had collaborated with the German authorities to slip into Britain by first joining the Polish army. By the end of 1945, however, the British government had asserted its authority over the Polish fighting forces. On 15 March Prime Minister Clement Attlee invited the commanders of all major Polish units in the West to London and informed them that the soldiers would be demobilized with the option of being able either to return to Poland or to remain in Britain. Some 6800 men took up the first option while 160 000 decided to remain in the West with many in due course moving to various countries of the British Empire and Commonwealth. Gradually, and in the face of strong opposition from within the Polish community, the Polish soldiers were demobilized and through the Resettlement Corps incorporated into British civilian life.[2]

When on 30 June 1945 the British and US governments recognized the TRJN as the provisional government of Poland, the fate of the Polish units in the West was sealed. Nevertheless, until all units were brought to Britain and properly demobilized in accordance with Churchill's promise, the British authorities had no choice but to work with the Polish command structure, which they could not replace. This gave the Poles scope and time to still pursue their own plans for restructuring the units and for plans for action in Poland. As the British authorities withdrew the facilities given to the Poles for the duration of the war, the Polish military leaders, no longer accountable to their own politicians, fought to retain what had been built up during the war, pursuing a variety of plans, some surprisingly unrealistic.

Mindful of the need not to give the Soviet government an excuse to accuse them of aiding the Poles in their plans for a future war against the Soviet Union, the British authorities gradually, but relentlessly, reduced all opportunities for communication between the West and Poland. On 9 February the Foreign Office asked the Polish Government to desist from sending any further radio messages to Poland. Anxious that the Poles would try and get around this restriction the point was reinforced by a further statement a few days later when they were told that all communications with Poland should end immediately.[3] The

Poles nevertheless did manage to maintain radio links, since the British could not restrict the radio links operated by the Polish military units in the West, which had still not been demobilized. Thus with the cessation of direct contacts between the ex-London government-in-exile and Poland, the military leaders undertook to convey these messages through the radio networks that they were allowed to maintain for the time being. This inevitably reduced the influence of the Polish émigré politicians on contacts with the homeland and action there. Already in December 1944 all flights from Britain and Italy to Poland were discontinued. The Poles argued that it was essential to drop agents into Poland, as they would carry funds, equipment and instructions. The British, increasingly mindful of Soviet disapproval, sought to reduce these contacts. The training of men for action behind enemy lines was likewise ended even before the defeat of Germany. On 4 September 1945, all links between Polish bases on the continent and Poland were supposed to have ended.[4]

In reality, in spite of British disapproval, various Polish officers, in particular those who during the war had been in charge of contacts with the occupied territories, proceeded to establish networks of conspiratorial organizations the role of which was to prepare plans to fight the Soviet Union. Although radio communication was radically reduced, and finally forbidden, contact with Poland was to be maintained via couriers.[5] All means of maintaining links with Poland were carefully considered. In April, as radio contact was becoming less reliable, General Kopański, chief of staff of the Polish Armed Forces, wrote to Poland advising that use should be made of allied ex-POWs who were being evacuated via Odessa to convey information to the West.

Funds, which the Polish armies still held, were allocated for the purchase of safe houses, which also became training centres. President Roosevelt's earlier grant of $10 million was set aside for the purpose of continuing to maintain conspiratorial organizations in territories under Soviet control. With equipment sent from the West, the anti-communist underground hoped to establish an illegal radio broadcasting station in Poland. This, however, was not possible.[6] The exile government of Prime Minister Arciszewski had no control over these machinations. It was to learn of the full extent of the army's plans and financial dealings only in 1952 when the Polish community in Britain was rocked by accusations that the military organizations preparing and training men for action to destabilize Poland had been infiltrated by communists. Only then was a full investigation authorized and this revealed that a number of military commanders had used various funds

allocated to them during the war to finance plans, which had not been sanctioned by the exiled community leaders.[7]

The gap between the exiled leaders' own assessment of the actions they wanted to undertake in Poland, and the reality of what was possible, had nevertheless become serious enough to render most plans impracticable. Thus, while in Poland opposition to Soviet domination and to the newly established TRJR persisted, all attempts to centralize or coordinate action were unsuccessful. At the same time in spite of attacking and harrying the authorities, a variety of units, bands and groups were ultimately not able to inhibit or prevent the gradual consolidation of the government's powers and authority throughout Poland during 1945–47. The security services, the army and the NKVD were ultimately able to prevent the anti-communist resistance from building up a countrywide network of organizations. The failure of the opposition in Poland had possibly less to do with what was being planned in the West on the one hand than with the realities of daily life, and the determination and successes of the security services on the other. The exile and underground leadership's underestimation of the communist forces played a role in the ultimate destruction of all forms of underground opposition. The population's desire for the end of hostilities and economic reconstruction was strong and as a result the anti-communist underground's plans for the continuation of the struggle had little to offer. People in the villages, towns and industry, in spite of having no conscious desire to support a communist-led government, did endorse attempts to eradicate lawlessness and further destruction. The TRJN thus could increasingly count on the community willingly participating in the economic, social and political life through the legalized political institutions.

Among the political parties in exile there was no agreement on what to do with the underground military units in Poland. For the BCh the issue was resolved by Mikołajczyk's decision to cooperate in the formation of the first post-war administration. Thus the PSL focused on establishing for itself a new role in the post-war political life of the country. It acted as a legal opposition with extensive hopes that a majority would be secured by the peasant parties in the forthcoming general elections. In the circumstances the BCh had no reason to continue in the underground and every reason to return home. While the peasants were possibly the first to leave the partisan units, the community's support for those who remained underground was critical to their continuing survival. The communists were only too aware of the importance of gaining peasant support for the new regime. The need for food was only

one reason for anxiety about the peasants' response to the first post-war administration, which unfortunately found itself imposing supply quotas every bit as stringent as those exacted by the Nazis. In a country that remained predominantly rural, anti-communist resistance could only survive if the peasant community supported it. Without support it would collapse. Thus during the first years after the war, the TRJN sought to placate the peasants through land reform, as much to encourage economic stability in that sector as in the hope that the villages would deny vital life lines to anti-communist bands. While the peasants could never be described as supporters of the new regime, the bands' increasing lawlessness and desperation alienated them from the villages, whose support was critical to their survival.

The first attempt to prepare an underground organization in anticipation of the establishment of Soviet control over all Polish territories was undertaken even before the Warsaw Uprising. Okulicki, on arrival in Warsaw in 1944 and in agreement with sections of the AK, proceeded to build a new underground organization, which was to be in deeper conspiracy than the already widely known AK. This was to take the name NIE ('No'). Since its aim was to prepare to continue the fight against the Soviet Union, the new organization could not be based on the old AK.[8] This plan had the approval of some of the London commanders, notably Sosnkowski, who was suspected of being behind the idea of preparing for war against the Soviet Union. It did not have the approval of either the exile government or the Delegatura.[9]

When the commander of the AK went into captivity after the Warsaw Uprising, he appointed Okulicki as his successor. For reasons which remain unclear, NIE did not succeed at that point in taking over the leadership of the AK. Outside Warsaw, AK units continued as before and former organizational unity prevailed, even though much weakened by the decision of BCh and NSZ units to go their own way. On 19 January 1945 Okulicki disbanded the AK making it clear that this was not the end of the fight for an independent Poland. On the contrary, in an order that was given further to his dissolution instructions, Okulicki stated that a new underground organization was to take over from the AK.[10] With the dissolution of the AK, its members were to initiate a new form of opposition namely: 'to take advantage of all local activities, to take over all aspect of the daily life of the of the provisional Lublin governments'. Small conspiratorial organizations were to be retained and these were to maintain radio contact with each other.[11] But Okulicki realized that the end of the war created new circumstances. He himself found it

difficult to coordinate action with the AK leadership and the new political organization, the RJN. Loss of contact and confusion in the leadership were taking their toll. It was noted that the rank and file showed signs of independence. Writing to Kopański at the end of January 1945, Okulicki explained: 'Due to the grass roots attitude, I think that we are being forced to be very careful in the formulation of directives for the boycott of Provisional Lublin government decrees'.[12] When Okulicki and the leadership of the underground movement were arrested by the Soviet authorities, plans for the NIE organization simply withered. The remaining political leaders had no commitment to pursuing it and most London politicians distrusted it.

In April Rzepecki, who was Okulicki's successor, officially dissolved 'NIE' and instead and in agreement with General Anders, who took over as commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces, proceeded to plan for a new underground command structure. This was to act under the name of Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych (Delegation of the Armed Forces – DSZ). This new organization was an attempt to reunite military and political leadership in Poland under one heading. It also tried to persuade existing AK units to disband. In an appeal dated 27 May the recently appointed government delegate to the armed forces in Poland called for all units to lay down arms and to return to civilian life.[13] This appeal and subsequent ones had been motivated by a real anxiety that continuing in various underground units, the purpose of which would become less clear, young people were likely to became bandits. The government-in-exile feared losing control over developments in the underground and was anxious that a whole generation of young people would waste their lives.[14] These appeals also failed because of the Soviet arrest of the Delegate and because the AK commanders had not been consulted about the change. The military commanders in the West realized that in Poland various AK units were still continuing the fight, though now against the Soviet and Lublin authorities, and the 'forest' units would not subordinate themselves willingly to instructions from London.

When a new and final underground umbrella organization was established this was done because it became clear that many AK units continued in existence and had refused to disband. One of the difficulties faced by those who had refused to lay down arms and declare their membership of AK units to the authorities was that as the TRJN tried to establish the rule of law, these people were trapped in a legal twilight zone. They had neither German identity papers, which could be presented to obtain new identity papers, nor new documentation acquired

on the basis of having declared their previous membership of underground units. Janusz Bokszanin, the last commander of the AK, claimed many years later that it was the duty of the remaining leadership of the AK to accept these men's decision to continue opposing the new regime and to steer them towards a different way of fighting it, namely through electoral means. The 'Wolność i Niezawisłość' ('Freedom and Independence' – WiN) organization was therefore an attempt by the AK leaders to harness what they could not dissolve, namely the remaining units.[15] This was to be no longer a military organization but one which had political objectives. It was to exist only until elections had taken place and true democracy established.[16]

WiN's activities were based on a painful conclusion that a war against the Soviet Union, on the outbreak of which so many of the Polish military leaders based in the West had pinned their hopes, would not take place in the near future. It also accepted that henceforth all decisions concerning Poland's future would have to be made in Poland, and not in the West. During the months following its establishment WiN forged close links with the PSL, seeing it as the only force likely to win the forthcoming general elections. The peasant party never, however, had any formal links with the underground organization. During the last months of 1945 and the beginning of 1946 WiN membership swelled. Armed units proclaiming their loyalty to WiN frequently attacked prisons and government organizations. But the organization was beset by setbacks. Three times its leadership was arrested and had to be reconstructed. By 1947 the security services together with the NKVD had fought back and gradually destroyed WiN and all remaining underground organizations.

The core of the NIE and WiN organizations consisted of ex-AK commanders and supporters. The nationalist movement's relations with the government-in-exile and the AK had always been strained. Although the NSZ units had ostensibly agreed to be incorporated into the AK, they never accepted the authority of the AK commanders. After the collapse of the Warsaw Uprising and the weakening of the Delegatura and AK leadership, the nationalist movement proceeded with its own policies. The movement also faced conflicts between the leadership based in Poland and that in London. While those in London supported the Arciszewski government and its policy of abject opposition to any dialogue with the Soviet Union and the TRJN, those in Poland addressed problems facing them there. Some within the SN wanted the party to seek legalization and then to build an alliance with the PSL. They argued that the forthcoming general elections would give them a chance to

assume a political role in Poland. Those in exile disagreed and tried to prevent the party from building a leadership in Poland.[17] Due to lack of evidence it is difficult to reconstruct the course of developments during the period 1945–47, though it would appear that in the absence of agreement on the way forward and due to internal ideological differences, no clear decision was made within the NSZ. In any case the TRJN was unwilling to allow for a nationalist party to emerge, thus blocking the way for the legalization of the movement. The nationalist movement continued its anti-communist activities, refusing to become part of the post-AK organizations.

The NSZ units in common with other nationalist organizations which had refused to join the AK had no illusions as to what would be their fate once the Red Army entered Polish territories. Thus, unlike the AK which had planned on establishing its authority in areas freed from German occupation and then entering into a dialogue with the Red Army, the nationalists had no plan for any degree of accommodation with the Soviet authorities. As a result, at the beginning of 1944 an order was issued for these units to move West. After the Warsaw Uprising, with the notable exception of the Swiętokrzyska Brigade, which left Poland and linked up with US forces in Bohemia, they concentrated west of the Vistula. After the resumption of the offensive by the Red Army in January 1945, some of the most prominent nationalist leaders and commanders of the NSZ fled West. It would seem that some attempts continued to be made to bring together disparate units under the umbrella organization which took the name Narodowe Zjednoczenie Militarne (National Military Unity – NZN), though it is not possible to say whether this was successful.[18]

Although relations between units loyal to WiN and the NSZ were generally good, they seem not to have sought to cooperate or to form a common command structure. As in other underground organizations, the destruction of the underground framework and the departure of the political and military leadership from Poland weakened the movements' cohesion and led to internal conflicts.[19] This might explain why NSZ units became particularly determined and reckless in their attacks. Still highly motivated, but lacking any plans other than to fight the communists, these units posed a real threat to the first post-war administrators in the country by attacking administrators, trade unionists, members of the MO and UB and known supporters of the TRJN. From the end of 1945 onwards the security services mounted a successful campaign against the NSZ units but it took two years before they were able to arrest the leadership, which was still in Poland.[20] In 1947 on dec-

laration of a further amnesty the remaining units were given an opportunity to come out of the underground.

The security situation in Poland was a matter of constant concern for the new administration. The question of Poland's future was of interest to Stalin, nevertheless as long as war activities continued in Poland and, until these ended and the future of Germany remained unresolved, the Soviet Union viewed Poland as a security zone. They therefore monitored events in Poland and noted any signs of the anti-communist opposition. Arrests of AK members led to the NKVD either gaining or breaking radio codes, which were used by those who sought to continue resistance. This meant that the Russian security service was aware of the underground's organizational structures, its membership and its activities. The underground might well have hastened its own defeat by underestimating the importance of Poland to Soviet security. As long as the future of Poland was viewed by them as purely a 'Polish Question', they did not accept that the NKVD was not so much fighting to subordinate Poland to Soviet whims as seeking to secure Soviet military objectives and the future safety of the Soviet Union. Thus developments in Poland were of direct concern to the highest authorities in the Soviet Union who wanted the security situation to be tackled even before the future of Poland was decided. Since the NKVD was only too aware of the chaos prevailing in the Polish security service, which continued to be plagued by desertions and infiltration by enemies of the new regime, they made sure that matters relating to the underground opposition were retained in their hands.

In May 1945 the NKVD arrested a number of AK leaders from the Kraków area. In the process they found copies of messages from London and instructions sent to the district commanders by the Okulicki. After interrogating those arrested, the AK Treasury was found by the NKVD. This, among other valuables, contained over $216 000 in banknotes and $1000 in gold.[21] Over the next week the Soviet security service arrested further leaders, radio operators and then captured radio equipment. This breakthrough led the NKVD to information on the AK plans to build up a new terrorist underground structure. It was also known that ex-AK members were told to join the MO, the Polish army and security service, and to demoralize them from the inside. This action was made easier by the low calibre of the existing army, police and security service. In describing the effect of attacks by anti-communist bands, the NKVD deliberately used the word 'paralysed'. Thus the districts of Białystok, Lublin, Rzeszów, Warsaw and Kraków were deemed to be paralysed. The fight against the bands, according to the report, had to be continued by

five regiments of the NKVD and a battalion of motorized infantry. A request for three more regiments was submitted at the same time.[22] No sooner did the NKVD arrest and break up the local HQ of the NSZ and AK bands, than it was once more reminded how widespread were their activities. Intelligence gained in the process only confirmed what they already suspected, namely that the NSZ and AK had consciously instigated a policy of infiltrating all sections of the new administration, in particular the security apparatus. That combined with desertions from the police and army made it impossible for the Poles to establish control without Soviet assistance. Two regiments of the Polish army were withdrawn from Germany and formed the Internal Security Groups (KBW). They were used to assist in fighting bands in Poland, but their officer cadre consisted of reliable ex-Red Army and NKVD officers.[23]

In June 1945 a concerted campaign was initiated to destroy both the underground organizations and the armed units. In July, the NKVD reported that it had arrested eight people from the AK command, including Stefan Korboński, who was Rzepecki's deputy and head of the remaining civil structure of the wartime Delegatura. By apprehending many couriers, the NKVD increased its knowledge of the relationship between anti-communist organizations in Poland and the London exile community. They thus knew that, in order to throw the NKVD off their trail, the forest units were instructed to disband temporarily and hide their weapons. In the same report a reference was made to the arrest of members of an illegal PPS organization.[24]

At the beginning of August in the district of Białystok a powerful AK band, led by a commander using the pseudonym 'Mścisław', was brought under control'. Once more, by capturing the district AK archives and documentation, links with the London émigré community were disclosed.[25] At the same time the leadership of Warsaw AK was apprehended and radio communication between the AK and London was monitored over a prolonged period. It is therefore surprising to note that even by the NKVD's own admission their actions were not successful in eradicating armed resistance. In a report summing up the consequences of action taken during the summer months, it was noted that only nine bands numbering 309 men, had come out of hiding, while during the limited period of 1–10 August alone, 87 attacks had taken place. In spite of 631 members of armed units being taken out of action, either through arrest or death, there was no let up in the number of attacks on government property, warehouses and prisons, the latter staged to free those incarcerated.[26] A possible explanation for the relative lack of success in reducing the effectiveness of the underground is

that its units increasingly acted independently, so that the capture of the leadership and commanders on a national level did not have the expected effect of reducing the hostile activities in various areas. As was noted by the NKVD, the underground units appeared to have agreed on a broad strategy. But when it came to making decisions as to what action was to be taken within their operational areas, they acted on local intelligence.

