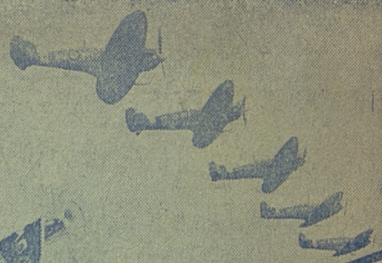
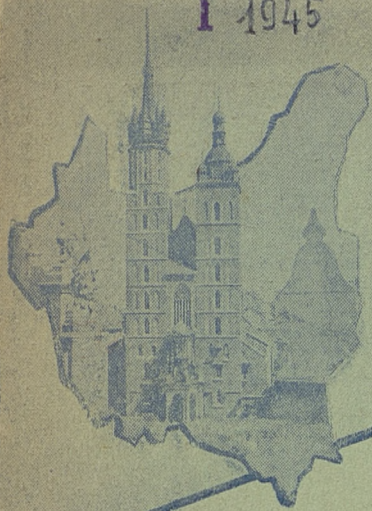


I 1945



THE POLISH

DIGEST



W. KOWANKO

THE POLISH DIGEST

ROME * FEBRUARY 1945

420533
I

The Polish Christmas Customs - <i>Ochotniczka</i>	3
To Whom Is This House - <i>Orzeł Bialy</i>	9
To Our Friends, The British - <i>Orzeł Bialy</i>	17
Interview With Polish Underground Leader - <i>Skrzydla</i>	29
O.R.P. Garland's Way To Glory - <i>Poland on the Seas</i>	33
Soldiers Of The 2nd Polish Corps - <i>Polish Press</i>	44
Marginalia on Reymont's «Peasants» - <i>Skrzydla</i>	52
Kazimierz Pulaski - <i>British Forces Radio Station</i>	59
The Little People and The Big Landowners - <i>Na Szlaku Kresowej</i>	63
Polish Air Ace Volunteers To Fight Japs - <i>Skrzydla</i>	66
An Eye For An Eye - <i>Dziennik Zolnierza A.P.W.</i>	70
No Strength Will Wipe Us From The Earth - <i>Anthology of Underground Warsaw Poetry</i>	73
Under-Cover War - <i>Glasgow Kurier</i>	74
Thank You, Polish Squadron of Lwow - <i>Skrzydla</i>	80
Partridge Shooting With Artillery - <i>Dziennik Zolnierza A.P.W.</i>	83
The Story Of Polish A.T.S. - <i>Polish Press</i>	85
On Offensive Patrol - <i>Allies Branch British M. of I. Carpathian Lancer Regiment - Polish Press</i>	98
Mr. Churchill On Lord Curzon - <i>Dziennik Zolnierza A.P.W.</i>	102
Anti-Tank Men Go Mountaineering - <i>The Battle For Monte Cassino</i>	104

Cartoons and Cover by W. Kowanko

Biblioteka Jagiellońska



1002212169

POLISH ARMY
PUBLIC RELATIONS BRANCH

F. Bibl. Jac.
1964 C D 902

POLISH CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

THE period of Advent, a time for quietness and concentration of mind comes to an end with the beginning of Christmas Week. The mood changes and the house, not so long ago closed and quiet, opens its doors alight with holiday joy, to receive guests and resound with gay carols. Advent dishes give way to tasty, plentiful weltvaried Christmas food. Now begins the long period of ning of Christmas Week. The mood changes and the house, not so long ago closed and quiet, opens its doors parties, shows, reviews and dances that last sometimes until Carnival. If the snow falls it is pretty easy for the guest. Everyone, not just the neighbours, comes to visit you and sleighs are in general use. In short, Christmas Week represents joy, family love and the spirit of neighbourliness. It is a holiday for children, and servants, a great, impoprtant feast.

« Christmas Eve was a great ovent » — writes Niemcewicz (1757-1841) in his memories of childhood — « already at dawn, family servants go fishing and cut the ice in order to leave the nests clear — the fishermen's return is eagerly awaited... On this day dinner is exactly the same in all Polish families. Three soups, almond soup with currants, « barshtch » with little dumplings, mushrooms and herrings, « kutia » —

grains of corn with poppy-seed and honey, small discs of horse-radish, carp in a specially prepared sauce, pike with saffron, small cakes with poppy-seed and honey, perch with slices of hard-boiled egg and oil, and many other dishes too numerous to tell of. The table-cloth must be laid on hay and in all four corners of the room are sheaves of unthrashed corn. All gather at the table waiting impatiently for the first star. As soon as the first person sees the star, all the guests and children assemble, parents come from another room carrying the Christmas Bread on a plate and everybody takes the Holy Bread and when all are present, including servants, they break it. As they break it, they repeat the wish « Let us hope we will break this Holy Bread together next year ».

The Christmas Eve dinner is of a traditional, home and family character. No wonder therefore, that many old customs are observed. These customs are sometimes older than the Christian tradition that centuries ago, replaced the old heathen feasts.

Hay or straw is put on the Christmas table — then the table is covered with a white table-cloth and different dishes are brought in. In all corners of the room are placed the four sheaves of rye. Straw is thrown on the floor. This is, according to common belief, in commemoration of the manger in which Jesus lay when in the stable.

It is very probable, however, that it is a survival of heathen custom, a relic of some old heathen feast of agrarian character, to which somebody has attributed a Christmas meaning.

The whole family takes part in this solemn Christmas Eve ceremony — everybody, including guests and servants also. In the more modest or more traditional houses, servants sit at the table together with the hosts;

where the social difference is greater — the family breaks the Christmas Bread with them and exchanges wishes. Persons not present at the ceremony are also remembered; vacant seats are left for them at the table just the same as for the dead. It is believed that the Christmas Eve dinner should re-unite everybody; so food is some times left there on the table during the night for the souls of the dead. Sometimes the food is left at the entrance to the house. Apparently the Christian feast has adopted some relics of the ancient ceremony for the remembrance of the dead.

It is very common to stress the fact that it is a feast of animals and that animals take part in the Christmas Eve dinner. Probably this too, is a survival of a heathen feast. Thus, all the food left from the Christmas Eve dinner is carried to the stables for the cows and horses. The same is being done even to-day in the country. The corn scattered on the table is thrown to the hens as it is believed that this helps them to lay eggs. The broken Holy Christmas Bread is given to the horses and cows along with the other food.

The other animals and birds are invited too; wolves from the forest, sparrows and so on. In order to do this the family gathers in front of the house and throws some of the food as if for those creatures. The wolf is invited with the sincere wish and belief that as a result it will not come again during the year. In some regions even the frost is invited — in short, every endeavour is made not to forget or omit anybody, but to come to agreement with all. It is, after all, an extraordinary day; there is a common belief that on this day the whole of nature feels that Our Saviour comes to the world and takes part in the common and general gaiety; old people say that at midnight animals speak to each other in human language and that water is transformed into wine.

This extraordinary evening is mostly suitable for fortune-telling; many people tell fortunes in different ways and according to various methods. The object of all this fortune-telling is to guess what the New Year will bring.

The days of the Christmas Week are devoted to social games; which are observed clamorously, gluttonously and noisily. « It is mostly certain that during Christmas vagabonding the whole night, shouting and breaking doors, he will come home without sausages, or playing dice he will seek happiness as if he has never celebrated this feast before » — writes Rey (born in 1505) in « Postylla ».

On this day presents are sent also — later on, these presents used to be given on Christmas Eve or on New Year's Day. They called it a « carol ». Some people send presents, some put in a word in order to get one; it is customary for country-workers, organist, country-teachers and in many cases priests also to go from one house to another — beginning, of course, at the house of the landlord — and collect « carols ». When collecting « carols » the country youths sing songs which are mostly old and very often difficult to understand. Besides these songs they used to sing versified wishes addressed to the members of the family visited; priests take this « carol » as a sort of tax.

The Mass on this day is crowded, noisy and gay; carols are sung and in the sermon the priest displays witty ingeniousness. He gives his sermon loftily and coarsely. He entertains and touches.

On the St. Stephen's Day or Boxing Day people throw oats at each other, most often in the church, or after the Mass at the Church. The priest also consecrates oats on this day, oats which are given to cows and horse-later on, in order to «keep them sound» during the com-

ing year. This custom is very old and you can connect it with different customs of throwing corn, cakes, money at each other as a magic means of assuring good-luck, beauty and wealth. These are not only thrown at people; sometimes the oats are thrown at animals and also at fruit-trees. On this day there is a general custom of binding the trees with ropes made of the straw that was put under the table-cloth at the Christmas Eve table and also of feeding the horses with this straw.

In one of the monastery-rooms St. Bernard monks display the cradle with the baby Jesus. The assembled people rock it, singing religious songs. It is an ordinary cradle in which children are normally lulled, but very modest without any reach ornaments or gold-embroidered cloth. In the cradle is a life-sized baby Jesus in rich clothes sleeping. The guardian on one side and the next in order after him on the other side, kneeling, lull the cradle, and sing with the others.

