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DOCUMENTARIO

The Jewish Mass Executions. Account by an Eye-Witness, in ALEXEI TOLSTOY, A POLISH UNDERGROUND WORKER, THOMAS MANN, *Terror in Europe. The Fate of the Polish Jews*, National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, London s.d. [1943], pp. 9-10.



The Polish Underground State, in «Polish Fortnightly Review», 82, 15.12.1943, London, pp. 1-6

T E R R O R

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E U R O P E

T H E F A T E O F T H E
J E W S

By

A L E X E I T O L S T O Y

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A P O L I S H U N D E R G R O U N D W O R K E R

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The Jewish Mass Executions

ACCOUNT by an EYE-WITNESS

News-Talk on European Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation

I was a member of the Polish Underground Movement. It was my duty to keep in touch with all underground parties, including the "Bund"—the Jewish Social Democratic Organization in Poland, and I left Warsaw in October, 1942, on a mission from the Underground Front to the Polish Government in London.

Among my other duties, I collected matter on the Jewish mass-exterminations carried out by the occupying power. I should perhaps explain why we paid special attention to the Jewish questions. I am not a Jew myself, and before the war I had very little contact with Jews; in fact, I knew practically nothing about them. But, at present, the extermination of the Jews has a special significance. The sufferings of my own Polish compatriots are terrible, and they are, of course, nearer to my heart; but the methods employed by the enemy against Poles and against Jews are different.

Us, the Poles, they try to reduce to a mediaeval race of serfs. They want to deprive us of our cultural standards, of our traditions, of our education, and reduce us to a nation of robots. But the policy towards the Jews is different. It is not a policy of subjugation and oppression, but of cold and systematic extermination. It is the first example in modern history that a whole nation (not 10, 20 or 30, but 100 per cent of them) are meant to disappear from this earth.

The methods of this process are known to a certain extent, but the details are not. The method is, as you know, to collect the Jews from all over Europe, to despatch them to the Ghettos of Warsaw, Lwew and Soon, where they stay for a certain time. From the ghettos they are "taken East" as the official term goes, that is, to the extermination camps, of Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor. In these camps, they are killed in batches of 1,000 to 6,000, by various methods, including gas, burning by steam, mass electrocution, and finally, by the method of the so-called "death train".

In the course of my investigation I succeeded in witnessing a mass-execution in the camp of Belzec. With the help of our underground organisation, I gained access to that camp in the disguise of a Latvian special policeman. I was, in fact, one of the executioners. I believe that my course of action was justified. I had no means of preventing the event, but by

becoming a witness, I was able to carry a first-hand account into the civilised world.

I arrived at the camp on a certain day in July, 1942. The camp, at that moment, contained roughly 6,000 Jews of both sexes and all ages. They had arrived a few days previously from the Ghetto of Warsaw. They did not know what fate was awaiting them. They had been told, like all detachments sent away from the Ghetto, that they were to be employed on field-work and to dig trenches. On arrival at the camp, they had been encouraged to write letters to their friends left behind in the Warsaw Ghetto—letters stating that they were being treated correctly, and that deportation was not at all as bad as they had feared. This is part of the German technique to reassure the victims and keep them in ignorance until the last possible moment, thus avoiding unnecessary fuss.

Had these people known with certainty what was awaiting them, the Germans would have to use much bigger forces to deal with them. Later, when all these manoeuvres proved of no avail, and the fate of those "going East" became known in the Ghetto of Warsaw, the Ghetto revolted. This happened in the Spring of 1943, and the Germans lost about 1,000 killed before they finally overcame and massacred the last survivors.

But the events I am speaking of took place almost a whole year earlier, and, as I say, the Jews in the camp did not know what fate was awaiting them. The executions took place on the day after my arrival.

The camp of Belzec is situated about 15 kilometres south of the town of that name. It is bounded by an enclosure which runs parallel to the railway track at a distance of some 30 yards. A narrow corridor about two yards in width, formed by a wooden palisade on either side, leads from the gate of the camp to a point on the railway track where the trains halt. At about 10 o'clock in the morning, a freight train halted alongside the camp. At the same moment, the guards at the farther side of the camp started shooting into the air, and yelling at the Jews to get into the trucks. They thus created a deliberate panic in order to prevent any hesitation or resistance amongst the prisoners.

They were driven in a frantic hurry through the wooden palisade into the first truck which had halted opposite the gate. It was the standard army truck, marked for "six horses or 36 men." The floor of the truck was covered with chloride of lime about two inches thick, but the Jews had no time to realise what this meant. When about 100 had been

driven into the truck, they could only stand packed like sardines. It seemed physically impossible to press more people into the truck, but at this moment, the guards, aided by the prisoners themselves who were half crazed with fear of the shots fired at their backs, began lifting those next to the truck and throwing them in bodily. Thirty individuals (men and women) were thrown in on top of the heads of those already inside. Some of the standing women had their necks broken, and the horror of the scene can be left to the imagination.