In October, the security services penetrated the NSZ national organization. It thus became known that the NSZ decided to scale down random attacks and instead to concentrate on a long-term strategy of political consolidation and preparation for the anticipated conflict between the West and the Soviet Union. The commander of the NSZ was known to be attempting to get to the West where he had contacts with General Anders and where they hoped to secure funds. The NSZ's immediate objectives seem to have been to penetrate the ranks of the ruling parties, to join the army and to take commanding positions in the army and industry.[27] In November, WiN and NSZ bands went onto the offensive once more, attacking Red Army soldiers, individual Jews, police and party HQ and prisons. In the Lublin and Rzeszów districts the Ukrainian nationalist movements also became active, suggesting possible cooperation with the Polish underground.[28] The November campaign was possibly a last attempt by the rank and file and individual unit commanders to inflict losses on the new regime. This they succeeded in doing, but by then the NKVD had enough information to destroy WiN and to arrest most NSZ leaders.

Only a month after it was decided to reform the underground organization, the NKVD arrested most of its leaders. Between 1 and 15 November the WiN leadership was arrested and its funds confiscated. Rzepecki was among those detained; $1 112 310 in notes and $81 385 in gold, but only £5 in gold, was found to be in WiN's possession. During the interrogations of Rzepecki and the other leaders, the NKVD was able to find out how the organization came into being, what its relationship to the émigré leadership was and, finally, how the underground organizations in Poland loosened their links with the government-in-exile and increasingly determined their own policies. The Soviet leaders noted that the newly emerging parties had links with some of the leading personalities in WiN. Rzepecki was personally known to Mikołajczyk.[29] The security services' apparent success in identifying and arresting the underground leadership was completed in December when the NSZ was routed.[30]

The NKVD and the Polish security service's success in striking at the

leadership of the underground did not lead to the cessation of attacks in the following months. Various units, now cast loose with communication with London and the West rapidly ceasing, continued their fight against the new regime, in the process becoming a burden to the local population and finally a nuisance which could result in the authorities taking punitive action against these communities on the grounds of their having aided and assisted the underground bands. In due course the underground resistance would either melt away or continue to fight an increasingly ineffectual fight, although they nevertheless remained dangerous.

The PPR's inability to establish security in Poland was a source of embarrassment. During contacts with the Soviet leadership they were constantly upbraided for their failures. Inevitably the question of how to respond to the perilous security situation caused divisions within the PPR leadership. Those in the party who still attached importance to the maintenance of political unity with the socialists and the peasant parties found it difficult to defend this policy in the face of accusations that the party was not combatting the opposition with the required degree of decisiveness. On 10 May 1945 Gomułka gave a summary of the situation in Poland to the international section of the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party, the organization which took over from the now disbanded Comintern. During his speech Gomułka was goaded by Dimitrov about the Poles' conciliatory policy towards the three other parties which made up the TRJN, even though there were suspicions that they were encouraging, or at least were in contact with, the underground opposition.[31] The Polish party secretary repeatedly attempted to stave off Dimitrov's demands that force should be used, including the setting up of concentration camps. Gomułka reasoned by pointing out that the PPR was not in command of the situation in Poland and had to be careful to educate the people and not to increase the extent of confrontation within the community.

During the meeting of the central committee of the PPR, which took place on 20–21 May, Gomułka referred to the security services' failure to combat the activities of the 'bands'. He accused the UB of using provocative methods that increased, rather than decreased, hostility to the present regime. In a damning summary he declared: 'Through the organs of the Security service the reactionary forces are realising their policies. The activities of the Security service (provide) frequent examples of narrow sectarian policies. . . . It will come to pass that we shall be the NKVD's worst agency.'[32] This was in reality an attack on Radkiewicz, minister for public safety who had been given absolute control

over the UB, a decision which some of the communists, who had stronger contacts with the Polish rank and file, disapproved of. Gomułka had hoped that the local councils would have a say over matters of security. Berman and Bierut disagreed with his conviction that education and continuing party activities as much as military action would in due course destroy the underground.[33] With the failure to gain local support through a conciliatory approach, the hard line option was chosen.

The Polish security services and the political–educational officers in the army were clearly aware that their failure to combat lawlessness and the underground opposition was as much a reflection of the prevalence of armed units dedicated to fighting the regime as it was of their own organizational weaknesses. Even at the end of 1945, when the NKVD was able to boast notable successes in arresting WiN and NSZ leaders and destroying courier links, there was no sense that the government had gained the upper hand. On the contrary, the situation continued to be perilous, even if somewhat slightly better than it had been in the summer. A report for the chiefs of the political–educational section of the Polish army, dated December 1945, was blunt in its admission that although the situation had improved, it continued to be very dangerous. This was mainly due to the fact that the underground bands were regrouping after apparent defeats. As a result of army and security service action, NSZ and ex-AK bands were routed in the Poznań, Łódź, and Kraków districts. In the Białystok area, however, they had increased their attacks.[34] More damning was the admission that these bands continued to be popular because of 'moral and political' shortcomings of the security services and the army units. The population continued to be fearful of soldiers, the militia and Red Army soldiers. The political officers did not disguise in their confidential reports that this was with good reason. Only too frequently units brought in to combat 'banditism' were demoralized, badly trained and on the lookout to abscond.

The most damning element of the report was an open admission that the MO, the UB and the army failed to cooperate. There was an unhealthy rivalry between units of the three services, which not only facilitated the opposition's policies of infiltrating them, but in effect destroyed efforts made to combat the political opposition. In November and December 1945 units of the three services fought each other in incidents which appeared to be far from unusual. The result was Order No. 306 issued by the ministry of national defence, which defined principles of cooperation between the three services.[35] Alas, the instructions still had to be implemented. By the middle of December only in the

Lublin district was a dialogue established between the security services with very good results. In most cases it was believed that the MO and UB were responsible for misunderstandings and conflicts. In any case, where joint meetings had been introduced, relations between the rank and file of the three services continued to be very bad.

Internal reports of the political–educational sections of the Polish army and summaries sent by the NKVD to Beria recognized that a paradoxical situation had arisen where the security services could not be trusted to do the job of eliminating the opposition because their ranks had been infiltrated by those very men whom they were supposed to be fighting. The ranks of the MO and UB had been successfully penetrated by the NSZ and ex-AK fighters and in some cases conflicts between the two had as much to do with institutional rivalries as with conflicts between the AK and the NSZ infiltrators predating the end of the war. At the end of 1945 the ministry of public safety tried to define who could join the units of the UB and instigated wholesale purges of those already in its ranks. Henceforth only those belonging to parties which made up the TRJN were allowed to join the MO and UB. In reality the UB was monopolized by members of the PPR with the PPS being allowed some membership of the MO. This undoubtedly was as much a reflection of the communists' policy to keep control of security matters as a policy of building up the security service as an effective tool in the process of transformation which lay ahead.

The internal situation was slow to improve. Radkiewicz, the communist minister of public safety, confided to Eugenio Reale, the Italian ambassador to Poland that 'common and political banditism' was a major issue in January 1946. Reale was a communist and ex-prisoner of war and therefore sympathetic to the new regime. Radkiewicz was likely to have been frank in his conversations with him. Thus, according to the minister, common banditism was the plague of all countries that had recently experienced war, and had not diminished. He estimated that at least 10000 men continued active, though his telling comment that: 'the peasants had recently stopped aiding the bandits, as they had done before' would suggest that he included political opposition in that category.[36] The definition of 'political bandits' was applied by Radkiewicz to all those who had been active in the resistance during the war but who refused to come out of conspiracy by 2 August 1945, the date of an amnesty.

According to Radkiewicz there were still 15000 active 'political bandits'. Of those, the NSZ was considered to be the most dangerous and determined. According to Radkiewicz the government-in-exile and

General Anders had been heavily involved in fomenting dissent and recently the PSL had also become involved.[37] In February Radkiewicz called a press conference to denounce foreign involvement in aiding the anti-communist underground. He focused in particular on the NSZ units, which had left Poland and were given sanctuary in the West. Anders' alleged support for underground units was of particular concern to the Italian ambassador since Polish troops continued to be stationed in Italy, where they had caused problems by waging a campaign of intimidation against Italian communists and socialists. During the press conference Radkiewicz declared that 1427 members of the security services had either been killed or died in action against the bands and 2000 members of other parties had also been victims of attacks by various bonds.[38] NKVD reports from Poland would suggest that this was an underestimation. According to Soviet calculations made in May, during the previous four months various bands had made 1909 attacks, during which 1410 people connected to the regime and 186 members of the security services had been killed, while 499 had died during robberies. Most of the bands were defined as belonging either to AK–WiN or NSZ.[39] In this Soviet report the hardening attitude towards the PSL, which declared itself the legal opposition, was clearly articulated. The Soviet advisor to the Polish ministry of national security pointed out that no attacks had been made on members of the PSL or on PSL property. According to him, this was clear evidence of complicity between the underground anti-communist opposition and Mikołajczyk.

During 1946 elections and then the referendum became the most important focal points of the legal and even the underground organizations, most notably WiN. While it remains difficult to reconstruct the complex reasons why the regime managed to overcome the threat posed by the underground resistance, it is clear that between April 1946, when the PPS put forward the idea of a referendum, and 30 June, when it took place, the communists became confident of being able to mount a campaign and to secure by whatever means necessary the results they sought.

Relations between the TRJN and the Catholic Church in Poland were so complex that to define them as being antagonistic would be to overlook what was the real spiritual role of the church on the one hand and to ascribe to the communists a clarity of purpose which they appear to have lacked. The church naturally pursued its own policies, aiming to maintain and consolidate its spiritual role in post-war Poland. The TRJN, on the other hand, sought to introduce legislation that would create a secular society more in line with what was the norm in the

industrialized democratic states of Western Europe. The inevitable conflict between the two was exacerbated by two additional factors. These were the primate's refusal to accept the TRJN claim to govern Poland and the papacy's own foreign policy objectives. The papacy's unwillingness to accept the incorporation of previously German territories into Poland created a dilemma concerning the appointment of Polish priests to these areas, which officially remained under the care of German bishops. In relation to the latter the Polish episcopate was torn by a quandary of whether to bow to the papacy's decisions or to defend the interest of their Polish parishioners. Either way the government would be sensitive to decisions that could be interpreted as signs of disloyalty to the Polish cause. The incompatibility of the two worlds represented by the two authorities, one spiritual and the other temporal, placed them on a collision course even before the communists decided to embark on a consistently anti-catholic course after the general elections in 1947.

At the time of the outbreak of the Second World War the Primate of All Poland Archbishop August Hlond decided to leave Poland and to follow the government and military leadership into exile. Although subsequently it was implied that the government had begged the archbishop to save himself from German arrest, this argument is dubious, since on 17 September 1939, when he left Poland it would have been difficult to anticipate the course of German policies towards the occupied territories. When Hlond returned to Poland after the war, no open accusations had been levelled against him, as the church simply does not behave in this way. It was nevertheless known that the man who in Hlond's absence became the spiritual leader of Polish Catholics, the Archbishop of Kraków, Adam Stefan Sapieha, had emerged with an enhanced reputation. The church had suffered during the course of the war. The Nazis had murdered nearly a fifth of the clergy, including six bishops. The priests' suffering had brought them close to their parishioners and increased the spiritual bond between them. The Catholic Church enjoyed one notable advantage at the end of the war. Whereas before the war 60 percent of Poland's population declared itself to be Catholics, after the war over 90 percent were Catholics. The large Jewish community had perished, but the incorporation of over one-third of pre-war Polish territories into the Soviet Union, meant that Poland lost followers of the Orthodox Christian and Uniate Christian Churches. The departure and then removal of the majority of the pre-war German population, reduced Poland's Protestant community. The Catholic Church benefited from the Poles' increased religious observance, an

understandable phenomenon considering the extent of suffering during the war.

Whereas in the first stages of liberation it would appear that relations between the newly established administrations and the church were not determined by prior decisions, in due course insurmountable problems appeared. To start with, church properties confiscated by the Nazis were returned and no obvious obstacles were put in the way of it resuming its duties. Frequently the local administrators and Soviet commanders, in their desire to reduce local conflicts, sought to enlist the support of local priests. These responded depending on their own inclinations. Some were obliging, seeing the advantages of reducing pilfering and lawlessness. Others, hostile to the presence of Soviet troops in Poland and unwilling to grant the new administration any recognition, supported the AK and NSZ units in the locality. In Lublin the Catholic University was reopened with the full support of the authorities', while in Kraków the Catholic weekly paper *Tygodnik Powszechny* resumed publication. In Warsaw a Catholic paper also appeared with the regime's permission. Church property was exempted from land reform.

At the same time the provisional government proceeded with legislation to separate the state and church. On 13 September 1945 teaching of religion at schools was made optional. On 25 September a decree was announced transferring the responsibility for the registration of births, marriages and deaths from the church to state offices. The most important state decision was to abolish the Concordat of 1925. The latter was accompanied by an attack on the Vatican for what the government claimed to have been pro-German policies during the war. Unfortunately, these decisions had a greater impact on relations between the two than the generally conciliatory gestures, which had been made by both sides earlier. The Catholic Church in the meantime pursued its own policies, which were not so much a response to what the new regime did as an attempt to consolidate its advantageous position in post-war Poland. Hlond's bullish attitude did not make things easier. On the contrary, his responses confirmed the growing antagonism. On his return to Poland, arriving in Poznań on 21 July 1945, he made no effort to meet with any government representatives and made no contact with local administrators. Instead he announced that a mass celebrating the end of the war was to take place on 22 July. Since the authorities had already announced a parade to commemorate the first anniversary of the establishment of the PKWN in Lublin, this was no coincidental arrangement. The mass was attended by 15 000, while the parade was attended by no more than 3000; this served to underscore

the government's dubious claim to legality.[40] Stalemate in relations between the TRJN and Hlond might explain why the government, on more than one occasion tried to resume talks with the Vatican rather than deal with the episcopate, as was the case with the deterioration of relations after the abrogation of the Concordat.

Henceforth the conflict between the two authorities, each representing a different ideology, would hinge on two issues: the government's ongoing and determined secularization of life in Poland; and the question of the newly incorporated German lands. Papal policies continued to add rather than decrease, the conflicts. The papacy refused to recognize the TRJN but treated the Polish government in London as the legitimate representative of the Polish state. Kazimierz Papée, who had held the post of Polish government-in-exile's ambassador to the Vatican, continued to be treated as the official Polish ambassador to the Vatican.

The most important, and undoubtedly also emotive, issue related to the territories incorporated into Poland. When Hlond arrived in Poland he brought with him papal agreement to the appointment of acting priests to these areas that in principle continued as part of German bishoprics. This enabled the Polish episcopate to accept the resignations of German priests and provide the Polish community with Polish priests. As used to be the tradition, Hlond sought the approval of the head of state for these appointments, only to be accused by Bierut of conniving with the Vatican in its refusal to recognize the Oder–Neisse border.[41] The matter dragged on until 1971, but in the meantime both sides traded accusations of disloyalty. The church accused the government of not appreciating its achievements, while the communists continued to attack the church for its alleged betrayal of national interests. In reality Hlond wanted to maintain the Catholic Church's spiritual hold over the Polish settlers, who would have stayed away from services led by a German priest. The issue of the Concordat was a further example of the TRJN's attempt to reduce the extent of the papacy's role in secular life. While on the one hand it was abrogated, behind the scenes contact was maintained and in November, through the intermediary of the writer Ksavery Pruszyński, negotiations were reopened, though unsuccessfully.[42] In 1948 the Vatican took up the case of German expellees from territories incorporated into Poland. However unjust these might have been, the church in Poland found itself in an invidious situation, since this was not a case for which any Poles had sympathy.