On the next day of St. John the Evangelist, the priest consecrates the wine that was sent from the mansion. This wine was supposed to be a medicine for sore throat and tooth-ache.

The next day of the Christmas Week, the 28th December, Holy Innocents' Day is a very gay one for children who receive presents.

On the Day of the Three Kings, boys go from one house to another with a star made from coloured paper with a light inside. It is the symbol of the star that led the Three Kings to the manger in Bethlehem. This is accompanied by carols sung by the boys — in return for this « spectacle » the hosts offer Christmas food to the boys. It is a general custom and in some regions is done even to-day for people to disguise themselves as animals and so disguised to visit all the village. So extempore

actors sing carols and collect money. The most common disguise is that of a bear, of a wolf and a goat; quite a specific feature is the so-called « turon » with a big wooden-head and a jaw which moves with a clattering sound.

These masquerades last until the beginning of the Carnival and sometimes end only on the first Wednesday.

(« Ochotniczka », No. 15, December 1944)



(« Lazik », No. 4, 5 December 1943)

NEW YEAR'S WISHES

TO WHOM IS THIS HOUSE ?

by ZYGMUNT NOWAKOWSKI

I shall tell you a fairy tale. I shall, rather, remode a certain tale which was related to me by my mother a long time ago. I always used to ask for this tale and I could hear it time and time again although a deep sorrow followed from it. To-day, after the lapse of several years, it appears to me that Andersen was the author, but I am not sure, for my mother used to tell it to me in French.

Now, one poor stranger wandered to an unknown country, to a splendid city and with each step his bewilderment grew. For instance he noticed a big marble palace, with golden balustrade and columns, and a beautiful garden. As he did not know the language of that country in his own language he asked one of the passers by, whom this palace belonged to.

— *Je ne comprends pas* — was the answer.

The wanderer thought that Mr. « *Jenecomprends-pas* » must be a rich and happy man, if he possessed such a beautiful palace. No sooner did he think this, than he saw galloping down the middle of the street four harnessed and plumed white horses, pulling a golden carriage. The coachman and the groom were sitting in front and in the rear were standing two huge footmen. The windows were of crystal and the seats covered with red velvet. The wanderer again asked the first passer-by, « To whom belongs this carriage, these horses, these servants? »

— « Je ne comprends pas » — was the answer.

The stranger wondered at the richness of Mr. « Jenecomprendspas ». Such a palace, such a carriage! He continued his walk through the streets of this foreign city, stopping from time to time and asking, to whom belonged this big shop, this factory, these ships in the harbour, and always he received the same answer. So he decided not to ask any more questions. He realized that Mr. Jenecomprendspas was as rich as Croesus, for nearly half of the city belonged to him. But just at that moment a splendid wedding train appeared on the threshold of the Cathedral. And the poor stranger not being able to contain his curiosity any longer asked once more. On the threshold of the sanctuary was standing the archbishop himself with a golden mitre, and by his sides a multitude of priests, elegant ladies and gentlemen. The bride wore a silver dress with a long train, supported by richly dressed pages. The bride was beautiful and the bridegroom was too.

— « Excuse me, whose wedding is this? »

— « Je ne comprends pas ».

The wanderer became furious and jealous. Again and again it is Mr. Jenecomprendspas! All this belongs to him! The palace, the carriage, the shops, the factories, the ships, and this bride so young and so beautiful! He ran away down the crowded streets and found refuge in the garret of a poor tavern, and only left it some hours later; no sooner did he go into the market than he saw a funeral. But it was at least a first class funeral! The hearse was splendid with silver angels, all covered with heap of flowers. The funeral procession was conducted by three bishops, 2 dozen priests and a lot of nuns took part in it. The hearse was preceded by a long file of people who carried wreathes with fringed scarfs,

many-coloured and long. Beyond the coffin walked a lady in deep mourning.

— « Excuse me » — asked the stranger one bystander, — « whose funera! this? ».

— « Je ne comprends pas » — was the answer.

The stranger who was a poor man, hungry and in rags, stopped thoughtful, worrying about such changes of fortune. This Mr. Jenecomprendspas, who was so rich and so happy, who married such a beautiful girl this morning, is now lying in the coffin and is carried to the cemetery.

— Poor Mr. « Jenecomprendspas! » he sighed with compassion, and thought that it is better not to possess so much richness, but to be alive, and to walk on foot in boots full of holes, to breathe the fresh air, to enjoy the sun and to live, instead of being carried to the cemetery in a coffin, even though a precious coffin.

Here ends my tale; and as always, the question appears — Well, then?...

I shall try to develop this tale:

Five years ago in autumn or during a black and dull winter many wanderers left their country and went far into the world, to several rich cities, and the inhabitants of all these cities did not understand the language of our wanderers. I remember, when I also went like many others, through snow and mountains, through marshes and forests to a beautiful city, which lay alongside a big river. I was wondering about everything and therefore I asked several questions. I was answered by the good inhabitants, that they did not understand me nor my curiosity.

The procured me boots, and food, and a railway ticket but nobody could answer me, when I asked them, if they knew what means captivity, exile, the loss of

home, of family, of country, and many other questions like these. I received always one answer: « I do not understand! » With growing importunity I asked the inhabitants of all cities that lay on my road if they were certain that the misfortune which fell on us would be spared them. I asked if they knew that slavery resembles a plague, and that it ignores all frontiers, treaties, agreements, and attacks one country after another. The people took me for a fool, and repeated that they did not understand my questions.

So then we could not find a common language and we continued our way in silence. Every one of us learned only how to ask in several languages: How much does this or that cost? How much costs bread, a night's lodging, a shirt, an escape, how much costs a passage through this or that frontier? This question « how much » stuck to our lips and like starlings or parrots we repeated it endlessly in Hungarian, Rumanian, Lithuanian or Latvian, in Bulgarian, and in Turkish, in Croatian, Italian, French and Spanish, in Portuguese, and in God knows what other language! And also in Russian! Of course!

We learned that bread is rather cheap, that we could spend the night everywhere, even gratis, that a hut of any kind in the forest may shelter a wanderer, also any kind of prison; yet the escape, the crossing of boundaries is very expensive, although its price is nothing in comparison to the most precious thing in the world, which was the aim of our wandering along these various, endless roads. But it was not worth while speaking about this thing on our halts, because we knew in advance, that we would meet the same answer: « We do not understand ».

All this happened a long time ago, who knows, perhaps five years or five centuries ago. After that slavery crossed one boundary after another without troubling about treaties and agreements. Palaces, carriages, the resources of several countries, all ended soon, and we were not inclined to ask in the meantime, by the way, to whom belonged this burnt palace, or these sunken ships. Besides, instead of carriages more and more often we saw funerals, but we knew whose funeral it was. Such a country yielded, such a state ceased to exist. Fortresses opened their gates without a shot. Here and there the aggressor was welcomed with flowers and colours, whole armies hastened to throw away their arms, factories began to work for the same aggressors, and we, we walked forward, and did not ask questions, although many questions arose.

What more! the rôles changed and we, wanderers, were now asked, « Why don't you want to yield, Why do your airmen, your seamen and soldiers continue to fight? Why do you escape from your country and wander all over the world, through boundaries, barbed wires, concentration camps, you undergo the sufferings of a thousand Miranda camps in order to continue the struggle? ».

— « Je ne comprends pas » — answered our wanderers in turn and did not understand the question.

— But the questions were more insistent. People pointed out the example of other countries. The other nations succeeded in preserving the « substance ». They saved themselves from biological extermination. They found means to come to an understanding with the aggressor. They succeeded in getting security on two or even three sides. Why do you not follow their example?

No, we see an ordinary house, clean, large, turned to the sun. A house which can hold all of us without exception.

— « Je ne comprends pas » --- answered the wanderers.

The tale is very long and very bloody. Its plot takes place everywhere in the wide world. Before all in the Country. There also the aggressors often ask: « Why do you not cease struggling? » The same question is asked in all German prisons and labour-camps in the countries occupied by Germans. We faced the same questions when we came to the North, in the light of the Aurora Borealis; The same came up when we fought on the fields of France, in Africa, in Tobruk and in Italy; and for the second time in France and in Holland, and on all seas; and in the skies. Why? Why?

After some years, people began to ask us the same things which we asked during our journey, about the price « How much does this fight cost you? You have seen towns where drunken soldiers danced when the news about armistice reached them! Did you calculate the cost of the struggle? Do you understand that the struggle does not pay? You must come to an understanding with one of your enemies! How much does it cost you? »

Stupefaction grew greater when at the end of the fifth year suddenly, one day before dusk Warsaw rose in a new war! --- without arms, without any help, without food, without medical supplies! The Underground Army came into the light of day. Everyone, who was alive joined it. The old and the young, the fit and the unfit, boys under age, women and children. And they fought so many days! « Why? Why? »

It seems to me, that the answer is simple: walking through the world, we see a house. Not a palace built

with marble, with golden balustrade and high columns.