I counted 130 people thrown into the truck—the truck marked “for 36 men.” Then the sliding doors were closed and bolted. The next truck was shunted into its place, and the same procedure carried out again. Altogether I counted 51 trucks, which absorbed the whole 6,000 people in the camp, with the exception of about 20 or 30, who had been shot dead during the rush.

When the camp was empty and the trucks all filled, the train moved on. The end of the story I learned from my “comrades”, that is, the executioners in the camp, who had done this sort of thing for several months, despatching one or two trains each week. The train moves on for about 25 miles and then halts in an open field. There it remains standing, hermetically closed, for six to seven days. When, at length, its doors are opened by the grave-diggers’ squad, the people inside are all dead, and their bodies in an advanced state of decomposition.

The details of how they die are simple and revolting: the chloride of lime on the floor has the property of developing chlorine gas when coming into contact with humidity. The people jammed into the trucks for many hours are compelled, at some time, to urinate, and this (on the lime), instantaneously produces a chemical reaction. Death must in the end be welcome, for whilst they are dying by the chlorine gas their feet are being burned to the bone by the chemically active chloride. As I said, the number executed in one death train is about 6,000 at a time.

I do not want to add any comments to what I have seen and described. I, myself, have not witnessed the other methods of mass-killing, such as electrocution, steaming, and so on, but I have heard first-hand eye-witness accounts, which describe them as equally horrible. The latest estimate of the number of Jews executed by these methods, in the systematic carrying out of Himmler’s orders, is in the region of two million.

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By JAN KARSKI.

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THE CHARACTER OF THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT

The underground movement in Poland is different from that of every other movement of a like nature in German-occupied countries. This is due to the different conditions of existence, the different form taken by the German terror, and in particular by the different principles applied by the Germans to Poland in the course of the war.

Poles Do Not Recognize the German Occupying Authorities

The Poles are the only nation in Europe which from the beginning adopted a rigid attitude towards the occupying power and its representatives. This has meant that in no sphere of political life has there been any collaboration with the German occupying authorities, and that at all costs even the semblance of stabilization of relations has been avoided, and so far avoided successfully. Despite more than one attempt on the part of German official sources to stabilize relations with the Poles, and to achieve some degree of political collaboration between the Polish nation and the German authorities, to develop some form of Polish political administration co-operating with the Germans, the Poles have always resolutely refused. There is not one Pole in the "Government of the General gouvernement," not one Pole has undertaken to act as a provincial governor or head of county administration, or town mayor. In no sector of political life have the Poles submitted to the occupying authorities.

The consequence has been to create a state of permanent martial law. The Poles have been in practice

placed outside all law. A Pole can obtain no legal redress against a German, in the sphere of criminal or even in that of civil law. A Pole may not bring any charge against any German official in any sphere of national, provincial, local, economic or social activity. A Pole may not have any positional authority over a German.

This state of affairs has in turn provoked a further reaction among the Poles. As early as 1939 Polish leaders realized that if this unique, unyielding attitude to the occupying authorities was maintained the Polish people could not be left in a state of chaos and internal lawlessness. And this was the root cause of the development of the underground life which exists in Poland to-day.

Once the attitude had been adopted that no German prescription, regulation, or order was binding on the Polish nation, it followed as an inevitable consequence that the Polish nation must set up its own supreme authority and its own various administrative departments. And as the Polish leaders, supported by the mass of the people, took the attitude that these authorities and institutions could have no relations with the German administration and legal system, they had to be created underground, as a second parallel but secret national and local authority.

The Continuity of Polish State Organization

From the very beginnings of the organization of the Polish Underground Movement the principle was adopted that the aim to be achieved was not merely the organi-

zation of a "patriotic resistance," but that Polish State authorities, departments and institutions must be maintained. Immediately after the fall of Warsaw on September 27th, 1939, Polish leaders decided that their chief objective must be to prevent any *de facto* break in the continuity of Polish State sovereignty. From the very beginning the underground movement adopted the principle of State legality, with the corollary that for Poles generally the Polish State was officially and legally recognized as still in existence. This principle, which has been most fruitful in its consequences for all Polish decisions and postulates throughout the war, meant that the Polish State has existed and functioned through all the most essential authorities, departments and institutions of a normal democratic State. Moreover, that State with its administrative machinery has continued in all the territories within the Polish State frontiers as they existed on September 1st, 1939. But the legal, plenipotentiary government of that State, together with all its constitutional titles with relation to the Polish nation, had to exist abroad, for only by functioning in conditions of security and having the physical possibility of day-to-day collaboration with the rest of the allied nations could that Government effectively pursue Polish policy.