The church's direct involvement in anti-communist activities cannot be proven even though WiN did communicate with the episcopate and informed it of its electoral hopes. It is unlikely that the episcopate would

have been so unwise as to endanger its long-term spiritual role in Poland for the sake of an underground resistance that was unlikely to succeed. Nevertheless the pulpit was used to attack the regime's abuses, its mistreatment and arrests of political opponents and those suspected of being likely to disagree with the regime. The Catholic Church, not known for its espousal of human rights in Poland during the inter-war period assumed a new role in the post-war period as defender of the innocent and abused, thus increasing its moral standing in society. These were genuine concerns, although anxiety about the state's secularist policies and attempts to limit the church's role in secular life, were just as strong reasons for criticizing the communists. In October 1945 the episcopate made it quite clear that it would fight for a 'Poland where the spirit of our Christ our Lord directed public and social life'.[43] A few months later it opposed civil marriages by declaring that only Catholic unlike pagan or even Jewish marriages which, according to the episcopate lacked 'purity', were true unions.[44] In February 1946 in a pastoral letter the episcopate called for a struggle for a Poland based on Catholic principles.[45] Lax morals, divorce, abortion, theft and materialism were all evils which the church was determined to combat. Its aim was the restoration of compulsory teaching of religion at schools and rejection of secularization. The fine boundary between the church upholding the dignity and sancticity of human life and its involvement in politics was broached in 1946. The episcopate condemned the state for its policy of arrests and executions as well as the curtailment of democratic rights.[46]

During the period 1945–47, when it was still hoped that the forthcoming elections would create an opportunity for reversing the communists' monopoly of power, a number of prominent Catholic intellectuals considered the possibility of forming a Christian party. It would appear that the communists, in their attempt to disarm the extreme nationalist movement, also thought that such a party would be useful to them. Within the Catholic community there existed dilemmas as to whether to enter into direct dealings with the communist-dominated regime. In Kraków, intellectuals based around the Catholic *Tygodnik Powszechny* disagreed with the idea that the church should confront the state. They proposed that the church should concentrate on providing spiritual leadership and cultural activities, but not soil its hands with politics. In Warsaw, initially tacitly encouraged by Hlond, radical nationalist groups that published two Catholic newspapers, agreed to negotiate with the government. Led by Bolesław Piasecki, the pre-war leader of the Polish fascist group the Fallanga, these groups continued negotiations with a number of influential communists until 1947

when Piasecki was told that the church no longer viewed his efforts in a positive light.[47]

The church had apparently reached an understanding with Mikołajczyk whereby in return for abandoning the PSL's traditional anti-clericalist stance, the church would use its authority to call its parishioners to take part in voting and to cast votes for the peasant party. The episcopate justified its involvement in temporal affairs by stating that state policies went contrary to the basic principles of upholding human dignity. During the summer of 1946, when expectations for the forthcoming elections were high, the church further elaborated on why it appeared to be crossing the boundary between involvement in temporal as opposed to sacred affairs. In September a proclamation was issued defining the duties of each Catholic. Catholics were to support parties whose programme upheld Christian values.[48] By then the communists and the Catholic Church faced each other in a conflict that encompassed the full scope of their activities.

While at the highest level relations between the state and the Catholic Church from the outset seemed to forecast an imminent clash of two fundamentally antagonistic ideologies, on a parish level this was not always the case. In view of future differences what is surprising is the fact that initially some cooperation existed and that both the Red Army and the TRJN did not seek to eradicate the church's role in Polish society from the outset. The fact that the national councils, which were established as the first administrative authorities in liberated territories, generally did not seek a confrontation with the local Catholic hierarchy and frequently sought some cooperation would suggest a degree of realism. They simply knew that if law and order were to be maintained and the pilfering and theft was to be controlled, they needed the support of the local priest, whose moral authority was likely to be vital to their initial aim of restoring order. When the town and district of Kielce was liberated in January 1945 the commander of the Red Army units paid a courtesy visit to the Bishop of Kielce, a point which was noted positively by a PPR inspector. He at the same time criticized Colonel Edward Ochab, a PPR member and head of the team that established the first administration, for not doing the same.[49] Later, in the wake of the Kielce pogrom, the district national councils tried to decrease the likelihood of pogroms spreading to other towns by, among other methods, appealing to local priests to condemn the pogrom. The authorities saw the fact that the Bishop of Kielce refused to add his signature to a proclamation condemning the pogrom as weakening its effectiveness. In the town of Kalisz a delegation, which included a

member of the PPR and a member of the allied SD, went to meet a local parish priest. They invited him to appeal to his parishioners to respect the will of God, who had created Jews as well as Christians. In response they were told by Father Martuzalski, that: 'Lice were also created by God, but still we kill them'.[50]

Notwithstanding the need for cooperation with those who had influence in the community, PPR's attitude towards the church from the outset was to treat it as a long-term obstacle to their policies. Gomułka, when making his presentation to the International Information Office of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party in May 1945 was forced by Dimitrov to defend his preferred non-confrontational approach to the church.[51] He openly admitted that as far as the communists were concerned, they knew that that the Catholic Church supported reactionary forces in Poland. Although the church's official stance was that it was not involved in politics, its insistence on expanding its activities into youth organizations had political implications. Gomułka pointed out that were they to try and negotiate with the episcopate, inevitably the TRJN would have to pay a price and that would be the retention of the Concordat. The communist leadership was aware of the need not to provoke the church and to secure its support at least in some areas. Uneasy efforts were thus made by the communists to secure the church's cooperation in reducing the flight of young people to join the resistance. In April and May 1945 several meetings took place between Major Jerzy Borejsza, a leading communist in the TRJN, and a number of Catholic intellectuals.[52] While the Catholics requested that an amnesty be declared allowing young people who were members of forest units to leave without fear of reprisals, Borejesza insisted that those who had been active in fighting the new administration had been given enough chances to do so. He nevertheless earnestly appealed to the Catholic leaders that the church should use its influence to discourage the young from wasting their lives.[53] These meetings appear to have been inconclusive, it might not have been a coincidence that an amnesty was declared on 2 September. They also led directly to further talks with Piasecki for the establishment of a pro-government Catholic party.

The communists were constantly being reminded of the church's influence in society. Cardinal Hlond Poznań's mass celebrating his return to Poland and the end of war was a particularly galling reminder of the power of the church. The head of the political section of the Red Army reported to Dimitrov that in all his actions Hlond avoided according the new regime any recognition. In his sermon Hlond had also warned that betrayal of Catholic principles would inevitably result in

divine punishment, as had been the case of the Jews who according to him had been smitten by God for their transgressions.[54] This homily was seen both in Warsaw and in Moscow as a gauntlet thrown to the new regime.

The communists were prepared for this conflict. Section V of the ministry of national security had only one function, namely the surveillance of the Catholic Church. Led by Julia Brystigierowa, a determined communist who had spent the war in the Soviet Union, Section V treated the church as an enemy organization. In years to come this section of the ministry continued to expand, as relations with the church became more confrontational.[55] When in 1946 the church fought back against the government's decisions to limit its rights, Section V increased its activities against it. At the same time attempts to form an independent pro-government Catholic Church were renewed only to fail. Some attempts to open a dialogue with the church were resumed before the elections, when the bishops' pastoral letter made it clear that the church was using its influence to advise believers to cast their vote in support of the PSL. Since the episcopate did not trust the communists, these efforts and attempts to open up talks with the Vatican on the Concordat were of no avail. Neither side trusted the other and the church was only too aware of the consolidation of communist control over Polish society.[56] When the political–educational officers of the army tried to gauge the results of their pre-election campaign, the attitude of the local priests and teachers was used as an indicator of success. In most cases it was noted that the first professed lack of interest in politics while clearly being hostile to the government and the communists, while the teaching profession was generally openly hostile. The results of the enquiry were worrying as the political leadership knew that in village communities priests and teachers were held in high esteem.[57]

After the elections relations deteriorated further. In September, after the episcopate had criticized the government in a pastoral letter, the central committee of the PPR authorized a new and more aggressive offensive against the church. A submission by Brystigerowa explained that the church was always treated as an enemy organization, but in 1945 its activities had not been organized.[58] The church's tactics had changed since the elections when the PSL failed to capture power. She admitted that the church had the capacity and organization to become a serious opposition and rallying point for those who had failed to defeat the communists by other means. Henceforth the UB would focus on undermining the church through attacks and arrests of individual

priests. It would become the security service's task to plant spies in church organizations and parishes to find out as much as possible about the church's financial situation and its contacts in society. This was to be a long-term task and one which was to be pursued relentlessly and with extreme care. According to Brystigerowa the enemy could not be underestimated.[59] At the same time secularization was implemented gradually but relentlessly. The church, now perceived by the head of the ministry of national security, Radkiewicz, as the strongest and best-organized enemy, was to be destroyed. In the coming years this was done by attacking individual priests and reducing the church's hold on youth organizations, church schools and orphanages.[60]

During 1946 the parties that made up the TRJN negotiated and manoeuvred in anticipation of the forthcoming elections. None was prepared to risk a breakdown of relations, even if conflict was an inevitable element of these preparations. As a result the underground resistance was not party to these discussions, as even the PSL was unwilling to champion openly the cause of the ex-AK and NSZ fighters. In the circumstances, divided and increasingly politically irrelevant, the underground organizations were unable to offer any credible alternative to those looking for stability and reconstruction. That is not to suggest that the underground resistance was not dangerous. On the contrary, throughout 1946 it remained a major security problem to the authorities. Nevertheless, with increasing isolation from Poles in the West it was bound to collapse. The security services aided by the NKVD, in time, became more efficient in combating the underground. The end of fighting in Germany made it possible to employ more reliable Polish army units in the fight against 'banditism'. War weariness and a desire for economic reconstruction and social stability, as much as the limitations of what the resistance could offer, played a role in driving a wedge between the underground and its supporters. A series of amnesties allowed those in the underground who no longer believed that the communists could be defeated, to come out of conspiracy. The final amnesty in 1947 is credited with making it possible for the increasingly demoralized and directionless underground to lay down their arms.

7
The Unwanted: The Creation of a Nation–State

During the war years various political parties and organizations tried to formulate plans for post-war Poland. Most recognized the emotive implications of addressing the nationality question. Thus while some had clear ideas, others shied away from it precisely because it was a question which had the capacity to backfire. In most cases the debate was confined to Poland's perceived 'Jewish Problem', although the Ukrainian minority was also occasionally referred to. The nationalist movement was the only one to advocate the wholesale removal of Jews from Poland. Left-wing parties were as unwilling to enter into the debate as were their opponents. The party which was most constrained in its attempt to formulate a nationality policy, however, was the PPR. In its attempt to build up a united front, any positive references to the Jewish issue were likely to decrease the party's appeal and to focus on the popular perception that the communist party was a party of Jews.

At the end of the war many Poles believed that Jews had no place in Poland, either because they were not wanted, or because they had in some way ceased to have the right to be treated as human beings. The Nazi annihilation of the Jewish community in Poland did not decrease the intensity of feelings concerning the question. Two other national groups became the focal point of post-war policies, the German and the Ukrainians. In relation to the former there was little disagreement either between the ruling parties or the TRJN and the underground opposition. The removal from the Polish territories of the remaining German community went hand in hand with disregard for any rights of German prisoners of war. After the war the remaining Germans either fled or were driven out of Poland. The Ukrainian problem manifested its full potential to destabilize any post-war regime. German policies of encouraging and exploiting Ukrainian nationalism drove a further wedge

between the already divided Poles and Ukrainians. At the end of the war, the Ukrainian communities in Eastern and Southeastern Poland became a source of instability, which the government was forced to tackle by military action and final removal to new areas. In any case the traumas inflicted on the three communities was not a subject for debate, public debates. This did not decrease the enormity or extent of the tragedies and injustices that occurred.

Most political parties in occupied Poland and in exile had discussed the subject of Polish Jews. Plans put forward varied from proposals for the outright removal of Jews from Poland to making them in some way less offensive to Polish sensitivities. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a discussion where the continuing presence of Polish Jews in the post-war state with guarantees of freedom to practise their religion and retain their cultural and community distinctiveness was advocated as a positive policy. Furthermore, whenever gestures were made of ostensibly accepting the rights of Polish Jews, reality usually turned out to be very different.[1] Thus while Sikorski incorporated in his exile government two representatives of the Jewish community, Ignacy Schwarzbart and Szmul Zygielbojm, in reality he repeatedly tried to persuade the British government to allow for the removal of Jews from Poland to Palestine. As he argued in his conversation with Eden on 19 January 1942: 'It is quite impossible . . . for Poland to continue to maintain 3.5 million Jews after the war. Room must be found for them elsewhere.'[2] Within Poland the nationalist parties, as was only to be expected, were unabashed in their desire to see the removal of Jews from the territory of the post-war state. The PPS–WRN was no less anxious that Jews should not continue a lifestyle which might offend Christian Poles. Their proposal went in the direction of supposedly scaling down prejudice by rendering Jews less 'provocative'. A Programme for a People's Poland, published in 1941, addressed the German and Jewish problem. All Germans settled on Polish lands during the period from the eighteenth century Partitions onwards would be removed. Jews, while being guaranteed equal rights to practise their religion, would be the objects of special policies. These would seek to 'reduce the unnatural and unilateral concentration of Jews in retail and in some free professions, but also the complete removal of parasitic groups of bankers, usurers etc., who are recruited in the majority from among the Jewish population'.[3] Anti-Semitic sentiments were not confined to the nationalist and centrist groups. PPR was only too aware that were it to be perceived to be a Jewish party, its appeal to the Polish working class would be diminished. This anxiety was articulated in discussions about the party's future. When Nowotko

tried to assure Dimitrov in 1942 that PPR did have a chance of heading a broad anti-fascist bloc, he stressed that unlike the KPP, which he described as '80 percent Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Jewish' the PPR would not become a sectarian organization lacking contact with the masses.[4]

At the end of the war Poland no longer had a genuine Jewish problem because of the tragic fact that the Jewish communities had been all but wiped out by the Nazis. Nevertheless, popular prejudice continued to manifest itself in the conviction that Jews were ever present and determined to attack the Polish nation and its existence. In towns and villages inhabitants faced tangible evidence of the destruction of the local Jewish community, in most cases having either witnessed their extermination or their forceful removal from the neighbourhood. The image of an eternally hostile Jew remained in the national psyche. In many cases these fears were fanned by the persistence of rational and irrational rumours. On a rational level there was an anxiety that some Jews would return and reclaim their property that had been taken over by Christian Poles. In other cases, religious hostility played as much a role in the constant fear of Jews. Rumours about the blood of Christian children being needed for the production of the Passover bread accompanied pogroms in Kraków and Kielce. A variation on that theme was accusations that Jewish doctors drained Christian children of blood to treat wounded Soviet soldiers.

Rarely were the local Catholic clergy willing to come forward and point out that this was medieval nonsense, either because they knew no better, or because anti-Semitism could be used to channel anger against the new regime in which Jews were seen as holding influential posts. For example the Bishop of Kielce refused to condemn the pogrom in his town by suggesting that popular anger was justified by the allegedly provocative fact that Jews were in cahoots with the communists. When, after the pogrom in Kielce, PPR, PPS and PSL party activists fanned out through the Kielce district to try and calm the situation, they got no help from the church. On the contrary, it became apparent that the faithful merely reflected the contempt of their spiritual leaders' for Jews and their desire to rid Poland of what they perceived to be the nation's enemies.[5] Among the workers, the view that Jews enjoyed a high standard of living was so strong that evidence to the contrary made little impression. Political activists reported that in addition to being directly involved in the killing of Jews during the two well-known pogroms, the railway guards union was notoriously anti-semitic. Travelling on trains was very dangerous for Jews, as once the presence of

Jews was identified on a train, guards would rally other passengers to kill them.[6]

It is difficult to be precise as to how many Polish Jews survived the war. Survival was an incidental issue. Some of those who managed to evade death did so because they succeeded at disguising their Jewish origins. A non-stereotypical Jewish appearance was an advantage. A certain proportion of survivors feared to return to the community or reveal their origins. Some departed from Poland immediately. Others never tried to return. The Italian ambassador Reale, himself married to a Polish Jewish woman he had helped to save, estimated that of the pre-war community of 3.5 million, possibly no more than 230 000 survived. Of those 160 000 had returned from Polish areas incorporated into the Soviet Union and 70 000 might have returned from German camps. That meant that within the occupied territories probably no more than 40 000 Polish Jews survived the war.[7] The NKVD estimate was lower. Reports to Beria spoke of 100 000 Jews living in Poland, of whom 30 000 had returned from German camps.[8]

The surviving Jewish community formed an umbrella organization the Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich (Central Committee of Polish Jews – CKŻP) which was headed by Emil Sommerstein, leader of Ichud, the main Zionist organization among the Polish Jews. The PPR allowed for a Jewish section to emerge within the PPR. Though initially a small group, by 1947, after the flight of many Jews from Poland and the weakening of the Zionist representation through emigration, it became the sole voice for left-wing Jews. After the war the Bund, the Jewish socialist party with a long history and tradition of activism, had most authority. In 1947 it had 1500 members to the 7000 registered as belonging to the PPR Jewish section.[9] Two other left-wing Jewish organizations were found on the left wing of the political spectrum. These were Poalej Syjon–Lewica and Poalej Syjon–Prawica. Unlike the former two, which had a commitment to the rebuilding of Jewish life in Poland, the latter two organizations advocated the creation of a Jewish socialist state in Palestine. Hechaluc and Hashomer Hacair, pre-war youth organizations, that aimed to prepare the young for migration to Palestine, emerged after the war as political parties strongly advocated the departure of Jews from Poland.[10]

Gradually foreign aid arrived and the Joint Distribution Committee, a charity established in the US after the First World War, provided money to be used by Jews for relief of hardship. The perception that Jews were in receipt of funds from abroad and the high Jewish participation in the security services added to the sense of hostility shown to Jews in Poland

from the moment of its liberation. The latter point in particular attracted attention. According to NKVD statistics, 18.7 percent of those employed by the ministry of public security in October 1945 were Jewish, but within the management of that ministry 50 percent were Jewish.[11] However a note submitted by Radkiewicz to Bierut at the same time gave lower figures. Only 1.7 percent of ministry of public security functionaries were Jewish, with 13 percent in management posts.[12] It is impossible to find out which set of figures is correct, and in some respects it does not even matter since it was the Jewish participation in the security services, rather than its extent, that was contentious.