This house is on the banks of the Vistula. Just at the spot where two straight lines cross, lines drawn from the North to the South, from the East to the West of Europe. This house is located in the geometrical centre, in the very heart of Europe, in the capital of the Country, which first was able to say « NO », when another wanted to take away its freedom.

This house which is visible from far, stands in Poland. It is new. It is strong. It is beautiful in its modesty. And above all it is our own. To the questions: « Why did we say « NO »? why did Poland fight openly in the Country so long? why did she not cease to fight underground and at the same time on all other fronts outside the Country? Why does the Polish Soldier conquer Monte Cassino? why does he clear the road to victory in France? why does the Polish seaman fight on the seas, and the airman in the skies? Why does Warsaw withstand? » We have one answer—because we want to keep this house, this clean, large house, turned to the sun. This house new, strong, and beautiful in its modesty, is our own house.

We wish, that if at any time, one stranger would ask in any language: « Whose is this house? » — he would be answered: « We understand you and your curiosity. It's our house. We built it on the ruins. We built it ourselves. It belongs to us. To none else. We shall always defend it against any enemy ».

This house is Poland. Our poet says of it: « It is my property, and it cannot be bought by my neighbour, nor by my brother, and no thief can extort from me or seize it ».

This house costs us dear, awfully dear! But, as it belongs to us, we don't care about the price. It is worth any price.



(Polish Press)

TO OUR FRIENDS, THE BRITISH

by MICHAL CIOLEK

BOUND by treaty we have been fighting arm in arm against the common enemy for over five years now. Our Corps already has a common past with your magnificent 8th Army. Other Polish troops have been received as guests in Great Britain. Some of our units are still there. Our airmen had the privilege of defending your capital, and your towns. Our small navy and merchant navy closely cooperated with yours. On your soil our government found residence. All this gives the opportunity for thousands of contacts, mutual acquaintances, and a common settlement of different matters.

Has this resulted in a tightening of the clasp of friendship between our two peoples? Has it resulted in solid sympathy?

As regards individuals — in most cases, yes. As regards the *community* — *no*. At least not to the extent that we wanted. To say otherwise would be unfair.

You can be sceptic about it. The empire and your relations with the whole world give you the right to chose your friends. You did without our friendship for centuries and you do not feel the necessity for a change. You are aware that in principle it is well to have as many friends as possible, but on the other hand you do not care for the idea very much. « I understand that you are fed up with the Poles » — thus spoke one

of your editors who considered it necessary to explain the situation to his readers. That excellent journalist Harold Nicolson confessed to pangs of conscience because he does not like Slavs, and Poles in particular, « as much as they deserve ».

Our situation is different. After five generations of absence from among the independent nations of the world, we are longing for friendly relations with other nations, relations based on equality and confidence. Our powerful neighbours did not invite us to be on friendly terms with them and from among the small nations — not all did. The Polish-British alliance fell on very fertile soil and on our side it was reasonable as a marriage of love. Therefore forgive us if to-day we cannot respond to your chilly attitude with indifference. This is why frequently, and daily more frequently, one meets with growing disappointment among our soldiers. Sometimes these words of disappointment against you are quite sharp. But you can always feel a certain willingness to change these feelings, into better ones, if only it is possible...

This hidden tendency of ours to regard you as friends excludes all malicious prejudice in judging your attitude. On the contrary, you would be amused to hear how our soldiers at radio loudspeakers try to interpret in your favour the sometimes difficult speeches and articles of your statesmen and writers. We take into consideration your insular tendency to disregard the Continent, the tradition of isolationism that you cannot depart from, and your commercial realism.

If in spite of this, our brotherhood of arms does not find its full expression — this is an important thing for you as well, because there are other nations too who wish, *without result*, to increase their sympathy towards you. I am sure you do not think that the time

will come when your contry will be able to follow isolationism. This time it would not be « splendid isolation ».

* * *

To the query as to how this state of affairs has come about I reply in one word — *Policy*.

Perhaps it seems strange to you that a nation that you regard as politically immature, deprived of its own policy for so long time, composed 60% of peasantry, puts such stress on policy. Some of your, and more often American, journalists propagate the view that the starving, persecuted, exposed to death populations of the occupied countries dream only of peace and wealth. Those who adhere to this view, learning that our average soldier takes more interest in international politics than quite a few of your officers, would attribute this phenomenon to the harmful mania of discussing politics. They do not know that the Polish nation for a century and a half has refused to pay for better living conditions by surrender of political will. The idea for which generations offer their lives cannot be defined as caprice or mania. And this is the first truth, that everyone has got to be aware of who wants to have friends in Europe: it is a great offence against a nation with high ideals and hopes for the future to disregard those ideals and hopes and to suggest that they be sacrificed for an assurance of mere existance. Man does not live on bread alone.

You cannot find two nations with entirely common ideas, and geographical-political conditions prove clearly that the hierarchy of ideas in Great Britain and Poland must be different, in spite of the fact that there is no essential difference in our more distant aims, and that

there are many which are practically the same. Thus a Pole, who worries why our tragedy is not regarded as the world's most important problem, is as naïve as the Englishman who wonders why we are not full of joy when learning that the German troops in Poland are withdrawing before the « liberty-bringing » Red units.

An understanding of the reasons for the different sets of ideas of the two nations should result in mutual forbearance. Am I not logical therefore in attributing to your policy the rôle of a factor which is hindering common understanding?

The answer is that the difference between us is not the essence of your « reasons of state » which we all respect. Each Pole, even the one who is very angry with you, wishes Great Britain power and durability. We all keep on believing that you have a great rôle to play in our part of the world. It may seem paradoxical but it is true that this belief is stronger among Poles than among your English journalists and writers.

We are employing different tactics. As was formulated by the above mentioned Harold Nicolson and also, indirectly, by Winston Churchill you reproach us with *deficiency of moderation*. *We are reproaching you with — excessive opportunism*. Let us examine these charges.

You find deficiency of moderation in our relations with the USSR and in appreciation of your attitude in the Polish-Russian conflict. As a matter of fact, the policy of both our nations, before Russia joined — not by her own initiative — the anti-German camp, did not present reciprocal restrictions.

Some of you think that, not being modest, we go so far as to refuse the principle of collaboration with Russia.

I have not met a Pole of this opinion. Each of us understandas how silly it would be to refuse the help of a notorious criminal who has the strength to pump water from a sinking ship. We also understand that we can pardon him his old crimes and even award him for the services rendered during the rescue. But if this precious fellow asks for the helmsman's daughter as an immediate reward, we are ready to object to the price to be paid for our rescue. Firstly because the lives of the people debased by this deed would not be worse saving, and secondly because we do not think that refusal to satisfy the caprice would lead the blackmailer to the suicidal decision of givin up the effort on which even his own life depends.

I do not stick to the accuracy of the particulars of this analogy. It explains plainly however the difference of our opinions *in judging the importance of the concessions to be paid as ransom for Russia's help against Germany*. Do not wonder that we are interested mostly in *who is going to pay* for those concessions...

* * *

Let us start with the last question. We no not consider it just that the expenses of the war should be paid by the culprits. They will be not able to cover the whole of them. Thus it is just that the wealthier countries and those less destroyed should help the countries which have suffered most. But the rewarding of one of the members who, in fact, is also one of the culprits, at the expense of Poland and the Baltic countries which have suffered enormously — this cannot be explained by any dialectics.

We understand, though it is not favourable to us, that the natural consequence of the differences existing in our conceptions of « reasons of state » is that Medi-

terreanean matters are nearer to you than Baltic affairs, and that you are ready to sacrifice more for the liberty of Athens than for Riga or Tallinn. But *inability to prevent something* and *collaboration* — if only moral or diplomatic — are quite different matters.

You ask us to be tolerant towards the fact that not all matters which are of vital importance to us are of the same importance to you; but you omit to take into consideration the fact that *our* attitude is, after all, determined by *elements which are important* to us.

This want of elasticity in perspective is about the main cause of our apparent deficiency of « good sense », which appears so singular to you. Two things fundamental for every state are at stake: *territory and freedom*.

Let us look into our deficiency of good sense concerning the territorial question. Do we lay claim to Russian territories? or even for the restoration of the Polish boundaries as they were before the partitions of Poland? You did not hear such claims even from those quarters which you consider « extreme nationalist », to this extent at least moderated. All this « deficiency of good sense » brings us to the thing we regard as impossible — the concession of a half of Polish territory not only to a foreign state, but to a non-european culture which employs methods experienced by us, and rather painfully. This concession would be a result of the victory of the side in which ranks we are fighting for the sixth year, with a spirit of sacrifice such as you do not doubt. Just think it over. Could anyone of you afford more « moderation » *if he were in our situation?*

Even our government, the « most cooperation-minded » wing of the nation, was charged with not being moderate because it did not accept eagerly the proposition of ceding half of our country to the enemy.