This principle has proved of inestimable value both to the Underground Movement and to the Polish Government. It is of value to the Underground Movement because it gives that movement authority in relation to the Polish people, because it underlines its official character, its character as a function of the State. And the principle is also of inestimable value to the Polish Government because it entitles it to speak and to conduct policy not simply in the name of the Polish emigrés living abroad but in the name of the entire Polish community.

A closer analysis of this situation brings out all its importance. For instance, the underground authorities have long possessed the right to call upon individual Poles to take part in the administrative machinery of the Government Plenipotentiary authority, or above all in the Underground Army. Most frequently Poles are called up or mobilized to work or fight in the Underground Movement. In most cases the decision rests not with the individual person but with the underground authorities. Naturally, in practice only the best and most reliable individuals are so mobilized, and a free hand is left to those who either do not possess the technical and psychological qualifications for conspiratorial activities or are not absolutely indispensable.

Obviously this degree of authority could not be achieved easily or automatically. The extent and degree to which the principle was put into practice can be very well judged from the results of enrolling new members of the Underground Movement. In 1939 or the beginning of 1940 when a patriotic Pole was asked to collaborate in the Underground Movement he was invited in terms rather of sentiment and patriotism. But when a representative of the Government Plenipotentiary or an officer of the military authorities applies to any Pole to-day he no longer does so in such terms: they are obvious and are taken for granted. He notifies the man or woman that he or she has been summoned by the Plenipotentiary of the Polish Government or the Commander of the National Army to service, and that he or

she is allocated a certain definite task. In such conditions only obstacles of a technical nature can be accepted as motives for refusal. If such do not exist, and the given individual refuses to carry out the order or instruction, it would mean that he does not recognize the official State authority of the underground organization. Such instances are very rare.

The Paradox of the Situation in Poland

The occupying authorities' specific system of terrorization, which is calculated to achieve the object of frightening and reducing to passivity the entire nation, has produced a certain kind of paradox in Poland. It is that the chief victims of German ruthlessness and brutality are most frequently the ordinary masses of the people, who are not engaged in the underground movement. The fact that while the occupying authorities' methods of terrorization are highly ruthless, they are also automatically bureaucratic, enabling the underground organizations to avoid suppression and sacrifice, while a high standard of conspiracy is achieved. This is neither the place, nor the time, to make public the methods which the Underground Movement employs in order to avoid the occupying authorities' attempts to break it up, but the fact remains that the losses in the movement are incomparably lower than those suffered by the people as a whole. It is easier for the Germans to arrest and destroy a hundred innocent people than to capture and render harmless a single member of an official underground organization. This leads to the strange situation that membership of the Underground Movement entails greater chances of remaining in freedom, even in everyday life, than if one relies only on being "innocent" in regard to the occupying authorities.

From time to time steps are taken to draw quite a number of people into the Underground Movement, not so much because of their immediate utility in this regard, as in order to protect them and save them from the everyday dangers arising from the German occupation.

Why There is No Polish Quisling

Working in accordance with the foregoing principles, the Underground Movement built up a corresponding organizational structure very early, in the first few months of 1940, and that structure was almost completely organized in its final form soon after the fall of France.

One of the most important and essential things to be said about that structure is that it constitutes a normal Polish State organization. All the most important authorities, departments and institutions characteristic of a normal democratic State have been organized and restored as far as possible, and of course in a more restricted sphere, within the framework of the Underground Movement. This constitutes a fundamental difference between the Polish Underground Movement and those of other nations whom the Germans have temporarily conquered. In every other country of Europe there are normal administrative authorities, local government authorities, economic authorities, normal educational institutions, and almost always a more or less legal constitutional government, co-operating with the German occupying authorities or set up within the framework of the occupying administration. Of course

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the majority of the citizens of the country realize that the only moral authoritative and patriotic factor of national policy is the Government abroad. None the less, the fact that official State authorities, departments and institutions are functioning inside the country within bounds laid down and allowed by the occupying power by no means facilitates the organization of the underground movement on a constitutional and State scale. And it provides the answer to the question why the Underground Movement watches so thoroughly and effectively over the principle that no Pole should take any part whatever in the German occupying administration who could be put forward as being in any way the political representative of even the smallest section of the Polish people. Unfortunately, people abroad do not sufficiently appreciate the significance of the fact, unique in the war, that not one Polish politician occupies any position whatever in the official German politico-organizational system established for the "General gouvernement."

This question is not to be explained exclusively in terms of the problem of relentless struggle against the occupying authority. And there is no need to conceal the fact that this is so. For any violation of this principle would menace the most essential principle of the structure of underground life. It would undermine that structure, and would complicate the question of Polish State existence. Not for one moment could a situation be allowed in which any Pole, even the humblest member of the community, could feel any doubt on the fundamental issue of State unity, legality and distinctive existence. Not for one moment could a situation be allowed to develop in which any Pole was confronted with the existence of another Polish authority and another Polish administration apart from the authority and administration of the Underground

Movement within Poland and of the Polish Government abroad.