From the moment Jews either emerged from hiding or returned to Poland from camps or the Soviet Union they faced open public hostility. The central committee of Polish Jews tried not to be too alarmist, but it nevertheless kept a record of reported atrocities that recorded that attacks on individual Jews were the norm, and furthermore that the security service and the MO did nothing or little to stop them.[13] The NKVD, Reale and the US Ambassador to Poland, Arthur Bliss-Lane, noted the daily threats Jews faced. The NKVD reported to Beria that between 1 January and 15 September 1945 291 Jews were killed in Polish territories.[14] Contemporary commentators put the figure much higher.

On 11 August the first pogrom took place in Kraków. This started with an attack on worshipers in the Kupa synagogue. Unchecked by either the MO or the security service, it spread to the town, where Jewish households were attacked and Jews were beaten in the streets. The worst recorded outrage occurred less than a year later, when on 4 July 1946 43 Jews were killed in Kielce. In both cases, as well as in other pogroms where the casualty rate was lower, there were common features. Accusations that Jews were draining blood from Christian children either for the production of Passover bread or for use by Soviet soldiers were voiced. In Kielce the MO and the UB did nothing to stop the outrages and units brought to calm the situation actually joined in and fanned the pogrom, directly contributing to the high casualty rate. In Kraków and Kielce crowds rather than individuals attacked the Jews. This then spread to the locality.[15] Subsequent investigations revealed what had been known but not tackled earlier, namely the extent to which the MO and the UB had been infiltrated by the AK and the NSZ and the low quality of political and administrative leadership in the district.[16]

The killing of Jews appears to have been accepted as a lesser crime than the killing of non-Jews and the security service either did nothing or not enough to deal with the gravity of the situation. PPR had been

aware of the strength of feelings concerning the continuing presence of Jews in Poland. In August 1945 a report by a party inspector who visited the Silesian coal-mining areas reported that reactionary forces were trying to foment anti-Semitic outrages. Although attempts to rally the young people behind anti-Semitic slogans had not been successful, two Jewish apprentices were killed in the district.[17] In June a party inspector reported that the situation in the industrial town of Łódź was close to a pogrom. The inspector had been sent to the town in connection with a wave of strikes that had affected the weaving factories there. He again suspected that reactionary forces were trying to channel discontent against Jews and rumours about Jews killing Christian children were common.[18] Reports from the localities made it clear that organizing meetings and explaining to the workers that they were being exploited by the reactionary forces were not reducing tension. Jews continued to be attacked and murdered with impunity. At the same time there was no escaping the conclusion that even communists viewed Jewish comrades in a different light from non-Jews. Those intent on a political career considered Jews as competition.[19] Party inspectors found themselves unable to stem the growth of anti-Semitism when communists voiced the same prejudices as the rest of the community.

On 8 August 1946 the government established a special commission to deal with Jewish issues. Its role was to advise and guide the government in its task of rebuilding Jewish life in Poland. Its initial enquiry was quite shocking. Whereas in June 1946 210 000 Jews lived in Poland, by May 1947 it was reported that only 110 000 remained. Although the commission presumed that many had merely decided to disguise their Jewish identity, it was presumed that the Kielce pogrom had caused an exodus from Poland.[20] The hostile atmosphere accentuated the sense of isolation and despair that overwhelmed surviving Jews. The activities of international Jewish organizations that campaigned for Jews to leave Poland might have had a decisive influence on their decision to depart. Only the Jewish section of the PPR and the Bund continued to advocate that Jews remain in Poland. The commission's task was to facilitate the settlement of Jews returning to Poland from Germany and the Soviet Union. Relations between the commission, the Committee for Polish Jews and Joint Distribution Committee were very good, with many activities being funded by the latter. Unfortunately the commission had to admit that its attempts to integrate Jews into life in Poland were hampered by the fact that most were incapable of living independently. This was usually due to ill health and destruction of family life. Over 80 percent of funds available were used to provide care for children, the

elderly and ill. Only 45 percent of surviving Jews were capable of taking up employment.

The Jews' inability to work and their apparent dependence on charitable funds coming from abroad was of concern to the commission because anti-Semites frequently accused Jews of parasitism. The Red Army had been sympathetic when the commission approached it for help in settling Jews on good farms in German areas incorporated into Poland. Thus the need to integrate Jews into the work force became a means of decreasing the divide between the Jews and non-Jews. It was nevertheless difficult for the commission to work with the Jewish organizations due to the bewildering lack of political unity within the community. Twenty-four separate parties and organizations were registered and this led to confusion and lack of strong representation. In May 1947 the commission declared that it had completed its task and was dissolved.[21] Its task was clearly not completed but the communists' policies on all political organization changed at that time. Henceforth a policy of integration was pursued and in due course political, cultural and religious organizations lost their independence.

Jewish activists were ambivalent about the number of Jews rapidly leaving Poland. On the one hand there was a desire to rebuild Jewish life in post-war Poland. On the other hand, there was the inescapable conclusion that not only was this no longer possible, but that by delaying the decision to leave, Jews daily risked their lives. At the end of the war the Zionist movement, always strong within the East European Jewish communities, became the leading party. Left-wing and progressive parties, including progressive Zionist movements, predominated. Contacts between the PPR and Jewish organizations had been established during the war. Nevertheless, when making plans for an uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Fighting Organization – ŻOB) had in the first place contacted the Delegatura. The Delegatura had formed a Council for Aid to the Jews, usually referred to as Żegota. Unfortunately the AK was either unable or unwilling to sacrifice valuable arms and Adolf Berman, one of the Jewish members of Żegota, then contacted the GL and PPR leadership.

When the uprising broke out during the night of 18/19 April 1943 the AK and GL were only able to take limited action to assist it.[22] After the failure of the uprising and the destruction of the ghetto Berman remained in touch with the leadership of the PPR. He then agreed to join the KRN as the representative of Poalej Syjon–Lewica. Although during the course of the war this was no more than a symbolic association, with the formation of the PKWN in Lublin this allowed the Jewish

representatives to defend Jewish interests. Berman advised the Red Army representatives to bring surviving Jewish leaders of pre-war and wartime organizations from liberated Warsaw to Lublin.[23] Thus from the outset a strong Jewish representation existed within the PKWN and then took its place in the TRJN. Jewish leaders who decided to work with the TRJN faced dilemmas as to what would be their vision of the future for the Polish Jewry. Association with left-wing parties was possibly the only guarantee for the continuing presence of Jewish communities in Poland.

Berman took the view that the establishment of a new regime gave the Jews an opportunity for full participation in Polish economic and political life. He and Sommerstein both knew that two prominent leaders of the Bund, Henryk Erlich and Wiktor Adler, who had fled to the Soviet Union, were first encouraged by Stalin but in the autumn of 1941 had been arrested and subsequently shot. Berman and Sommerstein were nevertheless willing to cooperate first with Stalin and then the PKWN in the belief that they could speak on behalf of the Jews in liberated Poland. Iccach Cukierman, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and leader of Hashomer Hacair, states in his memoirs that, in view of the hostility and indifference to the fate of Jews: 'cooperation with the Communists was the Jews' national duty, if only because of the anxiety about their fate'.[24] At the same time there were those Jews who refused to identify with the Jewish cause but who took part in TRJN and the leadership of the legalized parties. Of those Jakub Berman was a leading ideologue in the PPR and Julian Hochfeld was in the executive of the PPS.

After the Kielce pogrom PPR tried to devise a policy which would on the one hand allow the Jewish community full freedom to practise its religion and to retain its distinctiveness, while on the other hand integrating it in the life of post-war Poland.[25] Ideas put forward included full employment in professions with which Jews were previously not associated. Thus they were to be channelled into heavy and textile industries, metallurgy, mining. Jewish youth was to be encouraged to study technology. They were to be discouraged from working in tailoring or shoemaking. Bund and Poalej Syjon–Lewica wanted the establishment of Jewish cooperatives, but the communists disagreed with the idea of creating specifically Jewish employment communities. While Jewish organizations such as schools, cultural organizations and charitable foundations were to be encouraged, proposals prepared by the PPR suggested that the party wanted a fully active Jewish presence in Poland. The PPR policy was that Jews in the communist movement should fight against narrow nationalism, which expressed itself in plans for the

Jewish community leaving Poland to establish a new homeland elsewhere. In that it was felt that cooperation could be established with progressive organizations such as Hashomer Hacair, Itachtut and Ichud. Aguda, which was accused of having supported Piłsudski and had close links with the religious Jewish congregations, was to be opposed. A distinction was to be drawn between progressive, democratic Zionist movements and nationalist and 'folkish 'ones which were seen as reactionary.[26] Although this is difficult to verify, several proposals put to the central committee of the PPR during the period 1946–47 bore the unmistakable imprint of ideas propagated by Adolf Berman, who was particularly optimistic about the opportunities offered to Jews by the new regime. During the referendum and the general elections Poalej Syjon–Lewica called for the Jewish community to fully support the communist line.[27] It was therefore doubly disappointed when in preparation for the elections the party was not promised seats in the forthcoming assembly. Clearly support for the Jewish cause in Poland had its limits.

The departure of Jews from Poland during the period immediately after liberation was a complex process. Among many Jews the desire to leave was overwhelming. Icchak Cukierman represented the pre-war youth Zionist movement, the Hashomer Hacair. Together with many of those who survived in the Soviet Union he started to plan for the transfer of Jews to Palestine. Since the British authorities were committed to prevent the creation of the state of Israel, the transfer could only be phased through illegal networks. First attempts tried to open a route through Rumania. This did not work out and the next initiative was through Germany, Italy and finally through the Mediterranean.[28] There was a strong suspicion that some Polish communists who cooperated in the Jews' departure from Poland were more concerned with the desire to rid themselves of a potentially difficult issue. After the elections, and in particular from October 1947, the independence of Jewish parties and organizations was gradually reduced. The PPR Jewish section was encouraged to take the lead. Gradually Jewish parties were forced to merge with the CKŻP or were declared illegal. Social, charitable and cultural organizations were first taken over by the state then lost their specific Jewish character. In 1949 the Joint Distribution Committee was declared a hostile organization and was no longer allowed to assist Jews in Poland. Between 1949 and 1950 another 30000 Jews left Poland. To all purposes distinctive Jewish life in Poland had ended.

At the end of the war waves of humanity passed through Polish territories, some organized, most spontaneous and uncontrolled. Polish nationals from territories incorporated into the Soviet Union were grad-

ually moved to Poland. Foreign nationals, some who had for various reasons ended fighting with the Nazis, and others who were victims of their policies, were moved to camps in preparation for repatriation to their countries of origin. In previously German territories, now under Polish administration, some Germans attempted to flee West, while others tried to make their way back to their villages. In due course Poles in the West who decided to return to Poland were repatriated. But, with the increasing consolidation of communist control over the state, other Poles fled from Poland. Thieves, pillagers, deserters and the rootless moved in all directions, frequently travelling to acquire goods and returning to Poland to dispose of them. 'Szaber', a popular phrase for looting, was a pursuit taken up by many until borders became less porous and the rule of law could be imposed on Germany and the neighbouring states. Prisoners of war of many nationalities, though mainly German, were processed and moved around the Polish territories. Of those communities, none were treated with more contempt and subsequently received less sympathy than the German civilian population. Their fate has been generally viewed through the prism of the fact that Germany waged and then lost the war. In reality the German civilians in Eastern Europe were victims of Nazi policies.[29]

The population movements that resulted in the expulsion of German communities in Europe took part in stages. Hitler initiated the first during the early years of the war through the movement of Germans who had not lived in the Reich to areas under German administration. The second came in the wake of the defeat of the Nazi armies when many German families fled with the German troops. The final stage was when the borders were stabilized and the post-war governments decided to remove forcibly the remaining German population. This took place mainly in Czechoslovakia and Poland. In none of the cases described did the German communities have any say in the matter, just as they had had no influence over the Nazis coming to power in Germany. Nevertheless, by virtue of their German nationality they were universally treated as citizens of the defeated state and not as victims of Nazi policies.

During the period 1939–42, as a result of a bilateral agreement with allied states, Hitler demanded that German communities leave those states. During this time nearly 630,000 ethnic Germans were moved from areas as diverse as Wołynia, Northern and Southern Bukovina, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Croatia to occupied Polish territories. Those described as the *Volksdeutsch* were mainly settled in the Danzig–East Prussia region and Poznań-Łódź districts renamed *Wartheland,* which

were incorporated into the Third Reich.[30] Although the Nazis had planned for the removal of all Poles from those areas and from annexed Upper Silesia to the *Generalgouverenement* (GG) this plan was never fully realized.[31] Areas incorporated in the Third Reich were never fully cleared of Poles, nor was the settlement of the *Volksdeutsch* there completed. Germans living in the territories of the GG were to have been moved into those areas incorporated into the Third Reich and in particular into *Wartheland*. The process of colonization was meant to strengthen the German presence in the new border areas. For this policy to succeed larger number of Germans were needed there. As it turned out, Germans from the Third Reich (*Reichsdeutsch*) were not willing to move and the formerly Baltic, Balkan and Polish nationals remained in a minority in previously Polish areas.

In addition certain sections of the Polish community were targeted for Germanization. In the GG only the highland community in the Tatra Mountains were deemed to have appropriate racial characteristics to consider them a Germanic race. From 1941 in territories incorporated into the Third Reich non-Germans were divided into one of four categories. Category III, described as 'Polonized Germans' and category IV – those of German origin, were favoured by the regime over the Polish community, but had the duty of military service.[32] The decision to have one's name added to the list of *Volksdeutsch* was not always made on rational grounds. Some clearly saw this as a confirmation of their national identity, others, confused by changes in boundaries that had taken place during their lifetime, saw it as one more state-imposed decision. In many cases the initiative did not come from individuals, but from the Nazi authorities who coerced and pressurized those they considered to be of German origin to declare themselves as German nationals.[33]

As the war drew to a close, German families fearful of reprisals and the Red Army fled in the van, and the wake of the retreating German troops. Their flight was uncontrollable and unplanned. News that the new Polish state would be allowed to extend its borders to include Eastern Prussia and territories up to the Oder precipitated another wave of flights. Finding themselves between Poland's pre-war border and the proposed new one, the details of which were not confirmed until the Potsdam Conference, those who stayed tended to be farmers who clung to farms they had held before the war. No reliable figures exist on how many German nationals had been settled in previously Polish territories during the war, nor how many fled. It has been suggested that five million *Volksdeutsch* and half a million *Reichsdeutsch* fled from territo-

ries that were to become Polish.[34] Nevertheless, in 1945 it was estimated that the TRJN had to face the problem of dealing with anywhere between four and a half and five million German nationals. Figures prepared by the Polish office of statistics in 1946 suggest that 2,288,300 Germans lived within the new borders. These were qualified by a statement that this was an unreliable figure due to the ongoing repatriation.[35]

The Polish government-in-exile took for granted that German nationals would not be allowed to live in post-war Poland. This was not merely due to the general desire to create an ethnically homogenous state, but was also motivated by a widespread belief that in September 1939 German nationals had acted as a 'fifth column' and that their hostility to the Polish state and support for the German invaders was a foregone conclusion. The brutality of Nazi occupation policies predetermined Polish attitudes to the German question. During their desperate flight West during 1944–45 they were attacked by Polish civilians, resistance units and the Red Army. The German military leaders further contributed to the tragedy of the German nationals by the policy of establishing defensive redoubts to which the German civilian population was channelled. When these fell, flight routes were blocked on the Baltic coast, and thousands perished at sea.[36] While hundred of thousands of German nationals fled West, indeterminate numbers of men also headed eastwards from Germany, back to their families in Eastern Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia, where they had lived before the war.

The final stages of the removal of German nationals from the territory of post-war Poland came with the extension of Polish borders West and the incorporation of Danzig and Eastern Prussia. Plans prepared by the government-in-exile during the course of the war assumed that Poland's Western frontier would be extended to incorporate German-inhabited areas, including Danzig and East Prussia. The communists, who had not formulated their own territorial objectives, disagreed with the London Poles on the subject of territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939. They accepted this as a foregone conclusion and did not go back to the subject. When, as a result of agreements between the Soviet Union and the Western allies it was accepted that Poland would benefit from German territories in the West, the PKWN and later the TRJN accepted that decision. Thus the provisional government in Poland was forced to face the issue of German nationals within the borders of post-war Poland. In fact the issue was never fully debated and their removal was a foregone conclusion. The only aspect of the problem which remained unclear until Potsdam were precise details of

the border and thus the question whether Germans who had lived there were also to be affected by the policy of expulsions. The wartime allies accepted that Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary would want to expel German nationals and only asked that this should be done in an orderly and planned way. Their concern was that their German and Austrian occupation zones should not be overwhelmed and that time should be given to make proper arrangements for the absorption of the expellees.[37] It was estimated that the number of Germans due to be moved could exceed nine million. At Potsdam, however, Stalin and the Poles insisted that the German problem had resolved itself as these Germans had already fled.