One has to bear in mind that it was the government which, on no legal basis, agreed to declare the problem of our Eastern border as open and, against the Nation's will, accepted the « demarcation line ». Your Prime Minister states however, in the House of Commons: « If the Polish Government had followed the advice that we suggested at the beginning of this year there would never have been the additional and unnecessary complication caused by the creation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation in Lublin. » These words are read by the soldier between one battle and another which he is fighting for the cause which he believes is a common cause. A soldier who like 80% of his comrades, left his wife and children in the Eastern part of Poland.

As regards our Western border the « moderate » neighbour from the East advises us to occupy a bigger part of German territories than we, with our « lack of moderation », regard as just. We want to recover East Prussia, Silesia and part of Pomerania. But we want to recover it at the expense of a defeated aggressor and *not at the expense of our ally.*

You see also the « lack of moderation » in our refusal to agree to the « democratization » of Polish State Authorities in accordance with instructions from the Kremlin. Do you not consider it strange that the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the most democratic country, suggests to us the surrender of liberty, which is the most important constituent of democracy? *To subject the composition of a Cabinet to foreign will is the same as surrendering one's own will.* This is an unalterable fact.

And when, not being moderate we want to be able to apply to Poland « the seven criteria of liberty » *that Prime Minister Churchill proposes for the defeated*

country, the same Prime Minister Churchill suggests an agreement which makes us completely dependent upon the Eastern type of « democracy », which has nothing in common with liberty. This is not a question of structural theories, but of — life. It is not for the theory, that one forces us to have his agents as ministers. He does so for the purpose of gripping power. It consists of nothing else but occupying also the part of Poland which would apparently remain independent, at least for a certain time.

Your Prime Minister wants us to be « moderate » and have, as a result of the victorious campaign in which we have taken considerable part, *the abandonment of half of our country at once, and the subjection of the other half to strange, even very strange, authority.* So, to the « moderate » nation would in fact remain nothing more than the « *resting place* » promised by Mr. Churchill. Our Eastern protector and mighty neighbour would take care not to allow us to grow slothful during the rest. But it is not important, as there is no Pole who would consider vegetation as his aim of life.

As I mentioned before, we see a big difference between tolerating bad things which cannot be prevented to a certain time, and collaboration. We know that being not able to do without Soviet help you had no material possibility of preventing such deeds as one-sided acts of annexion based upon false voting. We do not think that you can close your eyes any longer to all what is going on in Central Eastern Europe. But it always will make us wonder and object when your statesmen explain in public, facts that are contrary to the principles you propagate. We explain this by excess of opportunism.

For eight months your Prime Minister has stressed that you did not guarantee us our Eastern borders. But

his first and the second points of the Polish-British treaty of the 25th August 1939 assure « all help » to the country which will oppose with her armed forces the aggression of the European power threatening « directly or indirectly » her independence. In point 3. both the Allies promise to help each other in case of « another European power having tendencies to undermine the independence of the other partner by means of economic penetration or any other means »....

On the 30th of July 1941 the Polish Prime Minister General Sikorski, signed an agreement with Maisky concerning the boundaries fixed at Riga; this agreement did not include a guarantee of Soviet Union, because this guarantee was quite superfluous — the Treaty of Riga being continually in legal force. General Sikorski contented himself with the cancelling of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact concerning the partition of Poland. He was aware of the imperfection of the text, but instead of it, he received a letter from Minister Eden declaring that Great Britain did not acknowledge any territorial changes made during the war without consent of the interested partner. It is true that such a formulation is not a guarantee of defence (such a guarantee was agreed on elsewhere) but the political substance of this letter was to fill the gap in the Polish-Soviet agreement, and we are entitled to expect at least diplomatic and moral support. In fact the Government of Great Britain gave all its support to the thesis of the aggressor. In return, the Prime Minister Churchill agreed *with Russia* to « the reconstruction of Poland, of a strong, free, independent and sovereign state of Poland, which would be loyal to *her Allies*, and *friendly disposed to Russia, her mighty neighbour and liberator.* »

To repeat these lofty adjectives after Stalin does not mean very much, since the very essence of sovereignty is the liberty to choose friendship, and in Mr. Churchill's eyes, we do not deserve such a liberty. All this takes place when Poland is still holding out her hand to such neighbours which answer her with reciprocity. But what necessity obliged your Prime Minister to reproach *Poland with the need for loyalty* to the Allies? This time we could point out somebody else's « lack of moderation »!

* * *

I have tried to prove, that our Nation is not an « enfant terrible » who has got some extravagant notion into his head but that this people wants to live simply. It would live as a community of individuals and families, and also live and develop as a nation. It would live as a free Nation, on its own territory, surrounded by equally free nations with which it would be able to collaborate for the common cause. What an unpardonable's « lack of moderation »!

* * *

You regard us as one of the « small » countries with « limited interests ». I do not think that it is the interests of Great Britain with its diminishing rate of birth, to propagate the view, that a nation with 20% less population, activated by an old culture, in the centre of Europe should be regarded as a small nation. We would not mind it from the point of view of prestige, if it had no connection with the practical consequences.

Having come to the conclusion that Poles are a small nation, you look at us with the same disregard as the big industrial trust looks at a modest workshop.

— « You are too weak to be independent so trust X will take care of you, because you are in his « sphere of operations ». In the similar way it is explained to us that we must come to the « closer friendship » with Russia in order not to become the prey of Germany. And « democratically » our future is being decided without us taking part in this discussion, because it is quite clear that such a small nation with such a lack of moderation would cause trouble to the Great Powers. In return for this one may speak about this « small nation » with tenderness and sympathy full of anxiety. It is essential to use this nation's own policy for those tasks the carrying out of which by the Great powers would be too inconvenient. So, for example, one can close one's eyes to the fate of international guarantees and if it is a question of liquidating them it is much more convenient to do this with Mikolajczyk's hands.

We understand these matters but do not like them. Even if one thinks we are naive, we do try to keep our belief that even in politics one can apply fair play. Moreover we believe that this is more effective in making possible good international relations than all the advertised and popular organizations of world security which deprived of this seemingly unimportant condition and in consequence — confidence — will tumble down like a pack of cards.

In fact, Poland being small and weak cannot exist securely between two mighty and aggressive powers like Russia and Germany. You consider only one issue in this situation — let Poland fall of her own accord into the arms of her neighbour. However, we are not inclined to commit suicide. And therefore we invite more adherents in your public opinion. This conception is not incompatible with natural laws neither with your

« reasons of state »: Poland has to be *a strong country*. Collaborating with other countries of the Union of Central Europe, bound by alliances with Great Britain and the United States and on good terms with countries of Latin culture, she would lie between weakened and controlled Germany and the Soviet Union, the latter having realized that aggression does not pay.

To a large extent the realization of this conception depends on you. It would give you *security* from the Continent, thing that was once appreciated by you, and what you cannot attain otherwise.

(« Orzel Bialy », No. 36-37, 5 November 1944)

« The history knows the examples of the suicide of the nation which is caused mainly by the lack of moderation and by the excessive pride.

Poland was deprived of consciousness to such extent, that she caused the second world war losing at the same time the right to participate as an independent member in the Community of the Free Europe nations.

The cause of the second world war was Poland's original sin. Poland stubbornly resists Germans and the whole nation is united in her fight against the tyranny. The Polish Army fights in all the theatres of operation; the Polish Air force bombs Germany; the Polish Propaganda contradicts and fights the German policy abroad and home the Polish population hinders and sabotages the German industry efforts and refuses even to collect the warm clothes for the German Army.

Thus she crazed herself suicidally from the map of Europe. »

(Reichspressechef Dietrich, September 1943)

INTERVIEW WITH A POLISH UNDERGROUND LEADER

by *ANDRZEJ PLODOWSKI*

HE is young, tall and slim. His face shows no anxiety, only decision and a certain ardour. The work of conspiracy which he has been doing in Poland for four years has toughened him. To-day he looks like a soldier weathered by several frontline campaigns.

For the last four years he has been one of the many organisers of the underground life of resistance to those occupying the country, so actually he has been unceasingly in battle.

At present he is here amongst us in this island, and has brought with him a detailed description of the Polish people's constant fight with the Germans.

As editor of an Air Force paper, I began our conversation with talk of the Forces. In general, the people of the United Nations hear enough about the Polish armed forces, especially the Air Force and Navy, fighting abroad; but in Western Europe, it seems to me, people believe that Poland has no more than the comparatively weak army which escaped to other countries.

« How important are the underground armed forces inside Poland? ».