This position has cost Poland a great deal, and the world knows or should know it. But at the same time, owing to this relentlessness and refusal to be deterred even by the most painful sacrifices, the Polish Underground Movement has maintained the purity of the State doctrine and the unchallenged authority and sway of the organs of the Polish Underground Movement over every Pole. The fact that there is no co-operation whatever with the occupying power on any sector of political life means not only that Poles have been able to hold the standard of Polish honour as high as former generations of Poles have held it in times of adversity, but that they have been able to avoid any kind of rivalry for authority over the nation.

And this attitude has consequences equally significant for the future. So long as this war lasts there will be no political co-operation in Poland with the Germans. There will be no traitors in Poland. The Underground Movement will not allow such a situation to happen, even if mechanical methods of prevention have to be applied, even if the necessity arises of applying such methods. But, in fact, there is no need to fear such a development. The most characteristic and most honourable testimony that can be paid to the Polish nation in this war is the fact that not once has the necessity arisen to eliminate any outstanding Polish figure ready to collaborate with the occupying authorities. The few dozen cases in which the Underground Movement has found it necessary to order the elimination of Poles who proved disloyal to Poland have been exclusively concerned with persons of the least importance and having no political standing, such as petty agents, small-scale agents provocateurs, cowardly Volksdeutsche, and similar small fry to be found everywhere.



Stickers on walls in Polish cities. The text reads: Germany is done for, Poland will win.

THE PROBLEM OF THE GOVERNMENT

From the earliest days of October, 1939, when the Polish Government abroad was organized, the problem of the Government was one of the most important, the Underground Movement had to consider. It was universally realised that on both the international and the internal plane the Polish State as an organization, a form of institution, a form of authority and administration must not be allowed to cease to exist. On the international plane this was achieved in its entirety and without any great difficulty. The late General Sikorski's initiative, the late Ignacy Paderewski's authority, the transference by the former President of Poland of his authority and powers to the present President, Władysław Raczkiewicz, and the constitutional formation of a Government led by General Sikorski, all rendered it possible for the Polish State *de jure* to continue to be recognized by all the Great Powers, with the exception of those directly within the Axis sphere of influence.

Nor was there any vacillation inside Poland even at first. The newly formed Polish Government was recognized by the entire nation as the constitutional, fully empowered Government of the country.

Of course the question arose whether the headquarters of the Government should be established within the country and the framework of the Underground Movement, or whether a Government plenipotentiary, entrusted with the Government's general delegation of authority, should be appointed to reside within the country.

The unquestionable traditions of Poland's struggles for independence all spoke in favour of the first alternative. The tradition of the 1863 insurrection appealed with especial force to the imaginations of certain members of the Polish Underground Movement. It is difficult to realize how greatly that tradition has been vitalized, and what practical services in terms of a programme and model it has rendered in a number of spheres.

There were many official conferences, discussions, plans, etc., on this subject. In the end the second alternative was decided upon: the Government should remain abroad, but should appoint its plenipotentiary at home, entrusting the general direction of the Government in the administrative-executive sphere to him. Three factors contributed to the acceptance of this plan; all of them were, for that matter, outside the control of the Polish people at home and imposed by the *de facto* state of affairs.

To begin with, if State life had been organized with

the Polish Government remaining on Polish soil, acting from underground, by the force of events that Government would have been isolated from the world, and could not have had direct contact with the allied Governments, could not have carried on Polish foreign policy, and would have found it difficult to maintain communications, and, far more, adequate communications with Polish diplomatic posts in allied and neutral countries. Even if a general delegation of authority had been entrusted to one of the Polish ambassadors or to some collective body, it would have failed to achieve the importance of the international sphere that the Polish cause required. Great opportunities would have been opened to the enemy for propaganda exploitation of the situation, and undoubtedly the Germans would have made every attempt to throw doubts on the authenticity of the instructions, declarations and the political bona fides of this kind of official representation of the secret and anonymous National Government in Poland.

Further, if a secret National Government had been organized within the country there would have been a terrible danger of interruptions in the continuity of State and constitutional authority. Who would have appointed a new Government if the existing Government had been discovered and arrested? There would always been the danger of uncertainty, chaos, and even political abuses.

Finally, by the application of the accepted principle that the State is in the Underground Movement, while the Government of that State is functioning abroad, gains to Poland and to the Government are achieved which would be impossible under any other arrangement. The country is assured the organizational continuity of the Underground Movement. That is a factor which is often inadequately appreciated even by Poles abroad. To-day, no matter what happens, no matter what ruthless methods the occupying power may use, and though the German security authorities should work with the maximum of efficiency, and the Polish people suffer the maximum of suffering and sacrifice, the Underground Movement cannot be exhausted and cannot be smothered. That is not an expression of exaggerated confidence in the forces working in Poland, but follows naturally from the nature of the structure of underground life. The entire secret consists in the fact that the highest disposing authority, which determines the framework and the bounds of the Underground Movement, works in conditions of security.