The Polish authorities started removing German nationals from areas under their administration even before the principle was sanctioned at the Potsdam Conference. The first wave of expulsions started in April 1945 and continued throughout the summer. In areas under military control men were imprisoned and then forced to work in sectors of industry where their skills could be utilized. At the same time local administrators were given permission to remove German communities from towns, dwellings and farms. The idea was to vacate these for Poles who were being moved from areas incorporated into the Soviet Union. Anxiety about returning German nationals was an equally strong motive for setting aside any considerations about the violation of their human and property rights.[38] Nevertheless, the most important consideration was that of creating a *fait accompli* before the forthcoming international conference. Hence the haste to move Germans from areas around the right bank of the Oder and around the Neisse river. The Polish army carried out the first stages of the operation to remove German nationals.[39] This action was halted after 28 June when a civilian administration was appointed to take over the so-called 'Recovered Territories'. Pillaging and rape, which inevitably accompanied the army's actions, as well as disputes between Polish and Russian troops, appear to have caused the army leadership to reflect on the damage these duties, were doing to the soldiers morale. In November a ministry of recovered territories was created and Gomułka was put in charge.[40]

One of the difficulties encountered by the Poles at this stage was the Russian commanders' anger at being faced with thousands of Germans removed from territories held by the Poles and being herded into areas under the administration of the Red Army. With the Poles pushing the Germans across the Oder and the Russians on the other side refusing to accept them, the river banks became congested with unwanted humanity.

At this stage the Polish civilian authorities tried to assume some control over a process of displacement over which they clearly had little control. In the course of registering and issuing appropriate ID documents it was realized that not all people fell into the clear category of Polish or German nationals. The Silesians, Kasubians and Masurians, and even those who had been defined by the Nazis as Category III and IV *Volksdeutsch*, were not German nationals. A policy of defining them as 'autochton' with a view to Polinization was put forward. If it was only German nationals who were to be expelled from the new Polish state, the definition who was a German and who was a Pole, deemed to have lost his/her way, became of critical importance. Unfortunately 1945–46 was not a time conducive to a sensitive handling of the problem of identity. Administrators appointed to conduct the verification procedure frequently were neither aware of the ethnic or legal complexities facing them, nor did they care. The sense of grievance and desire for revenge among Poles who had suffered so much during the war tended to take over. The result was that local people were frequently incorrectly defined as German. Where it was accepted that they were not German nationals, the definition of 'autochton' meant nothing to the incoming Poles who expelled them from farms and, with the collusion of the administration, mistreated them.[41] In years to come so strong was the sense of anger among the indigenous population at the way they had been treated during these and following years, that many chose to leave Poland. To do so they had to declare themselves as German nationals. By 1947 a far-reaching policy of 'Polonization' was introduced in the areas recently incorporated into the Polish state. This included the wholesale removal of many signs of the German past. The use of the phrase 'recovered territories' served to suggest that those areas were ethnically and historically Polish rather than German.

During 1945–46 a process of verification was supposed to be taking place in relation to all German nationals. Those who had collaborated with the Nazi regime and who were responsible for war crimes were to be arrested and tried. In reality, a disproportionate number of Germans ended up in camps and prisons. Membership of a Nazi youth organization or Nazi cultural associations was seen as proof of Nazi sympathies and thus punishable by imprisonment. Far from screening those responsible for crimes and collaboration this was a way of punishing and exploiting a national group that was deemed to have lost any rights. Since these procedures, as well as the camps and prisons, were in the hands of the security services, the local civil administration had no influence over them. In many case an unwillingness to release obviously

innocent individuals of German nationality was justified by the need to hold them until decisions were made to remove them to Germany.[42]

The next stages of removing German nationals from Poland were controlled by agreements between the TRJN on the one hand, and the Soviet and British Allied Commissions in Germany on the other. During 1946–47 the remaining Germans in Poland clearly concluded that they had no future in staying and their departure was voluntary, albeit preceded by intimidation and persecution. Whereas during the earlier wave of departures local military commanders and administrators had been responsible for making the decisions, after Potsdam the central authorities organized processing points, transport and safety.[43] The repatriation process was decided by joint meetings held between the Polish, Soviet and British authorities starting in January 1946. The Poles agreed to provide trains, which took the departing Germans, initially to the British zone and, when towards the end of 1946 the British authorities refused to accept any more deportees, to the Soviet zone. The deportations ended in November 1947, although during the next year due to the Poles' unwillingness to allow skilled German labour to leave early, it continued well into 1948. In total the British authorities accepted one and a half million German nationals, while the Russians took 1836 million Germans from the Polish areas.[44]

For the Polish authorities the main concern was not the wellbeing of the deportees, but anxiety that the British should not take the Germans' side concerning accusations of mistreatment. Nevertheless, their primary concern was to prevent Poles flooding into the area to take over property without authority. Destruction and theft which had been the norm in 1945, had resulted in loss of farms and agricultural production in the coming years. The newly vacated properties were to be allocated to communities being repatriated from the Soviet Union, and in the coal-mining areas to Polish miners who had been induced to return to Poland from the West, where they had migrated during the 1920s and 1930s. Due to conflicts between the number of authorities responsible for the deportations of the Germans and the settlement of repatriants, however, these plans were not always adhered to.

A separate category of Germans in post-war Poland were prisoners of war who, even though war activities had ended, remained in captivity and who, furthermore, were obliged to work for their captors. The justification given for this policy was that the value of their labour would be set against the reparations, which were due to Poland from Germany. A high percentage of POWs were captured during the war, nevertheless the Red Army subsequently arrested many Germans who had been

released from British or US captivity and who then were picked up on the way to their homes, which happened to be in the Soviet zone.[45] During the early stages of post-war reconstruction it became clear that shortage of coal would be a Europe-wide problem. Polish attempts to restart production foundered, among other things, on a shortage of skilled manpower. Thus the coal mining industry became the biggest employer of German POWs. Some were moved from Polish holding camps, the Russians supplied others, and some were *Volksdeutsch* who had been held in camps and prisons. During 1945 over 41,000 German POW were employed in Polish coalmines alone.[46] This was approximately 80 percent of all POWs held in Polish territories. Although the wartime allies undertook to release all POWs by 1947 the Soviet Union released the last POW as late as 1957. In Poland German POWs continued to be employed as miners mainly due to shortage of Polish labour to replace them. These were men against whom no war crime proceedings were outstanding and therefore whose continued detention went contrary to the Geneva Convention. The fact that they received lower food rations and pay rates than those given to Polish workers was a further breach of the Convention. Among the Polish authorities a certain unease was felt about the number of Poles among the POWs. These were men who had been conscripted into the German forces during the war. They were released from captivity in 1945–46, followed by Germans from territories incorporated into Poland's post-war borders. In 1948 the first stage of the release of all remaining POWs started and was completed in 1950.

A minor chapter in the history of human migration following the Second World War was the story of Poles who had sought employment in French, German and Belgian mines during the inter-war period. After the war, the communist movement, which dominated the labour movement in France and Belgium, encouraged them and their families to return to Poland and participate in the building of a new era in Polish history. The desire to return to Poland was encouraged by sections of the PPR, which emerged in those countries. Supported by the PPR in Poland, which looked forward to increasing its base in the working-class community, in particular among the elite of the working class, which the miners were perceived to be, the regime reached an agreement with the French and Belgian government.[47] It was hoped that at least 14000 politically reliable and highly skilled miners would return to Poland.[48]

When first transports arrived in Poland in 1946 the miners found conditions to be so bad, and the local Poles' hostility to be so pronounced, that further repatriation ceased. By the end of 1947, when the French

and Belgian side came to have doubts about losing their skilled labour force, only 8891 miners and their families had been repatriated to Poland.[49] Within a brief period of time many of those who returned attempted to go back to France. To the regime's extreme embarrassment, miners who had spent all their working lives active in communist-dominated trade unions in France and Belgium, felt let down by lack of professional and political appreciation in Poland. With the onset of the Cold War they were neither allowed to go back to their previous places of employment in the West nor bring their families to Poland.

During the inter-war period it was estimated that approximately five million Ukrainian nationals lived in Poland.[50] These were people whose aspirations to statehood had been thwarted and who mainly blamed Poland for this. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s this sense of grievance was increased by the Polish government's policy of colonization of areas inhabited by the Ukrainian minority. Polish responses to the Ukrainian problem varied from outright repression to pacification of villages suspected of harbouring terrorists. Attempts were made to divide the Ukrainian communities and to drive a wedge between them and their spiritual and cultural leaders, in the belief that this would make them receptive to Polish culture.[51] Germany, Rumania and Czechoslovakia, at various stages and for their own reasons, encouraged and financed the anti-Polish sentiments of the Ukrainian communities.

The response of the community was to come together. What until then had been a religiously diverse, economically differentiated and regionally based national group, was brought together by the denial of its right to self-determination and consistent policy of persecution. Although a high proportion of Ukrainians belonged to Greek Orthodox and Catholic Churches, the Uniate Church came to be seen as the church of the Ukrainian community. The attitude of the Polish Catholic hierarchy to the non-Catholics, and to the Uniates in spite of their adherence to the Church of Rome, was hostile. All these policies contributed to the strengthening of Ukrainian national consciousness. The Ukrainians and that community leaders were thus only too happy to see the defeat of the Polish state in 1939. At the same time, since 1920 a number of military organizations had emerged of which the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in 1929 was the most influential. In 1940, during acrimonious debates on the subject of cooperation with Germany, a split took place within the OUN. The radical youth wing, led by Stephan Bandera, broke off to form what came to be known as the OUN-B. In 1943 it took the name Ukraińska Powstańcza Armia (Ukrainian Insurrectionist Army – UPA). The Poles also referred to it as

the 'Banderowcy'. German policies towards the Ukrainian question were to exploit them but not to grant them autonomy. The result was that while sections of the community were willing to make the most of the opportunities offered by the war and to settle scores with the Poles and the Russians, others took the view that Germany was as much an enemy of Ukrainian nationalism as were Poland and the Soviet Union.[52] On the one hand a Waffen SS Division was formed consisting of Ukrainians under the name *SS Galizien*. Two Ukrainian battalions, *Nachtigal* and *Roland* were used for diversion and counterinsurgency. On the other hand, UPA, while concentrating primarily on fighting the Polish underground also took action against the Germans. Although details are difficult to verify, UPA was believed to have been a well-organized resistance movement. Numbering anywhere between 30 000–100 000 men, it could count on the Ukrainian population's support. It had the additional advantage of being very familiar with the areas in which it operated.

During the period 1941–43 the AK and OUN–UPA held talks. While both sought cooperation against the Germans and the Soviet Union, they were divided on the question of post-war policies. In May 1943 the Polish government-in-exile issued a decree in which it promised to respect the rights of the Ukrainian national minority. This was contrary to the desires of the Delegatura and the KRP, which did not want to make any such commitments. Relations between the Poles and UPA collapsed amidst acrimonious accusations that UPA was terrorizing the Polish community in Wołynia and trying to force Poles out of the areas which they hoped would become an independent Ukrainian state.[53]

As the war drew to a close, the Ukrainian community was to feel the full brunt of anger about, on the one hand, collaboration with the German authorities and, on the other hand, the Ukrainian resistance's terrorist activities during the war. The London government-in-exile and the AK was determined to deny the Ukrainians the right to autonomy and statehood. The communists, while declaring their commitment to respecting the wishes of the community, followed the Soviet lead on that subject. The Poles, irrespective of their political allegiances, wanted the Ukrainians punished for their wartime activities and removed from Poland. The Ukrainians fought for independence and in the brief period before the Red Army pushed the Germans back into Poland, they tried to establish a *fait accompli*. They did not succeed, as the Germans had only a transient interest in encouraging Ukrainian militancy, while the Red Army had none.

On 9 September 1944 the PKWN signed an agreement with the Soviet

Ukrainian and Byelorussian Republics for an exchange of population. This effectively sealed the fate of the Ukrainian nationals. While Polish nationals living in areas incorporated into the Soviet Union were repatriated to Poland, Ukrainians, together with the Byelorussian community, were to be moved to the Soviet Union. Although these agreements stipulated that removal was to be done on a voluntary basis, in reality the transfer of population was implemented under duress and without any effort being made to consult the Ukrainian community or its leaders.[54] In areas inhabited by a majority of Ukrainians a state of panic and terror prevailed. The AK, determined not to allow the Soviet Union to secure areas that had belonged to Poland before the war, put pressure on the Polish inhabitants to remain. Attacks by UPA and other Ukrainian paramilitary organizations were, however, of such brutality that most Poles preferred to depart. In areas that were to remain Polish and were to be cleared of Ukrainians, the UPA fought against the incoming Polish administration, the AK and the local Poles.[55] The result was a state of civil war in areas inhabited by the Ukrainians in which the NKVD aided by the UB and Polish army units tried to force the Ukrainians to leave for the Soviet Union, while the civilian population, supported by UPA and other military organizations, resisted and took reprisals against Polish villages.

It would appear that the incoming PKWN administration did not know what to do about the Ukrainian population. Whereas in July 1944 the Soviet leadership, primarily the secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Nikita Krushchev, demanded that all areas deemed by him to be Ukrainian, including Chełm, Hrubieszów, Zamość, Jarosław and Tomaszów should be incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, his demands were not supported in Moscow. In the end the whole of the Rzeszów, Zamość and Lublin districts remained within the new Polish boundaries. The strength of UPA in these areas might have made the PKWN politicians more inclined to accept the Soviet solution of population exchange.[56] The Poles might have been further pressurized into accepting the Soviet solution for fear that otherwise Polish nationals in the Soviet Union would not be allowed to move to Poland.

It is estimated that in 1944 700000 Ukrainians lived within the boundaries of what was to be the post-war Polish state. During the period 1944–47 482000 were forcefully deported to the Soviet Union. This calculation included an ethnic group called the Łemki, some of whom declared themselves to be Ukrainian nationals whereas others felt that they were Ruthenians. Throughout the whole period of deportations the Ukrainians tried to resist. They were willing to convert to

Catholicism and to give up demands for autonomy and retention of national identity. Their desperate desire to remain in areas that were theirs historically was thwarted. From October 1944 the resettlements were implemented relentlessly. Whereas initially the Poles tried to force the Ukrainians out through economic and moral pressure, by October 1945, when UPA reprisals and the activities of the Polish nationalist underground organizations had become alarming, the authorities decided to force the community to leave.[57] The army, now freed from military action, was extensively used to move the Ukrainian population out of Poland.

Throughout this period the army was being utilized in the fight with 'bands'. In the eastern and southeastern borderlands military units had the additional task of fighting the Ukrainian resistance. In April in the Rzeszów district the situation appeared particularly perilous. All attempts to gain local support were made difficult by the very fact that the local peasants had come to distrust all units, whether they were AK, NSZ, UPA or the Polish army. UPA units were larger, better organized and knew the terrain, although, it was reported that AK and UPA units were coming together to fight the common enemy.[58] During the most confrontational period of forceful resettlement, cooperation between the two increased. AK was certainly not interested in furthering the Ukrainian cause, but hoped to benefit from the government's preoccupation with the Ukrainian problem.[59] When operating in the vicinity of Przemyśl, army units were constantly harried. UPA's control of the countryside was in no doubt, but its organizational sophistication was also noted. After capturing the area around Iskan near Przemyśl it was found that the 'Banderowcy' had earlier established a well-run cadet school. The local Ukrainian population so resolutely supported UPA that no intelligence could be elicited from them.[60]

The fight against Ukrainian nationalist units required special preparation. Thus the political–educational officers were given the tasks of building up the soldiers' morale and providing political justification. At the same time the officers were only too well aware that the army's disciplinary shortcomings were a major obstacle to their being able to drive a wedge between the bands and the civilian population. If the army behaved badly, robbed and killed local peasants, their task would only be made more difficult.[61] The need to motivate and maintain the soldiers' morale became a pressing matter in September prior to the main campaign of removing Ukrainian villagers to the Soviet Union. A special debriefing meeting of political–educational officers of units scheduled to participate in the resettlement took place in Lublin on 28 August

1945. They were given instructions on how to explain to soldiers the 'correct political background to the resettlement'. They were to also pay attention so that no mistreatment of the Ukrainians took place and no pilfering occurred. Most importantly they were to remain vigilant as to the possibility of action by UPA.[62] The political–educational officers were provided with leaflets, texts of informal talks and appeals to be made in units. Furthermore, they were to seek informal opportunities to discuss further contentious issues with soldiers. Instructions varied from how to explain President Bierut's speech to a press conference to explanations on when and how the repatriation of Poles from the Soviet Union would take place. These latter two subjects were of great importance, as a high proportion of conscripts were from areas incorporated into the Soviet Union and it was known that anxiety about their families being repatriated to Poland was a major grievance.[63]

For all these instructions the life of a political–educational officer was not easy. On 24 September Major Jekla reported that in the units to which he was attached in his capacity of deputy commander with responsibilities for political–educational matters involved in the resettlement of Ukrainian villages to the Soviet Union, there was no time for political work. The programme was being hampered because of bad planning, which meant that although the villagers were persuaded to leave, there was no transport to take them away. Units of the UPA constantly attacked the soldiers who were forced to take up a defensive position in the area. Still the political–educational officers managed to initiate talks on the nature of the political system in Poland and the differences between the PPS and PPR. But, as it turned out, what bothered the soldiers most was the fate of their families and the fact that a charge had been introduced on letters sent by serving soldiers.[64]

By the end of August 1946, 482 000 Ukrainian nationals had left Poland. Those who remained, numbering over 200 000, became the responsibility of the Polish government because the Soviet Union refused to accept any further transports. At this point the Polish government had to decide what do with the remaining Ukrainian minority. As no amnesty was declared for members of the UPA there was no way of scaling down the policy of confrontation between the Polish authorities and Polish people on the one hand and the Ukrainian civilian and the Ukrainian fighting units on the other. Therefore the solution taken by the government was to destroy the Ukrainian community through internal exile and deny their culture and religion.