« The organized Army there is now the country's principal force. In it there are not only detachments

fully instructed and ready for battle, but all the auxiliary services, supply units, and even groups prepared for the immediate taking over of industry now in the hands of the Germans, as well as everything else belonging to the nation's life and culture. The armed forces inside the country are an important element of the basic strength at Poland's disposal. The part of our forces which is abroad — Air Force, Navy and Territorial Army — although effective, is only a portion of the main strength.

« Since the September campaign in 1939, four years ago, Polish soldiers have anchored and crumbled up a considerable German Army ».

« How does this remarkable resistance movement manage to be effective, surrounded by persecution and the methods applied by the Germans to the Poles? ».

« Well, firstly, there's the moral factor. A general and united will power, everyone's will to fight whoever tries to hinder the re-establishment of integrity and complete independence of Poland. Secondly, and no less important, is the organisation. This would make it possible to protect the vital forces while fighting, and even increase them in spite of huge losses ».

« Does the country know about the plans of the United Nations? ».

« Until a short time ago, yes. They were known, understood and accepted as being completely in line with Polish wishes. The news and official declarations which arrived, in spite of German efforts to cut us off from the rest of the world, confirmed the community of interests and concordance of efforts. But recently the picture has become confused, and there are many problems as difficult to understand, if we are looking at

them from our own point of view or from the point of view of the interests of the United Nations as well. All the same, the people are confident that wise and stable principles uphold the policy of the Western Powers. They are confident that solemn pledges will be honoured. So, although events are tensely watched, we still firmly believe that the final peace will be based on justice ».

« Is it known in our country that attempts are being made to frustrate the re-establishment of Poland in her whole territory? And does German propaganda make use of this? ».

« Of course! ». « Such news is leapt on by German propagandists, who seize every possible chance of disgusting the Poles with their Allies, and shaking the confidence in Great Britain. This doesn't only affect the Poles. Polish concerns are held up to others as an example of what threatens the whole of Europe.

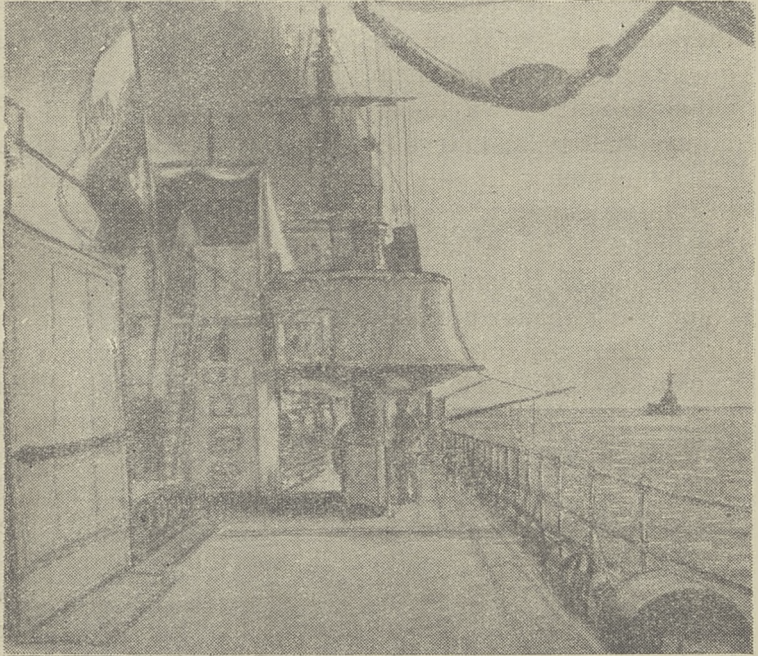
« The Germans see no hope of coming to an understanding with any group whatever in Poland, where the attitude has been consistently much stronger and more determined than in any other occupied country. And so it is not an entente that they are after when they jump at each unfriendly sign towards Poland, when they publish photographs of atrocities, and when they reprint in their own newspapers, in Polish, specially garnished articles from the British press which are inimical to Poland. It is simply an effort to plunge the Poles into apathy ».

« What does Poland feel about the news that leaks in? ».

« Well, on the one hand it makes for even greater unity among the people, and stirs them to even bigger efforts. All attempts directed against the integrity and

O. R. P. GARLANDS WAY TO GLORY

by J. C. B.



O.R.P. "Garland."

THE first impression which strikes anybody who has the opportunity of watching a great fleet in motion is the perfect harmony and interplay of its evolutions. At a given signal the ships execute a turn at the same moment and in exactly the same way, and yet, in spite of the apparent unity each of these floating mountains of steel pulsates with a rhythmic life of its own.

It is enough to go on board to sense the individual spirit of a ship. One may learn about her nature from the feeling among the crew, her fighting spirit and her problems, but it is her history which reveals the most.

There are some ships which have lived long in an aureole of fame, often reaching both sides of the ocean. Their names are seen, on the front pages of the papers, they are spoken of on the wireless, special communique are issued about them. But there are other ships which are unknown to anybody, fighting in obscurity, always waiting to take their place on the roll of fame.

One such ship which fate has persistently condemned to obscurity is the O.R.P. « Garland ». She was the first ship to be taken over by the Polish Navy after the defeat of Poland and was commissioned when that Navy was already in exile, and bore a foreign, non-Polish name. In spite of the fact she was in service for two years and carried our ensign to the ports of Palestine, the Aegean, Canada, the U.S.A., Iceland and, indeed, almost to the Pole itself, for she touched at Spitzbergen, and the fact that she broke all records for industriousness, covering more than 120.000 miles (by now it must be 180.000), somehow nobody had heard of her. It was others who sank the « Bismarck », fought at Dunkirk, raided the Lofoten Islands—« Garland » always remained in the background. It was as though fate had marked her down as the Cinderella of the Polish Navy, probably for the very reason that she bore in her crest a wreath of laurel and the motto « qui merruit ferrat ». I must admit that this sarcastic motto often annoyed us. However we firmly believed that sooner or later the day would come when it would be our turn to stand the test. We knew « Garland » would pass it, but nobody suspected that her way to fame would lie through Bear Island and Murmansk.

It is just a year since that chilly May morning when we left the picturesque bay. Strung out in long formation, we sailed northwards to join a convoy which had started some 30 hours earlier. As we took up our position in the escort, the flagship greeted us with the signal « The convoy has been sighted and its position reported by enemy aircraft and submarines ».

« Fun's beginning rather early », muttered a signalman. It was, indeed, a pretty friendly welcome on the part of our dear partners. We were sure that the Germans, with their unfailing hospitality, would have begun to do the honours of the house immediately had it not been for a thick fog which, for the moment, prevented any exchange of courtesies.

After 24 hours' sailing the fog began to lift, tearing into strands and wisps, and the sun came through, and with the sun our « Guardian Angel » emerged — a curious, horrible looking humped outline, fanged with three Bluhm and Voss engines. Thenceforward it was to be our most faithful companion, never leaving us for a moment, to the very end. Starting on the horizon, it flew in wide, slow circles round our convoy, though at a distance betraying a proper respect for our guns. It flew round, counted the ships, noted the positions of the escort, and sent off instructions through the radio calling the rest of the hornets, who were swarming in their hives along the coast from Trondheim to Nord Cap, to fall upon the prey. When it grew dark he was relieved by another guardian spirit, and often two or three together.

In the afternoon of May 25th the idyll was broken by a short alarm signal from the commander of the escort. « Immediate attack by torpedo and dive-bombers expected ». Within a few minutes the sky was full of tiny white puffs of smoke from bursting

A.A. shells. The convoy and escort opened a furious fire on the first squadron of torpedo aircraft. The Hurricane fighter, the only plane the convoy possessed, was catapulted from the flagship, flung itself upon the formation of Heinkels burdened with the weight of their torpedoes, and shot down one of them and damaged another. As it came back to the convoy it was hit by accident in the furious fire and crashed into the sea. The pilot was picked up, it is true, but from then on we were left with our guns as the only weapon against the onslaught of the Luftwaffe.

Meanwhile, the attack was continuing and hundreds of bombs fell, formations of Junkers made concentrated attacks on the leading vessels in the column. An American transport which got a stick of bombs broke completely in half and sank within a few seconds and of the whole crew not a soul was saved. One of the attacking Junkers, trying to get out of a dive, flew close to the « Garland » bows — it was his last flight; caught in the fire of our Oerlikons he burst into flames and crashed into the sea. Two small parachutes sank slowly down until they rested on the surface of the Arctic. Nobody went to their rescue; there was no time.

From then the raids were kept up, regularly for a whole day and so-called night, which in those spheres, within the Polar Circle, is just as sunny throughout the summer months as are the rest of the 24 hours. I am sure that more than one of those old seadogs had not felt such a longing for the fall of twilight, even in their youth, as they did at that moment. We certainly could not complain about the monotony of the fighting as we were attacked by torpedoes, high— and low—level bombers and, most frequently, dive-bombers. Of course, their onslaughts were synchronised with U-boat attacks. The radio flooded the deck with signals: « Large for-

mation of Junkers attacking » or « Torpedo from the left wing of convoy ».