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THE UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATION

What is known in Poland as the "structure of the Underground Movement" took shape quite early in the German occupation.

Speaking generally, one can divide the Polish Underground Movement into two fundamental parts: the "official movement," representing the official Polish State authorities, departments and institutions, and the movement representing "underground public opinion."

The first, official part of the movement consists of

four branches, strongly organized and extending to all parts of Poland ever since September, 1939.

Plenipotentiary of the Polish Government

The first branch is headed by the "Plenipotentiary of the Government." He is the Government's representative in Poland, and has the rank of member of the London Cabinet. He possesses general administrative and executive powers. He serves as the link to fill the gap arising from the application of the principle that the

Government of the Polish State must function in conditions of security and freedom.

The Government Plenipotentiary has his representatives in the various parts of Poland. One of his most important tasks is the organization of the "secret Polish administration" and its maintenance at the highest possible level, both politically and organizationally. The Germans overreached themselves when they reckoned that they would be able to impose their own State administration on Poland. They erred in thinking that the "Government of the General gouvernement," headed by Dr. Frank, could become the real Government in Polish eyes through resort to terror and violence. The Polish nation has organized its own authorities, and they are the only ones which it regards as genuine. That is one of the reasons why there is not a Pole to be found in "Frank's Government." For every Pole realizes that if he did join Frank's "government" he would automatically be passing on himself a sentence of death. But, quite apart from this, not one Pole of responsibility and sagacity has been found to believe that it would be right to collaborate politically with the German occupying authorities.

The existence of a secret administration in Poland is already of tremendous importance, but it will be of still greater importance on the day when the German army and civil authorities clear out of Poland. For then that administration will openly and automatically take over the administrative system from German hands. Two factors have been of importance in the development of the secret Polish administration. One was the will of the Polish people to avoid any internal disturbance or fratricidal struggle during the first period of recovery of independence. When the German occupying authority departs the Polish people will not find themselves in a political, administrative and organizational vacuum. In Poland the period from the conclusion of the armistice to the final decisions of the peace conference—a period in which conditions will undoubtedly not be satisfactory for the holding of elections, of election campaigns, of Party struggles, and for political consultations involving the great mass of the people—will be a period of internal order, law and stabilization.

The second factor in the development of the secret administration was the legal position. From the very beginnings of its existence the Underground Movement stood for strict legality. And this applies to the taking over of power from the occupying authorities. Because of the secret administration the act of eliminating those authorities in Poland will not be merely an armed step against the enemy, will not be simply a rising of the Polish people against foreign domination, but will be a legal act of taking over authority from the hands of the oppressing foreign authorities.

Polish Underground Army

The second powerful and highly organized branch of the underground movement is the "Home Army." This is not merely an underground military organization, one among many such. It is the official, legal Polish army, Poland's Third Army, ranking with the Polish Army in the Middle East and the Polish Army in Scotland. The commander of this Third Army possesses all the powers and

authority belonging to an army commander during the performance of military operations. The members of this army have all the rights and duties, and in the future will possess all the privileges within the community possessed by the soldiers fighting in the front line during this war. That perhaps is the sole difference between the soldiers of the Home Army and those of the armies in the Middle East or in Great Britain. A difference which compensates for the fact that the soldiers in the Home Army are not able to wear the military uniform. The Polish armies in the Middle East and in Scotland are engaged in fighting only from time to time, and the country realizes this, whereas the Home Army and all its members are legally recognized as continually engaged in the struggle, as continually on active service in the front line.

The Polish people abroad and the Polish armies in the Middle East and Scotland cannot be regarded as separate entities. They cannot be regarded in isolation from all those who are working, fighting and acting in Poland at home. The people in emigration are not a whole, they are only a part of the entire Polish nation, and only thus can they be regarded, only thus should they regard themselves. Just as the Polish Government, and just as the most minor official is not a representative only of the Poles abroad but of the Polish nation as a whole, so the fighting Polish army has to be considered as a whole consisting of three parts: the Home Army, the Middle East Army, and the Army in Scotland. If this is done then the losses which the Polish Army has suffered will be seen to be not only in proportion with (and of that there is not the least doubt) but, perhaps, even in absolute figures as high as those of the British or American army!

So far as questions of security permit, the activities of and results achieved by the Home Army are reported and made public from time to time.