The idea of removing the remnants of the Ukrainian community from the Rzeszów district was most probably first suggested by the military

authorities which, together with the UB, had been in charge of combating the UPA. Writing on 25 February 1947 the chairman of the district security committee suggested that, since the Soviet Union would not accept any more Ukrainian nationals, they should be moved West and settled in such a way that they would not be able recreate a community.[65] When on 28 March General Karol Świerczewski, deputy minister of national security, was killed by the UPA in an ambush, the Central Committee of the PPR approved this solution. In a telling conclusion of the minutes of the meeting it was stated:

> As part of reprisals against the Ukrainian community it was decided:
> 1. To relocate hastily Ukrainian and mixed families to the recovered territories (mainly Southern Prussia), (by) not creating compact groups, and no nearer to the border than 100km.
> 3. The preparation of the data about the Ukrainian people in Poland and preparation of project for their relocation are given to Comrade Spychalski and Radkiewicz.[66]

The army and the UB were put in charge of the final stages of dealing with the Ukrainian population. With Czechoslovak and Soviet assistance, over 18000 soldiers were deployed to round up that population and to put them on trains that took them to designated new villages. Led by General Stefan Mossor, the operation, codenamed 'Wisła', resulted in the removal of the remaining 150000 Ukrainians from the Rzeszów and Zamojszczyzna districts to Pomerania and the Olsztyn area. In accordance with the final version of the plan the displaced population was scattered through the new settlement districts in such a way that the Ukrainians were not to make up more than 10 percent of the community in any one village. The removal of the communities had the additional aim of destroying the Ukrainian national identity. Instructions issued by the ministry of recovered territories made it explicit that total assimilation of the community was the real aim of operation 'Wisła'. All efforts, including the forceful separation of the Ukrainian intellectuals from the community, which was to be settled on land, was a way of facilitating this process. Even the word 'Ukrainian' was not be used in defining the displaced community. In a final act of revenge, Ukrainian nationals were to be forbidden to leave areas on which they were forcefully settled and in particular they were not to return to areas from which they had originally been removed.[67] The popular portrayal of all Ukrainian nationals as perfidious and murderous as well as antagonistic towards the Polish nation completed

the physical destruction of the Ukrainian community in post-war Poland.

The initial ideas were to settle Poles in areas from which the Ukrainians had been moved. UPA nevertheless made this plan virtually impossible. Because the last amnesty declared in 1947 did not include members of Ukrainian nationalist groups, they had no choice but to fight to the end. Their last act of defiance was to burn all Ukrainian farmsteads thus making it impossible to settle Poles there.[68] In spite of a shortage of arable land and village overpopulation, the ex-Ukrainian areas in Poland became the most sparsely populated regions. Once they had done this, many UPA fighters made their way out of Poland to the West.

By the end of 1947 the communist regime had achieved what had been in originally a nationalist aim, to create a nation–state, and, furthermore one in which no national minority's right to self-expression was tolerated.

8
Towards a Communist Government

Immediately after the war all political parties focused their hopes on the general election which they presumed would take place soon after the end of hostilities. During the Potsdam Conference the wartime allies agreed on the necessity of fair and free elections being conducted in Poland, although no date was set. The Western powers were more concerned that they should be free, although they made no request that they should be allowed to monitor them. At this stage, Stalin appears to have insisted that the TRJN should conduct the elections, though he too appears not to have given the PPR leadership clear instructions as to what results he expected. The general expectation was still that, notwithstanding possible difficulties, these would be free and all sides would accept the results.

PPR knew though that were the elections to the national assembly to take place early, they would be routed. Thus they sought to postpone them for as long as possible, hoping that they would be able to negotiate an electoral alliance with the other parties. They also calculated that once a certain degree of stability had been established and key economic reforms had taken effect creating a sense of optimism, this would result in a less hostile atmosphere, from which they hoped to benefit. Had the elections taken place in 1945 it was only too obvious that they would be treated by the electorate as a referendum for or against Poland being in the Soviet sphere of influence.[1] PPR was to quickly realize that, despite the support of the NKVD and the presence of the Red Army on Polish territories, in their plans for the hegemony of the political system they had to deal with the PSL, which was intent on acting as a legal opposition. The legalization of the PSL in August 1945 led to the sidelining of the pro-communist SL and with that went the communist hope for securing the peasant vote. Mikołajczyk was not content to accept

the role that the communists hoped to assign to his party: a compliant ally. From the outset it was obvious that the general elections would be contested vigorously and that, unless the communists managed to draw the PSL into some prior agreement, they would not only lose, but the PSL would win an outright majority.

In 1946 the situation, far from improving, became more complex and Polish society continued to be polarized by economic and political issues. The activities of the underground resistance and lawlessness with which the security services had difficulty in dealing, increased. In the Southeast civil war raged between the Polish and Ukrainian communities and made it impossible to settle Polish repatriates from the Soviet Union there. The Recovered Territories, which Gomułka had hoped would satisfy peasant land hunger and thus increase the PPR's appeal to that community, were proving just as difficult to manage. Worse was to come when waves of strikes, mostly caused by economic hardship, affected the main industrial areas. The nationalization decree of January 1946 brought industrial enterprises under state ownership. Workers' anger at the loss of authority and deteriorating conditions of work was directed against the state managers.[2] In most cases the workers blamed the communists for their misfortunes. In these circumstance PPR sought to postpone the elections and in that they had the support of the PPS. PPS had its own reasons for avoiding a general election at this stage, for the party was divided by internal ideological debates in which the question of the degree of cooperation with the PPR was a major issue.[3]

The PPR thus increased its pressure on the PSL to form a six party electoral block, which naturally was to be dominated by the three largest ones – the PPR, PPS and the PSL – with the SD, SL and SP being allocated minor roles. Mikołajczyk, however, did not feel that the PSL had any need for such a coalition. He had increasingly come to believe that his party stood a chance of winning an outright majority. In February 1946 talks between the three main parties broke down. PPR and PPS had put to the PSL a proposal that they go into the elections on a joint platform, but agree beforehand how they would divide the seats. The PPS invested a lot of effort in the formation of the electoral bloc. It feared that if PSL went into the elections on its own, the fragile political situation in Poland would shatter, leading to extreme polarization and then to civil war. Cyrankiewicz was also aware that this would lead to the destruction of the PPS, as the radical sections of the PPS would join the PPR and others would take a right-wing road. Although an advocate of left-wing unity, Cyrankiewicz believed that Soviet domination of Poland was a foregone conclusion and the issue was merely one of how exten-

sive this would be. If PSL won the general election, the Soviet Union might well take action to impose a communist government, abandoning all pretence of political pluralism.[4]

The critical element in the preparations for the general elections was the attitude of the Soviet Union. It would appear that at this stage Stalin believed that Mikołajczyk could be persuaded to stay in the government rather than to challenge it. It is likely that the proposal which PPR and PPS jointly put to the PSL leadership represented a formula that had been arrived at with the Soviet Union's full approval. The proposal was for the PPR, PPS, PSL and SL to each have 20 percent of the seats in the Sejm, while the smaller SD and SP would have 10 percent. On 22 February at a joint meeting of the three main parties Mikołajczyk responded with a demand that PSL and SL should jointly be awarded 75 percent of the seats. As a result, the talks broke down. It has been suggested that this is what Mikołajczyk had wanted to happen, as he had no interest in the formation of an electoral bloc.[5] At this stage he genuinely believed that the PSL would win an outright majority in the elections. His hopes were not merely based on the assumption that the peasant vote would be solidly behind his party, but that the underground opposition, which had no political representation, would support the PSL rather than any other legalized party.

In the meantime the Catholic Church, which initially supported the christian SP, increasingly advocated support for the PSL, adding to Mikołajczyk's confidence. He and the party had in every respect come to represent an alternative orientation to that advocated by the PPR and PPS. Encouraged by the British and US ambassadors in Poland, he hoped that a PSL government would receive Western loans and aid, thus facilitating the economic recovery on the basis of economic links with the West. Dependence on the Soviet Union, he hoped, could be reduced by the Western powers taking an interest in Poland, which would also forewarn the Soviet Union not to interfere in the country's internal affairs. More recently, it has been suggested that Mikołajczyk was privy to Soviet thinking on the forthcoming elections. Through his contacts with Victor Lebedev, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, whom he knew from the days when both were in London during the war, Mikołajczyk had concluded that Stalin did not want to see the communist party in power in Poland, but wanted stability. The PSL leader clearly believed that by securing political stability, he could count on Stalin's tacit tolerance of his independent line.[6]

The PPS and PPR decided on the tactic of postponing the elections while in the meantime seeking a popular mandate. The device was to

hold a referendum that asked three questions to which an average, thinking Pole would inevitably answer in the affirmative. These were: 1) Do you approve of land reform and nationalization? 2) Do you approve of a single chamber legislature? 3) Do you approve of the extension of Poland's border to the Oder and Neisse line? The referendum date was set for 30 June. While the PPR and PPS embarked on a campaign calling for a '3 x Yes' vote, the PSL was put in a quandary. In principle PSL would have also advocated a positive answer to the three questions, but if the referendum was a test of allegiances, the party had to devise a way for the voters to state a preference in favour of the PSL and against the other two parties. Thus the PSL advised its supporters to vote 'No' to the question on the abolition of the senate, even though traditionally peasant politicians resented the upper chamber in which the landed interests predominated and tended to block legislation likely to benefit the peasants.

Before the referendum took place a government delegation consisting, however, only of PPR and PPS members, visited Stalin. In the course of a meeting on 23 May they first explained what was happening in Poland and then listened to Stalin's analysis and recommendations. Critically for the Poles, who had clearly hoped to be given authority to destroy the PSL and who believed that Mikołajczyk was a tool in the hands of British and US imperialism, Stalin did not agree that the world was polarizing into two conflicting camps. He in fact refused to countenance the possibility of war breaking out as 'there are no reasons for a war'.[7] He then stated that there was no need for a Soviet-style dictatorship of the proletariat in Poland, since a socialist system would emerge anyway. It would also seem that Stalin did not give his approval for the banning of PSL, or even for its destruction and weakening, as he stressed that it was he who had agreed to Mikołajczyk joining the first administration. Stalin's recommendations appeared to go counter to what the Poles had hoped to hear. Bierut, Gomułka and Osóbka-Morawski gave a very negative analysis of the PSL and its leadership, possibly with the hope that they would be encouraged to ban the party and to either exclude Mikołajczyk from the government or to imprison him. The interpretation of Stalin's attitude goes counter to what is generally perceived to have been his aim. It is worth considering whether this was merely a view which he held during the transitional period between his successful collaboration with the capitalist allies during the war, and the disappointments which came with the failure to agree with them over Germany's future and with the US decision on Marshall Aid.[8] In 1946, notwithstanding his conviction that democracy should prevail

in Poland, Stalin nevertheless stressed his belief that this would ultimately evolve into a socialist system, presumably modelled on the Soviet one.

For the three dominant parties the referendum was a test of strength before the elections. None had much time to prepare for it thoroughly, but clearly the results were to form the basis of planning for a campaign in the run-up to the elections. Once more the army was mobilized for political action. Earlier, in anticipation of the general election, special propaganda brigades had been formed, but when instead, the referendum was announced, these were deployed in the community. Between the 7 and 27 June it was given a three-fold task. Soldiers and those who had been recently demobilized were to be informed of the need to vote '3 x Yes'. The army was to provide security for the duration of the campaign and referendum. In the recovered territories and areas where, due to the ongoing fight against bands, underground resistance and the Ukrainian units, the army was in absolute control and this gave them considerable opportunities to influence popular opinion. Nevertheless, during this period the army was also given the task of protecting factories and polling stations. This meant that soldiers would be interacting with the community, in particular with the workers. The third and clearly most important task was a propaganda campaign among the civilian community.[9]

In February the political–educational section of the army was told to prepare a propaganda campaign in anticipation of the general election. In May it was instructed to focus on the referendum instead and to disseminate information throughout areas under the army's jurisdiction. In other areas it was to act in conjunction with the UB and MO and representatives of ruling parties. Propaganda brigades were to be assembled and trained immediately. Care was to be taken to find good speakers. Military units, which had earlier been deployed to help in bringing in the harvest and with sowing, were once more to be used to try and forge links with the peasant community. Where possible, use was to be made of orchestras and military theatre troupes to help break the ice. These brigades were to fan out across the country, equipped with leaflets, newspapers, pamphlets and additional security in case of attacks. Although nowhere was it stated openly in the instructions that action was to be taken to minimize support for the PSL, this point could be assumed from the stress on remaining in touch with the SL, which the communists favoured, and from the suggestion that a vote of the retention of the second chamber, the senate should be portrayed as a reactionary gesture.[10]

The results of the referendum, which were made public, were falsified. Poles were told that 68 percent of those who voted had stated '3 x Yes' to questions put to them. This was intended to convey the message that 68 percent of voters approved of the present government and its policies. Documents released 40 years later reveal an entirely different picture. Only 26.9 percent had voted '3 x Yes', and 73.1 percent had answered in the negative to the question on the retention of the senate.[11] The latter were likely to have responded to the PSL call to vote in favour of land reform, nationalization of industry and extension of Poland's western borders but against abolishing the senate. Nevertheless this cannot be taken as a clear indicator of support for the PSL. No obvious political loyalties could be deduced from the results of the referendum as it was not possible to distinguish where the voters made a response to the question posed and where they voted tactically either in support of PPR and PPS polities or the PSL. In some areas the '3 x Yes' vote was 30 percent, and in others the figure was closer to 80 percent. All parties involved viewed the results of the referendum with extreme anxiety. The PSL and Mikołajczyk knew the official results were false as they had done their own count at the polling stations. This made them determined to expose the fraud and increased their hopes in relation to the forthcoming general elections. Britain and the USA also became anxious as to what would happen next and tried to put pressure on the TRJN to give assurances about the elections.[12]

The pace of future developments was nevertheless now set firmly by the Soviet Union. Reports from Poland prepared by Colonel Semon Davidov, the NKVD advisor to the ministry of national security, and forwarded to Stalin indicated that the PSL, believing itself to have been cheated of a victory, was likely to go on the offensive. Equally worrying were reports that the right wing of the PPS, which opposed excessive subordination to the PPR, was voicing its irritation with the leadership's policies.[13] So seriously was the news from Poland viewed that it has been suggested that the results of the referendum caused Stalin to change his previously optimistic assessment of the likelihood of socialism evolving in Poland without there being a need for a dictatorship of the communist party. When the leadership of the PPS visited Stalin on 19 August, he let them know that he felt that Mikołajczyk had disappointed him. While Stalin at this stage appeared to be impressed by the PPS, which he hoped would increase its cooperation with PPR, this mood was not to last. In September a group within the party leadership led by Stefan Matuszewski, who was very close to the PPR,

attempted to overthrow the PPS leadership. When it failed, the leadership regrouped and the party ranks were purged of 'leftist elements'. Nevertheless, the referendum results and Matuszewski's actions brought to the fore criticism of PPR treatment of the PPS.[14]

Stalin was informed of this and when sometime at the end of August or beginning of September 1946 Bierut visited Stalin, the Soviet leader had changed his views on cooperation between the two parties. Not only did he start thinking in terms of splitting the socialists so that the pro-communist faction could form a new party, but then proceeded to advise that whatever further electoral agreements were made with Mikołajczyk these should ensure that the PSL was only given a minority of mandates. Stalin's advice during this meeting was very different from that which he had given before the referendum. Whereas previously he showed confidence in the PPR–PPS alliance with the PSL and disagreed with the PPR's anxieties about Mikołajczyk, now he appeared to agree with the course of action advocated by the PPR. Bierut now feared that the PPS leadership, having fought off an attempt by the pro-PPR section, would be more inclined to forge an electoral alliance with the PSL. The PPR therefore advocated that extensive and detailed arrangements should be made for the general elections. Groups opposed to the PSL were to be encouraged and the boundaries of the constituencies where PSL was strong were to be altered to limit their success.[15]

The PPR proposal submitted to Stalin amounted to a plan for the destruction of the PSL. While Stalin did not openly advocate this, in his conversation with Bierut he did not oppose this. His disapproval of the PSL was quickly communicated to Mikołajczyk when the latter asked for Stalin to arbitrate in his conflicts with the TRJN.[16] To the Polish communists this was an unmistakable signal that they could proceed with discrediting the PSL leader and sidelining – and even destroying – his party.