The intensive fire which was kept up, with short intervals, throughout the whole of May 26th and 27th was emptying our ammunition stores systematically. This was no very cheerful prospect, for we knew in advance that there could be no hope of replenishing our supplies in Russia. Thus we were obliged to go very sparingly and only shoot from single barrels. The men became more and more weary; they hardly got any sleep at all.

That was how May 27th found us — a memorable day for the ship and for the whole convoy; it was them only about 40 minutes' flight from the nearest enemy air bases. The number of planes taking part in the raids exceeded 100. Time after time, as soon as they had loaded up fresh bombs and torpedoes, they returned to the convoy. We now shot at the nearest targets and in spite of the efforts made by the escort, the losses in the convoy grew. Some vessels sank at once, others burned slowly, appealing to Heaven in black columns of smoke and fire. The Commander's destroyer turned back to the invalids falling behind; she was everywhere, wherever the danger appeared greatest. When there was no hope of saving vessels they were sunk by torpedo; those less badly damaged were sent back to Iceland on their own. We were distressed by the tragic helplessness of the convoy.

Enemy planes rushed above our very masts placing consignments of bombs on the flock of ships, immovable, bunched together and apparently incapable of changing course. The defenceless « sheep » perished without making the least effort at self-defence against the attacking wolves. It was seldom possible to pick

up survivors as there was absolutely no time and the slightest pause invited a torpedo from a U-boat. Despite ourselves, we could not help reflecting how much better off we were on board our quick destroyer with a full range of speed and bristling with guns. Our artillery worked faultlessly. The 120 mm. guns and range-finder worked by electricity, held guard over the convoy. Their mighty voices were the personification of our dearest hope.

Finally about 2.0 p. m., the klaxon alarmed us for the last time: « Large formation of bombers over the convoy ». We could see that some of the planes were selecting « Garland » as their special target. The first attacks miscarried, for the bombs fell some way off. The next attack was made by four Junkers. The angle was about 80° — much too high for our guns. A short call came through the telephone: « Bombs coming », The rest was lost in an appalling thundrous roar.

When the thunder passed, a deep silence fell, broken only by the groans of the wounded and the crackle of burning 120 mm. ammunition in the forward store. Sailors grasp a situation like lightning. A short order, and the burning shells were flung overboard with bare hands. Nobody mentioned danger; the worst was that there was nothing to be seen all around. Puffs of grey smoke came from a burning boat, covering the whole ship with sticky, irritating fumes. Another moment, and the burning boat was flung overboard. In the meanwhile, deep down in the ship, the watchers in the holds ere extinguishing the fire which had broken out there. Somewhere behind the funnel there were bursts of steam. Obviously, engines or boilers had been damaged. We thought: « let's hope they won't blow up now! In any case, somebody else must worry about

that ». It was horrible to look at the tangled wreckage which was all that was left of the proud ship's splendid artillery. There was only one 75 and one stern 120 mm. gun left to carry on the fight. The entire forward battery was dead, the crew of the port Oerlikon, too: the machine - gun crew dead or wounded, and 50 men wounded and incapable of action. Yet the fight still continued, it had to go on while there was still any of the deck above water. We had been ordered to get the convoy of supplies to Russia, so we were going to do it. At the stern guns the men were keeping up the fire, surrounded by piles of bodies and the groans of their comrades dying of their wounds; they were carried close to the ward - room, where the doctor was operating on a table. The defence of the forward sector was in a bad way, only one gun being left in use with a damaged barrel and great gashes and dents in it. How ridiculous the principles of safety seem in such situations! Improvised crews composed of the remaining cooks, carpenters and torpedists — men, who had hardly ever seen a gun from close quarters — manned the gun and four minutes later opened fire on a fresh wave of bombers. No. 1 gun fired slowly in a very primitive manner, but it fired. A small trawler covering the convoy astern of us sent a short, laconic signal: « Bloody good show! ». So they expressed their sentiments in their own simple but honest way.

The fight went on for another whole day and night, the temperature fell lower and the cold became distressingly penetrating. The smell of blood and burning spread over the ship and the men, wrapped in greatcoats, stood by the wrecked guns, ready to jump at any moment.

And high above the decks running with blood, above the dead and those who remained alive to carry

on the fight, fluttered a brand new red and white ensign. When the old one was destroyed in the explosion it was replaced immediately by another: its fresh colours shone in the Polar midnight sun like a symbol of victory.

Towards morning the C. O. of the escort sent us to Murmansk on our own to try to save the lives of the severely wounded. In taking leave of us they saluted and signalled: « God bless you, my very gallant ship ». We were greatly touched by this appreciation, expressed on the field of battle, by a foreign commander, the more so that it came from an officer who had won the true appreciation and admiration of the whole convoy and escort. Immediately after we left, the watch on deck reported a white spot on the horizon, we took it for a piece of ice, like scores of others. On closer inspection the officer of the watch noticed a black speck on the edge of it. It was the conning tower of a German submarine and the white smoke was the exhaust from its Diesel engines. We made for it at the greatest speed our damaged engines could make — 20 knots. In spite of this, the distance between us and the U—boat did not lessen. The Germans even began to signal to us. Obviously they took us for their own people. It would be difficult to find a situation of greater irony! Now, when we were almost wrecked, incapable of pursuit and with our guns shattered, a German submarine came to the surface in front of us in broad daylight. The distance was great, about 15.000 metres. We shook our fists as the smoke disappeared towards the Norwegian coast. A moment later the « Guardian Angel » flew up from the direction of the convoy. Obviously it must have been concerned about our activities. We all knew what it would mean. In about 10, 15 or perhaps 20 minutes we should have a whole swarm of Jun-

kers over us. Despite ourselves we could not help glancing at the wrecked barrels of the Oerlikons and the bodies of the dead gunners. Merciful Heaven!

We waited for 16 long hours. Why they did not come I cannot understand to this day. The prey lay ready and the visibility was exceptionally good — several miles. Eyes bloodshot with weariness and with leaden lids searched the horizon for the black specks which did not appear.

But then they came! Close to the very entrance to Murmansk. When we were already in sight of land we saw against the sun the outlines of nine bombers making straight for us. The thought ran through our minds quite clearly: « This is the end »! Luckily the squadron swung round in a great curve before our bows and showed the red stars painted on their bodies. A gunner muttered softly « We are under the wings of Russia ».

* * *

Unfortunately, I have no time to speak of the several weeks we spent in Russia. I can only say that it was a period of exceptional misery and depression, such as we had never experienced before.

It was probably the problem of ammunition which troubled us the most, for no supplies were available there; they had to be brought from Great Britain. Taking advantage of the cover afforded by a thick fog, two destroyers slipped up at top speed and took the rest of our shells for their own use. We were only permitted to keep 10. It is difficult to describe what an impression the sight of those shells — so carefully saved during the fighting — being given away made on the men. So we were left at the end of the world, without hope of return, with over 300 holes in our hull and

with part of the crew dead, and now they were taking our last arms as well.

We had no contacts whatever with the Soviet authorities or people. Only once the Soviet Admiral Golubko, in command of the Northern Fleet, wrote the Commander of the «Garland» expressing his appreciation and his sympathy for the losses we had suffered. His Soviet uniform did not permit him to mention a single word about our being a Polish ship, but still, we did at least appreciate that honest and instinctive response from a fellow seaman.

However, our own impressions were quite different, especially now, when we look back across the intervening period of time on the events described. For us the fact remains that, however it may be, little Poland, which does not exist geographically, helped great and powerful Russia. She gave of her best, with devotion, and whole - heartedly. Nobody asked why we were dying for Russia. There was something very sad in that sacrifice.

* * *

O. R. P. «Garland» soon recovered from her wounds; the guns were repaired and manned by fresh crews. To-day, 1943, she is still fighting, as she did a year ago. But whenever May comes round in all its spring beauty the men who were there see again the gloomy Murmansk fiord, to whose waters we consigned for ever a long line of white, rough-hewn coffins containing the bodies of some 40 of our comrades. In that strange land, so foreign to us, far within the Polar Circle, Poland has a new burial mound — and a new monument to her greatness.

Among those who remained behind in hospital at Archangel, with an amputated leg and without hope of returning to Great Britain, was a naval captain who had only recently been released from imprisonment in Russia. His first posting on regaining his freedom was to O.R.P. « Garland », and his first voyage was to Murmansk. The prison where he had been held was somewhere near Smolensk. Perhaps more than one of his comrades who were murdered there would have fought later on for Poland and for Russia, as he did. It is a great pity — and not only for us.