It is almost impossible to realise the tremendous scope of the Polish Underground Movement without knowing all the methods of operation, the forms of organization, all that in the slang of the Underground Movement is called "tricks." For the time being these "tricks" must remain unrevealed. Some day the history of the Underground Movement will relate the story of these years as a whole and in detail, and then many things which would be regarded as "impossible" will be seen to have been achieved.

In sum, the Home Army's operations can be classified into three categories: diversionary activity, directed against the German military machine; sabotage directed against the German industrial and civil machine; and, thirdly, the activities of the fighting guerilla groups.

Home Political Representation

The third powerful branch of the Underground Movement is given the generic name of "Home Political Representation." Of recent times four political ideological trends have come to the forefront of all the political movements. They are the Socialist and the Peasant movements; the Christian Democratic Labour Party, and the National Movement. Each of these political groups carries on activities in the underground at its own cost, so to speak. Their activities can be classified as militant and political, propaganda and organizational. Each group is responsible for and bears

the risk of its own activities. But from representatives of these four political movements a body has been formed which is in the nature of a State institution, known as the Home Political Representation. The basis of co-operation in this body is the Government's Declaration of Principles, made in 1939 and 1942, and its powers approximate to those of a Parliament together with those of a Supreme State audit. The principle that the Polish people is officially represented by these four political trends was accepted as early as the beginning of 1940, and was accepted as a "rigid" principle. To a very great extent the necessity for the principle to be rigid arose from the objective conditions in the country. If any attempt had been made to assemble representatives of all the numerous "loose" political groupings actually functioning, and frequently functioning highly effectively, in the Underground Movement, the result might well have been chaos, or it is extremely difficult, and at times quite impossible, to estimate the strength and scope of any particular underground organization, and most probably an element of rivalry, injured prestige or even the possibility of abuse would have come into play. For these reasons the principle that the people at home are represented by a Home Political Representation formed on these lines must be considered as continuing to apply in the future. Politically both the Government Plenipotentiary in Poland first and foremost and also to a certain extent the Commander of the Home Army are responsible to this body. It also has political control of the secret administration, and especially of its higher posts, and over the budget of both civil and military authorities. And among other things it watches to ensure that the division between civil political life and military organizational activity should be made strictly and advantageously for the efficiency of both spheres of activity.

In regard to this particular organization there are certain deviations from the principal foreign relations between Government and country. For, while the authorities represented by the Government Plenipotentiary and those represented by the Commander of the Home Army derive to a lesser or greater extent, and in any case in principle from the supreme authorities at present in Great Britain (the Government and the Commander in Chief) in this sector of the national struggle the situation is exactly the converse. Each of the various political trends represented in the Home Political Representation has its representatives or in certain cases its legal organizational authorities abroad. Those representatives in London contribute to the formation of the Government, by means of the "Government Coalition." Therefore it is not they who give their comrades at home a mandate to carry on activities, but they themselves are either appointed as representatives of the various political trends operating at home, or are recognised by their home parties as the legal organizational authorities.

Directorate of Civil Resistance

The fourth branch of the Underground Movement is the organization known as the Directorate of Civil Resistance. This organization is of a special nature. It was brought into existence only in 1941. Its powers and competence are reminiscent of the powers and competence of the People's Tribunals which society

brings into existence in times of turbulence. This organization watches over the national morale, maintains the spirit of resistance and struggle, and simultaneously is responsible to the nation for what is known in Poland as "the rigid attitude to the occupying nation", and which in Great Britain is conveyed in the phrase "no Quislings!" In 1941 the German terror was especially bloody and ruthless, and during this period the German armies were having their greatest successes on all fronts. The Germans were then, absolutely confident of victory and were at their most arrogant. They were most ruthless in their treatment of the conquered nations and, in particular, of the stubborn Poles. During this phase two needs became evident. One was that there should be automatic punishment for those of the German executioners who excelled even their fellows in brutality, a punishment, meted out not as a form of reaction or act of desperation but as a legal, legitimate act of justice of an oppressed but not subdued nation. This was the beginning of the death sentences on Germans which have now developed on such a wide scale. The creation of this organization has led to hundreds of especially brutal Gestapo-men, county heads, German gendarmes, soldiers, officers, and S.S. men being assisted out of this life.

A further need for such an organization arose out of the necessity to take every step to maintain the morale of the Polish people themselves, and especially of those Poles, or more frequently Volksdeutsche, who were not strong enough in the conditions of German terror to resist the temptation to succumb and to be disloyal to their fellow Poles. The Directorate of Civil Resistance has the right to administer two kinds of sentence: that of ostracism and that of death. The fact that people of wide and high qualifications are members of the tribunals ensures that the sentences are always just and amply motivated. The fact that every accused has an official defender, even though he himself be not present, who pleads all the existing extenuating circumstances, ensures that there is no abuse of the tribunal or any possibility of misunderstanding.