The period between the time when the date was set for the elections and the elections themselves left little time for careful preparations. Nevertheless, the results of the referendum gave all sides due warning as to what might happen during the general elections. They were also given a longer period of time to prepare and implement a strategy. While the parties, in particular the PPR and PPS, embarked on a period of intensive negotiations concerning collaboration and organizational unity, there was also a need to evaluate how successful the campaign had been before the referendum. The army most certainly felt that the propaganda brigades had done their job well. These brigades had been

given the task of linking up with the peasants in the field, the workers in the factory and the average citizen. This they did by calling meetings and giving lectures. Where the brigades were given an opportunity to offer practical help, as was the case with fieldwork, it proved easier to break barriers. In many cases, local people who asked for support against either corrupt or unjust local administrators and party officials welcomed the arrival of the propaganda brigade. The orchestra and military theatre proved particularly useful in building trust between the community and the army and made it possible to disseminate propaganda.[17]

At one time up to 800 brigades moved through the countryside daily. Although the political–educational section of the army insisted that the brigades did a splendid job of overcoming hostility and educating and informing the community, reading between the lines it is possible to see the enormity of the task they faced. To start with any uniformed groups entering villages and settlements caused anxiety and distrust. Too much time was spent on explaining that they did not belong to bands set on robbing the peasants. The brigades were drawn into arbitrating between Poles who had come to the Recovered Territories from Poland and those repatriated from the Soviet Union. Corrupt local officials and the continuing presence of ethnic Germans added to problems faced by the inexperienced, but nevertheless optimistic, political officers. Even the distribution of UNRRA goods proved to be a mixed blessing as decisions had to be made as to who then was deserving and who not.[18] In the final analysis the official results of the referendum were more telling than reports written by the political officers. The campaign to persuade the community of the need to cast a '3 x Yes' vote failed. Thus preparations to deliver the expected results during the general elections had to be either better or different.

The Central Committee of the PPR analysed the results of the referendum a few days after its completion. The author of the party reports mournfully wrote: 'several days of propaganda work among the peasants in the Wieluń area was turned to dust by the bishop's visit'. There was no escaping the conclusion that the communists and socialists had failed to make a lasting impression on the peasants, who did as the church told them. Fear of collectivization prevailed, even though most had benefited from land reform. A simple fact that land allocated to them had not been registered correctly made the peasants fearful that it would soon be taken over by the state. A report from the Łódź gives a very detailed picture of how attempts to mobilize workers to educate the peasants backfired. While the peasants were sober and moral, the

workers who had been sent to the countryside to assist the propaganda brigades were disreputable. They sat all the time in the MO station getting drunk and generally being more of a hindrance than a help. The exception were old KPP members who had a generally higher political awareness and were able to speak to the peasants in a way they found convincing, though it was still doubtful whether this made them vote for the PPR–PPS programme.[19]

The way forward was to purge the local administration of hostile elements, replace unreliable party hotheads with serious party activists and improve security. The central committee confirmed these conclusions when it concluded that although the party was isolated from the masses, it had performed well, as had the army.[20] The reports still provide a picture in which stock phrases about the success of the party in mobilizing the community are preceded and followed by paragraphs in which a dismal picture of alienation and internal party weaknesses is painted. More telling was the security committee's report in preparation for the general elections which were to follow. In this the usefulness of the propaganda brigades was confirmed, but at the same time it was pointed out that army officers continued to be unreliable and there were instances of the commanders leading units to take part in the referendum and setting a bad example by voting in the negative to at least one question. The security situation had a bad impact on the conduct of the referendum and the committee agreed that the fight against the bands had to be concluded before the elections.[21]

The destruction of PSL on a local level was preceded by an agreement between the PPR and PPS to exclude the peasant party from the future electoral bloc. Both sides signed this agreement on 16 September 1946. Although the SD and SL were also included, clearly the first two made all the decisions. The socialists and communists then tried to arrive at an agreement as to how the portfolios would be distributed after the elections. For that purpose the leaders of both parties visited Stalin on the Black Sea coast where he was recuperating after a stroke. During the meeting Stalin allegedly approved cooperation between the two and agreed that Cyrankiewicz should become the next prime minister.[22] Although no instructions can be traced back to Stalin, his abandonment of Mikołajczyk inevitably led the Polish communists to conclude that they were free to attack the PSL with the explicit aim of destroying it before the elections. During the months preceding the elections, which were scheduled for the 19 January 1947, 162 PSL candidates and over 2000 activists and even more party members were arrested. Mikołajczyk appealed to the British and US ambassadors for help. Although both

lodged protests with the TRJN, this did not alter the momentum of events in Poland.

In the run-up to the referendum the propaganda brigades attacked and generally sought to discredit the PSL. This was done not only by explaining to peasants that the party represented the interests of the reactionary forces, but also by destroying PSL literature and making it impossible for the party to hold its meetings.[23] After the referendum the discrediting of the PSL became the clearly stated aim. Already in July the state security committee set out a plan of action for the period before the elections. This was summarized as:

1) To make it impossible for the legal and illegal opposition to cause anxiety;
2) To reduce its (the oppositions) social base;
3) To make sure that the elections are conducted fully and in peace.[24]

The political–educational section of the army was told in no uncertain terms that it should take immediate action against any PSL attempts to disseminate its own propaganda among military settlers and in areas under military control. The political officers were told to 'completely destroy all PSL organisation and circles in areas of military settlements'.[25] In October special Grupy Ochronno-Propagandowe (Protection–Propaganda Groups–GOP) were established by the political–educational department of the army. Its regulations stipulated that one of the groups' main aims was 'to actively counter enemy, bandit propaganda and PSL propaganda, which aid the bands. In the most backward settlements to provide the truth about democratic Poland.' Henceforth GOP propaganda portrayed the legal opposition and the bands as working together. While combating banditism and the NSZ, the groups were to prepare lists of all known supporters, and PSL activists were to be include on those. In all cases the groups acting together with the UB were to obtain intelligence about the strength of the PSL within villages and settlements. Wherever the PSL was accused of corruption or misuse of UNRRA supplies this information was to be retained, presumably for future use. Lectures and presentations were to be made in accordance with a pre-prepared template in which the activities of the bands and the PSL were to be jointly explained.[26]

Nine electoral districts around the Katowice and Wrocław areas were covered by the GOP activities. These targeted almost exclusively villages where the PSL vote was likely to be high. Only small towns where the PSL vote was likely to be in the range of 30–40 percent were to be visited

by GOP units. Internal memoranda setting out the structure of GOP activities nevertheless made it clear that the political officers knew the connection between PSL, lawlessness and the activities of underground resistance bands (NSZ and WiN) did not exist in reality, though it was to be implied in PPR/PPS and army propaganda. Thus, reporting on 12 December, Colonel Zarzycki stated openly that in the vicinity of Pszczyna, Bielsko and Cieszyn where NSZ and WiN bands were particularly active, support for the PSL was insignificant. On the other hand, where marauding bands of deserters from the Red Army were active, PSL support was on the increase.[27] A week before the elections, a report on the activities of the GOP units noted that in relation to the PSL it had been a success. Numerous PSL party cells were either disbanding or allegedly coming round wholesale to the decision to vote in support of the Democratic Bloc parties (PPR, PPS, SD and SL). Just how this was being achieved was not made explicit in the report though the point was made in a somewhat coy statement that

> it is a fact that these dissolutions are taking place rather through persuasion, than pressure. Although GOP is applying in its anti-PSL propaganda elements of force, nevertheless when it comes to the dissolution of PSL circles, in the returning of membership cards, the deciding factors in the majority of cases are the force of arguments about the damaging consequences of PSL policies.[28]

Other reports were more explicit and confirmed what PSL claimed at the time and subsequently, namely that physical force and intimidation was used to persuade voters that they should not vote for the PSL. According to GOP commanders, it was not they who were responsible for intimidating PSL members and supporters, but the MO and UB. Thus, having earlier repeatedly mentioned that the UB was not trusted and was making the propaganda campaign in favour of the Democratic Bloc difficult, one commander of the GOP emphatically stated that force was being used. In one particular case, in the town of Golub in the district of Wabrzezno, the commander of the MO had the habit of inviting to his office all those who earlier belonged to the PSL. He would then place his gun on the table and 'persuade them to join the PPR'.[29]

Arguably other methods were also used to persuade the peasant community of the wisdom of voting for the Democratic Bloc and abandoning their loyalties not only to the PSL but also the communist-supported SL. In addition to the already tried method of staging propaganda campaigns, saturating the areas with activists who assisted

in agricultural activities, arranged talks and meetings and seeking out peasants in their houses, specific inducements were also offered to the impoverished communities. In some cases additional land was made available for distribution, in others a doctor was appointed to the locality. Dentists and eye specialists were brought in to see those in need of help. Where a fire broke out, the GOP unit was immediately mobilized to assist the desperate peasants, thus forging a bond of trust. Distribution of potatoes and supplies of fuel to the poorest peasant communities naturally made a lasting impression on the villagers.[30] It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of such assistance to the peasants whose standard of living would have been low before the war and whose quality of life would have been close to subsistence after the war. GOP commanders had learned from mistakes made by the propaganda brigades before the referendum. This time they sent the most reliable, well-dressed and cleanly turned out soldiers, to the villages. They also brought with them their own food, thus reducing the incidence of theft and pilfering.

Little was left to chance and the communists used the judiciary to reduce further the likelihood of votes being cast against the Democratic Bloc. All those suspected of collaborating with the German authorities during the war were stripped of the right to vote. One of the sanctions against those found guilty of criminal activities was the loss of civil rights, which gave the security services an opportunity to further manipulate the vote. Those who were in the underground and who had not completed proceedings relating to the granting of amnesty were also denied the vote. A number of candidates were also stripped of their right to stand for elections on similar grounds. Nevertheless, the communists' determination to assume control of local electoral commissions gave them the clearest opportunity to manipulate the results of the general elections. According to a Soviet report, the PPR made sure that it controlled 52.3 percent of the local commissions while the remaining were controlled either by compliant members of other parties or by people recruited by the security service.[31]

The elections which took place on 19 January 1947 were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation and anxiety. The PSL's electoral structure was to all purposes destroyed and the electorate was cowered. In any case there was little doubt as to what the results were going to be. When the votes were announced they were a surprise to neither the Poles nor the international community. The official announcement was that 89.9 percent of those eligible to vote had participated in the general elections; 80.1 percent voted in favour of the Democratic Bloc while the

PSL secured 6.9 percent. In a press conference following the announcement of the results Mikołajczyk claimed that at least 60 percent of Poles would have wanted to vote for the PSL. It is now considered that this figure was a reasonable estimate of what would have happened had voting not been affected by manipulation and intimidation.[32] Nevertheless, neither he nor the foreign ambassadors who reported widespread irregularities were able to alter the course of developments from then on.

The Sejm met on 4 February. The Democratic Bloc was able to make decisions about the composition of the government, unopposed. Bierut, as the only candidate whose name was put forward, became president. Cyrankiewicz became the prime minister. Retaining the façade that the government was a coalition, all portfolios were supposedly divided between the parties in accordance with previous agreements, though in reality PPR, PPS and SL took the lion's share. The PPR made sure, however, that it controlled the most important ministries, namely security, industry, foreign relations, education and recovered territories. The PPS, although it controlled six ministries, was given the less important ones, namely public administration, reconstruction and social services, treasury, justice, navigation and finally, foreign trade.[33] It also monopolised the Centralny Urząd Planowania (Central Planning Office–CUP). General Rola Żymirski, ostensibly without party affiliation, and who became minister of national defence, was in reality at the disposal the PPR's.

The elections marked a turning point in the political life of Poland after the war. Although initially the pretence of a democratic system was still maintained, the international situation, in particular the polarization between the Soviet Union and its satellite states on the one hand and the capitalist states on the other had an immediate impact on internal developments. Following the elections Cyrankiewicz visited Moscow and obtained assurances of credits for reconstruction. The announcement of the Truman Doctrine and the granting of extensive funds for Greece and Turkey were viewed by the Soviet leadership as an insult. While talks about the reunification of Germany continued inconclusively, the Soviet Union realized that Britain and the United States did not want to continue cooperation on that issue. The announcement made by General George Marshall on funds for European reconstruction was the final straw. The Soviet Union did not allow Czechoslovakia and Poland to apply for economic assistance under the Marshall Aid programme. By the summer of 1947 the Soviet leadership came to the conclusion that the capitalist world was hostile. This affected the way

developments in Poland were viewed. Many processes which had already been initiated in Poland, namely the piecemeal destruction of the peasant movement, the taking over of trade unions and co-operatives, traditional socialist areas of activity, and the coming together of the PPR and PPS were now accelerated. With that, all form of political pluralism was finally destroyed. The critical stage was passed at the founding congress of the Communist Information Bureau (usually referred to as the Cominform) in September 1947 in Szklarska Poręba, in Poland. Earlier a shift had taken place in the Soviet leadership that brought to the fore a radical group of ideologues led by Andrei Zhdanov. His speech at Szklarska Poręba is seen as a turning point in the Soviet Union's relations with states within its sphere of influence. By defining relations between the capitalist and democratic states as antagonistic, Zhdanov indicated that the East European states should form a socialist bloc with the Soviet Union. Implicit in his speech was an instruction to the communist movements that they should identify and destroy enemies of the socialist movement.[34] To Polish communists, in spite of Gomułka's attempts to set out a Polish road to socialism, this amounted to an instruction to create left-wing unity, in reality absorbing the PPS into the PPR.

The PPR's attitude towards the PSL had been consistent from the outset. In the first place an attempt was made to sideline the main peasant party by the its incorporation of the SL into the TRJN. The party was supported by the PPR even as negotiations were being conduced with a view to forming an electoral block with the main peasant party. Throughout, the security services took a keen interest in Mikołajczyk. Their aim was to break up the peasant party by encouraging internal splits and undermining its cohesiveness. The security service increased its activities before the referendum. In the run-up to the general elections attacks on the PSL became open and after the elections the party was cast in the role of the enemy of democracy and an agent of the imperialist powers.[35]

The peasant movement was always disunited and even the creation of the PSL in particularly difficult circumstances did not overcome disunity, which predated the war. In the aftermath of the elections an attempt was made by a radical section of the party to challenge Mikołajczyk's policies. In February a clearly defined party faction moved into the offensive, though Mikołajczyk managed still to consolidate his support base.[36] While the dissidents sought to establish a new peasant party, one which would possibly ally itself with the PPS, the communists did not try to draw them into the SL, as this could have resulted in the PPR losing control over its compliant peasant party. In May a

PSL–Nowe Wyzwolenie party was formally constituted and awarded two seats in the Sejm. By the autumn the PSL's fate was already a foregone conclusion. The fight against the peasant party, still the legal opposition with 28 seats in the Sejm, was pursued on several levels. The security service attacked and intimidated regional activists while PSL members were being removed from administrative and government posts. On 10 September a trial of several prominent leaders of the PSL was opened in Kraków. The accusation against them was that they had collaborated with members of the underground opposition. Fearing that he too would be arrested and that a show trial would follow, Mikołajczyk and three other members of the party leadership fled from Poland on 20 October.

The regime moved quickly to destroy the remaining party structures. SL activists, assisted by the MO, took over all PSL buildings and property, publishing houses and facilities. The remaining PSL party was then purged to replace all previous PSL officials with those of the PSL–Nowe Wyzwolemie. The result was a transformed party, one where the name was retained, but which was reduced to the role of a nominal opposition, which in any case never opposed the government. The role of the Sejm opposition was in due course uneasily assumed by the Catholic club 'Dziś'i Jutro'. At the same time internal conflicts within the ruling coalition of PPR and PPS also in due course added some degree of debate, though it was never open or free.

The fate of the PPS offers an equally good example of how the communists' aims changed during the period between 1945 and 1947. Whereas initially the two parties appeared to be willing to explore organizational unity as a long-term aim, their relations were heavily affected by the shifting international situation and changing Soviet directives to the PPR. In October 1946, in the face of the decreased likelihood that the PSL would agree to join an electoral bloc, the PPS and PPR tried to clarify the extent and nature of future collaboration. The PPS wanted a clear division of seats in the future Sejm and prior agreements on which portfolios each party would hold. The party had already become uneasy about PPR's aggressive tactics in the factories. The PPS's strong presence in the trade unions was seen by the communists as a threat to their own attempts to control the working class. The trade union and factory council's independence was interpreted by the PPR as providing a platform for the right wing.[37]

On 28 November 1946 representatives of the two parties signed an agreement which clarified relations between the PPS and the PPR. A confidential appendix committed both sides to educating party

members to the importance of joint action and to excluding those who took action detrimental to that policy.[38] No doubt influenced by Stalin's approval of Cyrankiewicz, the party leadership believed that its independent existence was not threatened. At the same time the international situation had an impact on the PPS analysis of its future role in Polish politics. All Poles, not merely those on the left of the political spectrum, felt unease at the failure of the wartime allies to resolve the German issue. Polish memories were too recent for any politician to overlook the potential implication of German *revanchism*. This was apparent in December 1946 when Osóbka-Morawski in his address to the national council focused on the US and British failure to approve reparations for Poland, their evasiveness concerning Poland's western borders and their disinclination to topple General Franco, the one remaining wartime fascist leader in Europe. All this appeared in stark contrast to the Soviet commitment to Polish security. Even to those PPS leaders who opposed organizational unity with the communists, the Soviet Union appeared to be a consistent guarantor of Polish independence, while US and British preoccupation with the Far East and the maintenance of economic stability in Germany, suggested that long-term preparations for war against the Soviet Union were being made. These factors caused the PPS leadership to address once more the question of the consolidation of left-wing forces.[39] There can be little doubt that during the period 1946–47 the perceived imminence of another world war influenced debates on the subject of organizational unity with the communists.