(« Polska na Morzach », No. 6, June 1943)

SOLDIERS OF THE 2nd POLISH CORPS

SINCE 1939, there has not been a front against Germany the Polish soldier has missed. The campaigns in France and Norway, in 1940, the Battle of Britain, the fighting in Libyan Desert in 1941 and 1942, the victories of the 2nd Polish Corps in Italy, and the action of the 1 Polish Armoured Division at the Western front, the incessant struggle of the Home Army in Poland, the heroic and tragic uprising in Warsaw, the participation of the Polish Navy and Air Forces in the Allied War effort — this is the history of the Polish Forces.

Nothing illustrates better the strange experiences through which these soldiers have lived making their different ways towards the Polish Army, than the hardships suffered by them.

The Commander.

In 1939 the O. C. of this Corps, General Wladyslaw Anders, fought against the Germans until the very end and added new wounds to those received in the last war. Surrounded by overwhelming Soviet troops, he was taken prisoner, sent to a hospital, and detained in prison.

Released in August 1941 he began to gather soldiers gallant and resolute though barefooted and ragged.

These soldiers formed the Polish Army in U.S.S.R., which General Anders eventually led out of Russia. This Army later comprised the Polish Carpathian Brigade already existing and fighting in the Libyan Desert. The 2nd Polish Corps was formed from this Army trained in the Arabian and Iraq Deserts and today has become famous for its victorious fighting in Italy.

The whole history of the 2nd Polish Corps is contained in the following description of adventures experienced by individual soldiers.

The men.

In 1939, Andrzej Mirecki was 19 years old. He graduated in Wilno and was just about to enter the University, when German troops came close to Wilno and Andrzej joined a kind of an auxiliary battalion and fought on the outskirts of the city against German tanks. The hard time came for Andrzej. The life in his hometown under the Russian occupation became very trying, especially when he, with his parents, sisters and the rest of his family were deported to Khazakstan (Russia). He was sentenced to prison for trying to escape. Later he was condemned to 8 years hard labour and this time he had to go to northern camp near Murmansk. He crossed the greater part of Russia in a special train designed for prisoners. Later he worked at a big factory which had been built at this time in Kandalaksha. It was his lot to work with a heavy pick on hard and frozen ground.

When in 1941 a new Polish Army had been created in Russia, contrary to expectations Mirecki was not released from camp until some time later. Even then

it took him a long, long time to cover the considerable distance that separated him from his people.

He arrived at Uzbekistan near Tashkent. Here he stayed in a « Kolkhoz » working on a cotton field. Afflicted again with the Pelagra disease, which he had already contracted before in Northern Russia, he was again confined to hospital. Many died of that illness, however, after several months of suffering, Andrzej was discharged from the hospital. He found out that the Polish Army was somewhere near Djala'abad and that its G. O. C. was General Andres, a former prisoner like himself. Andrzej joined the Polish Army, received a W. D. uniform and though no longer suffering from hunger, for the first time in a long time, yet shortly afterwards he caught typhoid fever. By the time he was discharged from hospital again, his regiment had already entrained for Iran. He managed to leave this place with others. He spent several weeks on the Pahlevi beach, right on the other side of the Caspian Sea, later taking part in the first parade of the new Polish Army in the East. From Pahlevi he was sent with the rest of the Army to Khanaqin in Iraq, where he started his training in armoured warfare. Here, for the first time, he met Poles of the Carpathian Brigade, who had already done a tough job in the Western Desert in Tobruk. Here also he met Poles who had arrived before from England and who were quite acquainted with armoured vehicles and tanks. They were all united to form one Army. From now on Andrzej started to work hard in order to complete his training. He had passed quite a number of courses and had a lot of practical training. He travelled over most of Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt, when finally the long-awaited hour

arrived. The Polish 2nd Corps which had been created from the Polish Army in the East, left Egypt for Europe in order to take part in the fighting in Italy.

To-day Andrzej is 24 years old. He is a Cadet Officer and wears the Cross of Valour for gallantry in action at Cassino and Ancona.

In the western desert.

Sergeant Wojciech Karkowski belonged to a unit which in 1939 fought to the end against the Germans near Lwów. He was taken prisoner and stayed for a few months in a German P. O. W. camp from where he later escaped, hiding with friends in a village called Miechów. From there he made his way on foot to the Hungarian border and walked over the Carpathian Mountains into Hungary. Here he found a lot of old friends and it was also here that he made up his mind to join the Polish Forces in France just created under the Command of Gen. Sikorski. He was twice arrested by the Hungarian authorities but finally after receiving all the necessary documents under a false name, he managed to escape through Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey and later by sea to France.

After the collapse of France Karkowski was not able to make his way to Great Britain. With a few friends, wearing old and torn civilian clothing which had been bought in a French village, exhausted from hunger and without money, they walked towards the Spanish border. Following many adventures, they arrived at Gibraltar, after diverting the attention of the frontier guards. Here they were met by British Officers who took care of them and sent them finally to Syria. It was there that the Independent Polish Brigade was created. In charge of it was Lt. Gen. (then Colonel)

Kopanski. In the ranks of the Brigade, Karkowski was reunited with his old friends, who arrived there almost in the same way as he had. This was in June 1940, just after the capitulation of France. Gen. Mittelhauser, the French G. O. C. the Levant Forces, demanded of the Poles, as of the French units, that they should lay down their arms, but this was refused by Gen. Kopanski. After a dramatic conference with the French authorities the Brigade crossed the border into Palestine. In Palestine Karkowski underwent more training and was transferred later with the Brigade to Egypt. Finally in August 1941 he took part in the Brigade's campaign in the Libyan Desert, and then in Tobruk in the siege which lasted over 2 months. After Tobruk had been relieved by 8th Army Karkowski took part with his Brigade in the battle around Gazala. After the Brigade had left the Western Desert and been transferred to Palestine, Karkowski came into contact for the first time with the men who had arrived earlier with the Polish Army from Russia.

And ever since Karkowski has been fighting with the « Polish Army in the East » on the Italian Front.

Arrived from Germany.

Alojzy Dziwisz is a pure Silesian and so was his father and grandfather. They were always ready to take part in any anti-German movement and Alojzy's father fought in two Silesian up-risings in 1919 and 1921. Dziwisz played soccer in the League Championships. In 1939 he fought with the Polish Army against the German invader but it had to surrender to superior German forces, and later he returned to Królewska Huta.

He could never tolerate the fact that German citizenship was enforced upon him. With the German ar-

my he went deep into Russia, took part in the battle around Stalingrad and was withdrawn later. After that he had leave and returned home. But at home he found neither mother nor father. His father had been arrested for sabotage in the coal-mine and the mother had died. His brothers had been deported to Westphalia, for forced labour. And now, Obergefreiter Alojzy Dziwisz had to fight in Kesselring's army in Italy. How delighted he was to see the powerful German army in full retreat! But when the news reached him through the radio that the Poles were smashing the German lines at Cassino he became almost hysterical with happiness. From that time on, he made up his mind to escape, and finally succeeded. He joined a band of Italian partisans, which was active in the mountains commanding the Adriatic coast. And when he was positive that the Polish Corps was in the vicinity in the village of Fermo, he went to join Polish forces.

Let us hope that Alojzy Dziwisz will return to Siberia in a Polish uniform.

From Far Away China.

27 years ago Wincenty Tomaszewski was born in China. Because of their activities on behalf of Polish independence his parents had been deported from Poland to Siberia, from where later they managed to come to China. Never in his life had Wincenty seen Poland. But in spite of that his home was full of Polish traditions and the education given to him was purely Polish. He went to a Polish school with a few other Poles who lived in China. Everything connected with Poland became of great interest to him. When, in 1939, the German aggressor overran Poland, Wincenty Tomaszewski decided to join the Polish Army. It was not so easy

to fulfil the task. Wincenty with a few other Poles had to make his way through Shanghai, Hongkong and Singapore to get finally to Port Said. On their way they sometimes had to deal with Japanese authorities who already at this time had their own point of view with regard to Poland. After they had arrived in Port Said the news reached them that France had collapsed and that the Polish Carpathian Brigade from Syria, had already crossed the Palestinian border linking up with the British Forces in the Middle East.

In June 1940 the Poles from Kharbin joined the ranks of the Polish Army. To-day Wincenty Tomaszewski is a second lieutenant. His wife and three children are in China and he fights for Poland, which he has never seen.

Over the Norwegian Fjords.

At the outbreak of war, Adam Grzybowski was in France, where he worked as a clerk in the Polish Consulate. When, after the September tragedy, a new Polish Army was formed in France, Grzybowski joined the Polish Officer Cadet School in Coëtquidan. In February 1940 Grzybowski was already a soldier in the Podhale Brigade, commanded by Gen. Szyszko-Bohusz. Adam took part with the same Brigade in the fighting in Norway at Narvik, in May 1940, which ended in the throwing out of the Germans from Ankenes and Beisfjord.