The majority of the sentences passed on Volksdeutsche or Germans are published before being carried out. And not one sentence has failed to be carried out, except in cases where its execution has formally been postponed to the post-war period in connection with the proposed steps for bringing "responsible war criminals" to trial.

The sentence, to ostracism is of specific importance. It is effected by the publication of the name of the given person in the official secret press, as one who has been alienated from the Polish nation. It is in a sense the deprivation of civic and honourable rights without imprisonment. It leads to an inevitable moral, social and political isolation of the man condemned. Legally the passing of sentence means that although the person condemned to the sentence of ostracism does not suffer any punishment beyond being compromised and ostracised, so long as the German occupation continues, as soon as Polish courts are able to function in freedom again he will be handed over to be dealt with under the normal criminal court procedure. Thus from the legal aspect sentence to ostracism is to be understood as meaning that, on the ground of indubitable evidence against the accused person, the State authorities and

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public opinion hold him in a condition of permanent public accusation.

The competence and powers of the Directorate of Civil Resistance must be considered in the light of the tremendous moral discipline of the Polish community and the great national solidarity during this war. Not one Pole occupying an important position, whether political, social, economic or moral, in the community before or during the war has earned the death sentence.

Every case has concerned people who were dangerous from the functional, and not from the political aspect. They have all been petty provocateurs, agents of the German police, and in the overwhelming majority, Volksdeutsche, who both during the days of Polish independence and in wartime made demonstration of being Polish, concealing the fact that their German origin had led them to be long active against Poland and for Germany.

THE UNDERGROUND PUBLIC OPINION

The four branches of the underground movement above mentioned constitute what are known in Poland as the "Underground Authorities."

In addition there are a number of stronger and weaker, but mainly local organizations, centres and groups of a political, social, economic, religious, self-educational or literary character, operating illegally underground. Each of these groups reveals the fact of its existence mainly through secret publications: journals, brochures, books, etc. Many of them are concerned with the question of planning for the future, with analysis of the international situation, with discussion of programmes. In the aggregate they act as forms of manifestation of "public opinion." Both in political and in organizational regards they have a very extensive scope.

The Secret Press

The fact that there are a very large number of underground publications has to be ascribed first and foremost to the great differentiation of these so-called "loose groups." It need only be mentioned that the Polish Underground Movement possesses over 140 regularly published periodicals. In Warsaw alone there are over 85 secret periodicals, which is far more than the number which existed openly in normal conditions before the war. It would be impossible to give any indication of how the printing machinery, paper, printing and press workers, and headquarters are obtained and arranged. In this field more than anywhere else the great fertility of invention, capacity, and daring of the underground workers are revealed. It is an amazing fact that one periodical was for a long period printed on the finest Japanese paper, while another was published in the format of the London *Times*. In the first leading article of this newspaper the editors informed their readers that they had "adopted this non-conspiratorial and dangerous format because after long consideration it had been decided . . . not to take any notice of the German occupying authorities and the Gestapo." Certain of the periodicals published have pictures printed by a three-colour process, and there are frequent new editions of Polish literary classics, running to hundreds of pages per volume, as well as new breviaries, school primers, etc. The scope of the secret press and its influence on the community are inestimable. A citizen of another occupied country, a man who is now in freedom, has defined a member of the Underground Movement as being "in the broadest sense of the word, anyone who at least has contact and regularly reads the underground press." If this criterion were applied in Poland the resulting figure would seem incredible.

Certain journals, such as *Rzeczpospolita* (The Polish Republic), the official organ of the Government, the *Wiadomosci Polskie* (Polish News), the official organ of the Commander of the Home Army, or, finally, the most popular of all the underground journals, the *Biuletyn Informacyjny* (Information Bulletin) are published in 25,000 copies per issue. And the aggregate printing of all the underground periodical press has been calculated to be at least 500,000 copies. Taking it as certain that each copy is read by at least ten persons, the astonishing figure of over three million Polish readers is reached. As it happens, in Poland the very broad definition of an Underground member given above is not accepted. In Poland a member of the Underground Movement is one who gives his labour, energy or safety; a person who receives something from the Underground Movement, even though he runs some risk in accepting it, is not *ipso facto* a member. He has been given something, has been served by that movement, but he is not therefore entitled to be regarded as a fighter for national freedom.

In discussion of the secret press attention must be drawn to the tremendous part played by poetry. Every number of a periodical, and every publishing activity, even the most important, finds a place of special honour for the poet's contribution to human aspiration. Certain poems and verses which Poles learned by heart at school have now acquired particular value and significance. There was the case of the fifteen-year-old boy who was a member of the Home Army, was captured by the Gestapo in the act of distributing secret periodicals, and was subjected to horrible torture. When the Underground Movement got a secret message to him asking how they could help him and what he needed, he answered with not one word of his own, but in the words of the poet Asnyk:

"Though I perish,
Though I fall,
Yet life will not have been squandered,
For the finest part of life is in such struggle
and pursuit.
It will be worth while seeing that magic building
of crystal from afar.
It will be worth while to pay with blood and
pain for entering the region of the ideal."