The socialists' sense of isolation was compounded by their losing diplomatic support. Whereas at the end of 1946 the British and US ambassadors to Warsaw went to great lengths to encourage the PPS to assume an independent role in relation to the communists, at the beginning of 1947 they made it clear that they did not agree with the socialists' proposals for left-wing unity.[40] In May 1946 Cyrankiewicz attended a conference of European socialist parties held in Clacton in Britain. During his meetings there, which included contacts with the émigré PPS group, he realized that West European socialists did not approve of cooperation with the communist party. Furthermore, the exiled PPS considered that during the forthcoming elections the party should form an electoral block with the PSL and not the PPR.[41] Relations between the exiled PPS and the party in Poland were broken off. As European political life became polarized by the Cold War, Polish socialists felt both abandoned and misunderstood by their West European counterparts.[42]

The electoral victory of the Democratic Bloc in January 1947 placed

the question of organizational unity at the top of the agenda both in internal party discussions and in contacts with the PPR. In May Cyrankiewicz confirmed that organizational unity with the PPR was now the main aim, although he qualified this statement with an assurance that this objective was a long-term one.[43] The party was not, however, at one on the issue. The 30 June meeting of the executive council, the first since the general election, was a stormy one. It was generally agreed that a state of *impasse* had overwhelmed the party in its relations with the PPR. The PPS felt that it was being marginalized by the PPR and that its representation in the government was too limited. Doubts continued to be expressed about the communists' long-term aim and their commitment to cooperation with the socialists. Osóbka-Morawski led the attack on the communists accusing them of lacking good faith.[44] Cyrankiewicz defended the communists who had earlier accused the PPS of harbouring enemies. He pointed out that the party had, in its earlier drive for mass membership, absorbed members of the wartime WRN, who remained hostile to communists.

After the referendum some PSL members joined the PPS. Both these groups had formed factions within the PPS. Cyrankiewicz demanded that a line should be drawn between members who held acceptable views, namely against excessive cooperation with the communists, and those who used the party as a vehicle for attacking left-wing unity. The meeting concluded that the party should 'steer a left-wing course' in its future policies. The decision to proceed with left-wing unity, even though neither a date nor the extent of organizational unity was as yet defined, set the scene for internal purges. Matuszewski, whose radical left-wing course had been defeated in early 1946, reappeared on the scene, advocating immediate organizational union. Conflicts within the party leadership were uneasily resolved with the acceptance of Cyrankiewicz's motion that unity with the PPR should be approved in principle. This spelt the final defeat of those who believed that the party could play an independent role in post-war politics. With Osóbka-Morawski's replacement by Kazimierz Rusinek as chair of the executive council, Cyrankiewicz's control over the leadership became absolute.

The communists' belligerence and the creation of the Cominform in September put the PPS under extreme pressure. During joint-leadership meetings of the two parties the communists attacked the PPS for its apparent support of right-wing groups. The left wing of the PPS was given tactical advice by the communists on how to pursue their campaign for unity. At the same time regional PPS leaders and pre-war trade union activists were arrested.[45] During the founding congress of the

Cominform Zhdanov accused the social democratic movement of harbouring agents of the capitalist powers. As a result PPS leaders realized that the confrontational line taken by the Cominform would have an impact on the way the PPR viewed the PPS. Nevertheless, Cyrankiewicz still presumed that Gomułka's determination to pursue 'the Polish road to socialism' would prevail and in effect would guarantee that the two parties would be allowed to discuss the process of coming together freely and amicably.

The XXVII Party Congress, which took place in December, symbolically in the previously German town of Wrocław (Breslau), was meant to be a demonstration of the party's independence. The congress approved the party's role in Polish politics. A number of interesting ideas stressing PPS's own vision of Poland's transformation to a democratic system, which had been put forward by key PPS ideologues during the course of the year, were approved in Wrocław. Julian Hochfeld's key point had been that while Poland aimed to build a democratic state, in the Marxist meaning of the word, the process need not be a violent or revolutionary one. His views reflected PPS opposition to the rapid process of centralization. It was felt that centralization would result in the establishment of a totalitarian state where the economic resources would be gathered in the hands of a small elite. Hochfeld and Jan Topiński both advocated a decentralized state system in which trade unions and the co-operative movement would act as a counterweight to the power of the state.[46] The Congress accepted these points as guidelines, hoping thus to underline the party's distinct ideological and organizational identity. The international and domestic circumstances nevertheless changed rapidly.

In December 1947 the party's membership stood at 750000. By December 1948 when the PPS and PPR merged to form the Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party – PZPR) it had been reduced to 531000.[47] The purge of the party's ranks had taken place in two waves. In April 1948 opponents of organizational unity with the PPR were removed from the executive council. In their place were co-opted those who had previously campaigned for closer relations with the communists, including Matuszewski. In October, a second wave of purges was instigated. During these Osóbka-Morawski was dropped from the supreme council. Most prominent men who had been associated with the formative period of the post-war PPS lost their seats on the supreme council, the executive council and the party's political committee. The process of unification was likely to have been accelerated by a visit to Moscow by Bierut and Cyrankiewicz to discuss long-term

economic assistance for Poland. There they met Stalin and Molotov. While the details of exchanges are unknown, it is generally presumed that both party leaders were urged to complete the process of unification. Economic assistance to Poland might well have been held out as a reward.[48]

Cyrankiewicz's role in the accelerated process of unification cannot be overlooked. The purges of the leadership were followed by a rapid consolidation of key posts in the hands of his supporters. By March 1948 Cyrankiewicz appears to have led the way towards organizational unity. One suggestion is that on returning from Moscow he realized the inevitability of events to follow and accepted that the PPS could not ignore Soviet wishes. From representing a centrist position of cooperation with the communists, he became the man who concluded the process, perhaps in the belief that this was the only way forward, other than outright destruction.

The supreme council of the PPS met for the last time during 18–22 September 1948. Cyrankiewicz led the discussion and in his keynote speech he reviewed the course of developments during the years since the end of the war. He condemned the past conciliatory approach to the ex-WRN members and toleration of right-wing groups within the party. He ridiculed attempts to steer a middle course between revolutionary marxism and democratic liberalism. Justifying the PPR's assertion that PPS was unreliable, Cyrankiewicz condemned the wartime RPPS for having tried to create a revolutionary organization distinct from the PPR.[49] In the process it was clearly decided to overlook the fact that the PPR's programme formulated during the war was far from revolutionary, while the RPPS one was progressive and far-reaching. In the course of the debates which followed old wounds were exposed and new ones inflicted. Matuszewski led the attack on the centre and right wings of the party. In some cases partial admissions of mistakes were made by those under attack. Those who did so saved their political careers, while those who held on to their socialist credentials were expelled from the PPS. Stanisław Szwalbe, who had earlier advocated that the government should base itself on trade unions and factory committees, seeing them as an expression of the worker's progressive aspirations, stood his ground. He insisted that the PPS had been right to base its economic programme on the co-operative movement, but that it had been wrong not to integrate it more closely with the national economy. Osker Lange was more craven in his criticism of his past ideas. He admitted that he had supported Hochfeld's theory of a non-violent revolution, though he wished it to be known that he presently accepted that this had been

a mistaken concept. He conceded that PPS economists had not considered the possibility that economic plans based on statistical analysis, rather that on marxist class concepts, could 'degenerate in the capitalist direction'. Hochfelt admitted that he had misread historic developments. He conceded that he had personalized the issue of the role of the PPS and now agreed that this had been 'middle-class selfishness' on his part, one which he was proud to state he had since overcome.[50]

Between September and December 1948, 82,000 members of the PPS were excluded from the party. On 15 December 1948 at a joint congress meeting the two parties merged, forming the PZPR. The merger was not one in which both parties came together respecting their different origins. This was the PPR taking over the socialist party and imposing on it the PPR's agenda. Although a pretence of left-wing organizational unity was maintained, the PPS had lost its identity and structure. Communist control of all aspects of Poland's political life was an astounding reversal of what had been the state of affairs in 1944, when the PPR's membership at its most optimistic amounted to no more than 20000. In the spring of 1945, when Polish territories had been liberated, this had increased to 300000.[51] Gradually this increased, clearly in line with the PPR's growing political power. In January 1947 it was estimated that the PPR's membership was 555880, larger than the PPS membership reported to be 438871.[52]

The party membership nevertheless underwent a change throughout the period. During the war and in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the PKWN in Lublin, old KPP members still dominated the leadership and would have been the first recruits, returning to the new communist party. Nevertheless, during the following period those attracted to the ranks of the PPR were less reliable and had less ideological motivation. This becomes apparent from all reports where the political reliability of party activists, the security service, the MO and the political–educational section of the army was discussed. The new recruits were young, with little if any political experience, and lacked any understanding of the nature of the movement they were joining. Their motives for joining the PPR and state organs were dubious. Too frequently the party inspectors lamented the local party's secretaries' lax morality, alcoholism, corruptibility and preoccupation with their own wellbeing. The ideological and moral shortcomings of the party active were factors which were highlighted in all reports concerning campaigns in the run-up to the referendum and the general elections. The young party activists had no understanding of how to speak to the peasants, and furthermore had no respect for them. They were equally

useless in rallying the workers in industries that had a long-standing tradition of working-class organizations. At the same time the pre-war KPP members were not trusted to understand the new party's role in post-war politics and were therefore not entrusted with positions of responsibility in the post-war order. The presence of Jews in the PPR and key state organizations was a further cause of concern.

Thus the point of the merger of PPR with PPS to form the PZPR marked a watershed not merely for the socialists, but it also was a critical stage in the communist party's transformation to a party of government. Dispensing with all pretence of political pluralism, the PZPR took over all remaining state functions. In order to do this efficiently and in accordance with strict criteria expected by the Soviet Union, PZPR would have to purge its ranks to prepare the party for its new role. Under attack would be not merely old KPP members but also those who during the brief period between 1945 and 1947 believed that freedom would be given to pursue a 'Polish road to socialism'. Thus the creation of the PZPR opened a new chapter in the communist movement's history; this would start with a purge of those who had, at the time, believed in Soviet–Polish cooperation rather than subordination.

Conclusion

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War Poland was a deeply divided society. The policies of the government of the colonels, a military coterie which came to power after Piłsudski's death, alienated sizeable sections of society from the government. Not only the socialist PPS, but also the Christian Democratic and the Nationalist parties, were sidelined. In addition, insensitive and prejudicial policies towards the national minorities and the Jewish communities increased divisions throughout the Polish state.

The threat of war and the German attack briefly united Poles. Unfortunately, due to badly thought-out military strategy, misconceived plans for rearmament and international isolation, Poland was defeated within three weeks. The entry of the Red Army into Polish Eastern territories completed the rout and precipitated the flight of the government, military leadership and community leaders, including the Catholic Primate of All Poland. Within one month a government-in-exile was established in Paris with an ambitious programme of building up a Polish Fighting Force. Nevertheless by October 1939, the brief period of unity, which came in the wake of the German attack, had collapsed. The fight to establish a government-in-exile was won by an opponent of the colonels, while in Poland various groups and parties attempted to build up an underground force.

During the course of the war, obvious aims united both the exiled community and those in occupied Poland. The desire to re-establish an independent Poland, one which would reclaim its boundaries from before the war, was the only principle which was held in common by the Sikorski government, the military leaders in France, and, after May 1940, in Britain and those in Poland. Whether the liberation of Poland could be secured by diplomatic means or by direct military involvement

in allied fighting was a matter for dispute within the government-in-exile and the exiled army. In Poland, political parties viewed each other with the same degree of hostility as they had before the outbreak of the war. Nevertheless in 1941 some degree of unity prevailed. The government-in-exile uneasily and acrimoniously settled into a pattern of dependence on British leadership, including cooperation with the Soviet Union in the wake of the German attack in July 1941. At the same time Sikorski was able to build links with the underground movement and to persuade them to accept the government's leading role in relation to all matters relating to the plans for post-war Poland. A precondition for a successful resistance movement was unity and this was slowly, but impressively, built up in the form of an underground army, the AK and a civilian administration subordinate to the government-in-exile, the Delegatura. This unity was, however, tenuous and dependent on the setting aside of fundamental political differences.

From the end of 1942, when the likelihood of the Soviet Union defeating Germany could be countenanced, the issue of post-war Poland came to dominate all discussions within the government-in-exile and within the underground. The clearly defined fault lines with the government ranks were paralleled by equally clear ones within the underground movement. From that point onwards the underground came to demand a larger say in planning for the future. Dominated by officers of the pre-war army, the AK had uneasy relations with the peasant BCh and the nationalist groupings. The newly emerged communist PPR, though an irritant, carried little weight. The left wing of the underground movement was represented by the left PPS, in due course to be renamed the RPPS. During the war, although the AK and the Delegatura tried to maintain unity and discipline within the ranks of the underground, conflicts erupted between the various groupings, though none so openly as those between the nationalists and the PPR.

The diplomatic break between the Soviet Union and the exile government, Sikorski's death and increasing British preoccupation with the Soviet Union cast the government adrift, in spite of a great increase in the Polish military contribution to the allied war effort. The diminution of the authority of the government-in-exile and the loosening of links between London and occupied Poland meant that the unity of the underground movement weakened. The Warsaw Uprising in effect destroyed what had been painfully prepared in anticipation of the moment when control could be established over Polish territories. First the German counteroffensive in Warsaw, followed by the Red Army's determination not to allow any challenge to its authority to emerge

from within the Polish underground, destroyed the command structure of the resistance.

In July 1944 the Soviet Union nominally handed over authority for the administration of liberated territories to a PPR-dominated group. The PKWN's authority, which had been built up by the resistance in occupied territories, was then enhanced by British and US willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Union on the basis of merely broadening the composition of the PKWN. The AK and the sections of the civilian structures that had been established during the war, could not compete with the NKVD. Nor was it able to adjust well to the realities of the last months of the war. The AK leaders were impervious to the popular desire for reforms and unwilling to accept that war weariness, more than the NKVD actions, would reduce the population's support for their plans. The government-in-exile and the military leadership became embroiled in internal conflicts and rivalries, the impact of which was to reduce their ability to gain support in Poland. By the summer of 1945 the exiled leadership, though still claiming for itself the right to speak on behalf of the Polish resistance, had little to offer those in Poland.

The presence of the Red Army in Poland and the breakdown of the underground, due, first, to the Warsaw Uprising and, second, to the Red Army's determination not to allow the underground resistance to capture any power over liberated territories, gave the PPR and those within the peasant movement the opportunity to form a first government, the TRJN. The PPR proceeded to build its power through the use of the security service and the political section of the Polish Army. Mikołajczyk, the leader of the peasant PSL, although confident of electoral support, was unwilling to cooperate with the PPR and the PPS. He was ultimately outmanoeuvred and outwitted by the alliance of the two parties and faced the destruction of his party. Stalin's designs for post-war Poland, critical in determining the nature of relations between the Polish communists and other two key parties, changed during the period 1945–47. By the end of 1946 he was willing to allow the PPR to destroy the PSL and as the fault lines of post-war disagreements solidified into the Cold War, he turned against the social democratic movement. This in turn gave the PPR full rein to destroy the PPS through an enforced merger.

The battle for actual and real control of territories defined as Polish after the war would rage until the end of 1947. Unconstrained by either the larger objectives of the government-in-exile, or the discipline that earlier reduced the incidence of fratricidal conflicts, the underground resistance fought against the communists by all means available. They

were nevertheless doomed to failure as supplies from the West dried up and the TRJN was able to focus on defeating them. War weariness and several amnesties facilitated the collapse of the anti-communist underground. At the same time the first post-war government had to deal with an explosion of ethnic conflicts in areas inhabited by the Ukrainian population. Although the PPR had never planned for an ethnically homogenous post-war Poland, the enforced exchange of population with the Soviet Union and the strength of Ukrainian irredentism effectively led the TRJN to the conclusion that Ukrainian nationalism needed to be destroyed.

The extension of Polish borders West to the Oder Neisse Line and the incorporation of Eastern Prussia and Pomerania into the boundaries of post-war Poland meant that the TRJN had to deal with the German problem. Indifference to the fate of the German nationals and the wish to rid Poland of the German community meant that all were either forced or intimidated to the point of declaring their willingness to leave.

Internal stability eluded Poland after the war. The scale of economic destruction and the movement of population was enormous. The TRJN was not placed well to conciliate the community so severely traumatized by the war. An example of the government's limited authority in the community was apparent in its inability to protect the Jewish population. The communists' unpopularity, general distrust of their future plans for Poland and lack of a power base in the community all made the task of imposing law and order much more difficult. The one institution that could have assisted them in that task was the Catholic Church. Yet it was opposed to the communist-dominated regime, and this attitude was converted into outright hostility by the secularization policies which the TRJN pursued. Although some attempts were made to arrive at an accommodation with the Catholic Church, these were not successful and by 1947 the two viewed each other with undisguised antagonism.

Stability and the end of conflict came at a price. As a result of the undisputedly falsified general elections in January 1947 the PPR establish an effective monopoly of power. This meant that even those parties that had collaborated with the PPR in July 1944 were destroyed, enabling the communists to establish an effective dictatorship.

Notes

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