We do not imply any sentimentality or weakness in the leaders of the Underground Movement if we admit that, reading this answer of the boy, those veterans who had fought in Tsarist times had tears in their eyes.

And there is the case of the periodical which was discovered by the Gestapo, with the result that the

entire editorial office was blown up and the editor in chief as well as other members of the staff shot. The next number issued was run off on a duplicator, on wretched quality paper, uncorrected, but bearing the following words of apology: "We sincerely apologise to our readers for the fact that owing to circumstances outside editorial control, the present number does not appear in the format to which readers are accustomed. . . ."

The editor of another periodical printed an article listing all the crimes which had been committed by "Governor-General" Frank, concluding that after the war he should be sentenced to death by an international legal tribunal, and added: "But now it gives us genuine pleasure to inform our readers that we have sent a copy of this issue by registered post, to Governor-General Frank in Cracow. For we took the view that it would not be fair not to make him acquainted with all the charges which the Polish Underground Movement will bring against him after the war. Maybe he has sunk so deep in his criminality that he has lost all measure of its extent, and is acting in ignorance of his guilt."

Scope of the Underground Movement

In Britain the question is frequently asked: How deeply does the official Underground Movement penetrate into the mass of the people, and how far is it possible for the secret administration and organs of the Government Delegate to function? The underground authorities themselves have asked the same question again and again. And attempts have been made to obtain a satisfying answer. The means employed were simple enough. For instance, in 1941 the Government Plenipotentiary was experiencing a severe shortage of financial resources, and a normal internal state loan was issued. Of course, superficially it could not be a very "official" sort of affair: pieces of ordinary paper bore the authorities' thanks for so many kilogrammes of certain products, for articles of everyday use, for writing materials, etc. Each kind of article represented a certain sum contributed. Each receipt was furnished with a special sign, which of course cannot be indicated publicly to-day. The principle adopted was that each sum contributed to the Government Plenipotentiary department or to other branches of the Underground Movement would be met at some date in the future by the Polish Government from the State Treasury, together with a normal rate of interest. And meantime each contributor will have had the honour of assisting the Underground Movement in the days of struggle and sacrifice. Thus the loan had two purposes: to raise finance, and to discover how far the people were ready to make financial sacrifices for what after all are anonymous and personally unknown state authorities working underground. The results were far above all expectations: The vast majority of those invited to contribute gave larger or smaller sums.

Another indication of the people's support was

obtained in a different way. As is well known, the Germans publish a popular "reptile press" in Poland—newspapers and periodicals printed in Polish and intended to disorientate and demoralise the Polish people. Among Poles there is a definite tendency to refuse to read these journals, but the underground authorities always realized that it would be difficult to enforce a categorical ban on Poles reading them. For many people have to buy a newspaper from time to time, if only because of the general shortage of paper for all kinds of purposes. Moreover, there is a terrible lack of news and shortage of the "printed word" because of the Germans' ban on any genuinely Polish publication. But, anxious to restrain Poles from buying these periodicals and at the same time to check up on the social discipline, the Directorate of Civil Resistance prohibited the purchase of any newspaper whatever on Fridays. The order was so effective that the Germans had to reduce the publication of Friday issues of newspapers to the bare minimum, so completely did sales fall off.

The Youth of Poland

The youth of Poland provide a particularly difficult problem for the Underground Movement, yet it can be said that they give great reason for hope in the future. As is well known, the German authorities pursue a particularly loathsome policy in regard to the young people of Poland. The Germans have closed all the secondary and higher schools, and all the universities, they have confiscated four to five thousand different works in history, geography and Polish literature, they have banned the publication of even a single truly Polish classic. At the same time they attempt to demoralize the youngsters who are thus deprived of education and books. They print special pornographic literature in Polish, they issue special magazines with pornographic text and pictures, they open special cinemas and theatres for doubtful types of films and performances, they have opened special gaming houses which only Poles may attend and bearing the sign "*Wehrmacht und deutschen Genossen nicht erlaubt*" (Members of the German army and German comrades are not allowed).

In answer secret instruction and education have been organized on a great scale. The teaching is concealed under all kinds of pretexts. In consequence large numbers of young people are provided with opportunities of education. It can even be revealed that despite the enemy's ban "high schools" and "universities" have been opened, the young people have primers which aid them to study, and they are even issued school certificates and matriculation certificates. The secret education is strictly linked up with the Underground Movement, and in practice it brings great benefits to that movement. It can be said that, often without their knowing it, every girl and boy profiting by secret education is passing through a preliminary course before being drawn into the main Underground Movement.

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