On 14th July, the Brigade returned to France a short time after the capitulation of the French Government. The evacuation from France to Great Britain had already started, but Grzybowski, having been wounded at Ankenes, had to stay in hospital and was unable to evacuate to Britain. After being discharged from

hospital, he had to hide among his French friends. Later he decided to return to Poland in order to work with the underground movement there. Speaking fluent German, Grzybowski bought a bicycle and, in civilian clothing, passed all the way through Germany until he arrived to Poznan in Poland. In Warsaw he took part in the clandestine movement and was sent as a courier to Lwów, in occupied Poland. Here the Russian authorities arrested him. He passed through several jails until he was sent as a labourer to a concentration camp in Komi, U.S.S.R. In October 1941, Grzybowski was set free and joined the Polish Army where he found his former Podhale Brigade Commander — Gen. SZYSZKO-BOHUSZ.

MARGINALIA ON REYMONT'S «PAESANTS»

by VICTOR STAN



TOWARDS the end of a conversation in a London office when the editor was drawing conclusions about the problems of Central Europe, my attention was caught by the red design on a book jacket. A symmetrical branch with two primitive cocks in profile, facing each other. Possibly the original of this design had been cut from a folded piece of red paper by the strong hands of a Polish peasant woman. Something made me pick up the book.

« The Peasants by Reymont », remarked the editor, seeing that no further attention was being paid to his speech. « A new edition printed in Great Britain ».

I had read the book twenty years ago. Story of Mathew Boryna's family and life in the village of Lipce, it begins in the autumn and continues in four volumes through the four seasons of the year.

« You will have it back in a few days ». I promised on leaving.

Autumn. Yes, who has not seen it in the village life of Poland...?

Behind the corner of bombed and battered houses stretched a large square, with a small statue which must help to give London strollers the feeling of a romantic park.

The prudence of a fairly new Londoner made me look for and read the name « Berkeley Square ». Which particular Berkeley is concerned I don't know, but the word is one which always carries me back to the days at Warsaw University, when I first came in contact with the philosopher Berkeley and his system. That great idealist, who saw the world as being a product of mankind's imagination — millions of individual imaginations — and spoke consolingly at the same time of one single objective reality seen through the eyes of Providence — this man had tugged at my own imagination, and his pages attracted the eyes as a glass attracts the mouth of a reveller who between swallows will mutter « in vino veritas », and all the time have his head turned more and more.

The small student room appeared to me then just like that individual world, limited, shut in; and rebelling against the four walls my sole wish was to get out of a world which was restricted to one's own knowledge, to get out of one's self and plunge into a larger spirit,

to become attached to an objective reality, but something more accessible than that highest peak of superhuman knowledge. Some years later I found it, or so I believed, in the national spirit.

In Berkeley Square the wind sighed and autumn leaves whispered through the mist; they whispered that it was autumn in Poland too; that nearly every day cold rain fell and puddles on the roads shone like mirrors in the afternoon light. And what would be happening in Lipce? Harvesting over, the fever of work is past. Old Mathew Boryna, already a widower but still a stalwart, is marrying beautiful young Jagna, with her corn-coloured hair twisted twice round her head, forming a double crown. The village is buzzing like a market place. The church bells having been rung, music pours out of the mayor's house into the road. Violin and flute, tambourine and double bass. The musicians are decorated with ribbons. Behind them comes the male procession of well-built youths, tall as young trees, slim in the belt and spreading widely at the shoulder; ardent dancers and talkers all of them, strong fighters who make way for no one. This band of farmer's sons marches in the middle of the road shoulder to shoulder, and it is so well dressed that the many coloured stripes of the trousers, the red jackets, and festoons of ribbon fixed to the hats play up to the sun. The white overcoats carried out by the wind move like wings. And the swishing noise as these lads go marching past is like the noise of an uprooted young forest flying with the storm.

After the procession they have a good time, good things to eat and drink. Such good things to drink that the old women begin to joke, giving advice to the bride, about how her husband must be treated, the need for warming his feather-bed by the fire every evening and

making him eat plenty of fat for his strength. In vain the miller's wife draws attention to the young girls and children. In vain the old organist draws morals from his Latin books.

« He's rubbing himself against the priest » says a mocking voice. « He takes himself for a saint ».

And they dance. They dance the Cracoviac, its broken tinkling tune planted with snatches of song, like a leather belt studded with metal.

Follows another dance, the Mazur — long as grass boundary strips between the fields, and spreading as the pear tree... gliding and severe, dignified, but tough and unrelenting as the peasants themselves. The latter, in compact band, are like a tall forest as they crash with staccato shouts into the dance. A hundred with such force could march against a thousand.

And then the Oberek — short, broken, whirling, inflamed, crazy, swaggering, plaintive, pulsating with hot blood, generous and full of love... so that tears flow over laughter, the heart sings with joy, the soul is torn with a longing that reaches over the wide plain and distant forests, to go out into the whole world dreaming.

There is so much dancing that finally old Mathew seizes his Jagna by the waist and launches forth. Strongly, widely, from wall to wall he sweeps, pausing now and again in front of the musicians to toss them a silver piece, and singing himself as he goes.

Oh Mathew, you, Grze!a and Anthony are not known abroad; although you are spoken of, sometimes well, sometimes not well. I don't know if you are good or bad, too conversative or too radical, but what does it matter to you anyhow? Stay as you were and are, with the background of your countryside, with your spirit, customs, colours and tastes ».

But Mathew does not have long to rejoice in his married life. Spring finds him in bed. And although the lands is taut like the breast of a young nursing mother, although clouds chase each other across the sky like geese, although the hay is already in stacks which are huddled together as closely as the good neighbours sitting in doorways exchanging the news of the village, he cannot get over his illness. Death is approaching, and with his room full of moonlight the old farmer murmurs « It's daytime ». He gets up and goes his rounds. To the horses, to the cows, followed everywhere by the delighted dog. Then he goes out to the fields. « It's time for sowing », he mutters. In the fever of death he takes earth into his shirt and stalking over the fields, sometimes limping, slipping or stumbling, he takes the earth in his hand and with ritual movements he sows. He sows and sows, until the moment when all the earth cries out to him. « Stay stay with us ». And it seems to him that everything moves, marches towards him — grass, corn swaying in the wind, the earth itself. Suddenly the sky opens in front of him and he hears a voice, « Come to me, tired man ».

Mathew falls and is buried in the earth... like a plough.

When an old oak like that falls, the heavy, sad question of dividing his land at once arises.

What would the conversation be like between elderly Belica the blacksmith's wife and old Rocho?

« I remember when Lipce in the old days had only fifteen farmers ».

« And now there are forty ».

« And new ones wait already for the division; a year may be fertile or it may not, but people are always growing, aren't they? ».

« Aye, and when the boys get married their children will have no more than acre each ».

« They'll have to go out into the world ».

« And what will they take with them? Their bare nails to rake the wind ».

They did, however, go. Certain people to-day remember when they went empty-handed to America, in spite of the cost of the journey. Then, as everyone knows, they went to Western Europe, where there were heavy industries, and so it continued until the present war, as there was not enough industry in the country to transform the overflow of peasants into factory workers.

Certainly during twenty years of independence the situation improved daily. The country was becoming more industrialised. The land reform came about, and one could always borrow money to buy ground.

But to go back to the story of Lipce and Poland of forty years ago, when life was still harder, there is a small bit of land near the forest, land bordering on the fields of the village and not far from the water. The landowner wants to sell it for ready cash, provided the peasants make a little too. But it is not so easy and time is short. German colonists appear with money. When the people of the village start grumbling the chiefs of the German colony reply: « The land belongs to those who buy it ».

The farmers try without success to dissuade the Germans from purchasing. In vain they reply that the land belongs to those with ten fingers-to work it and who have not enough fields of their own. It nearly arrives at the point of a free fight, so much so that old Rocho, fearing the arrival of the Russian police and the arrest of the peasants, has to smooth things over. This is how it is in Reymont's « Peasants ».

Since then, as we have said, things got much better. The sky over Poland began to clear.

Now there are more clouds. There is only one hope for Polish skies — Polish pilots. Among them are many peasants, sons of all those Mathews, Anthonys and Rochos. Perhaps at the daily work a sound of their engine running makes them think of their own forest music, and they hear Rocho's warm voice saying. « Don't worry, boys, one day things will be better »....

(« Skrzydła », No. 1, 15 January 1944)

KAZIMIERZ PULASKI

FOR Poles as well as for Americans, the personality of Pulaski is connected with the tradition of the struggle for independence and freedom of their state. He lived during the period when the currents of liberty penetrated the peoples of Europe and America. This epoch was crowned with the break out of the French revolution and the consolidation of the independence of the United States.

At this time threatening clouds accumulated over Poland. Austria as well as Prussia and Russia, looked eagerly on the fertile fields of the peaceful by nature neighbour. This neighbour, however became famous for his war exploits, though he used to seize the arms only to defend his boundaries and his freedom; he never arised for rapacious purposes. The Russian Czarine, who interfered in the internal Polish affairs, tried with all her might to annihilate each effort of the Polish people, aimed at the recovery of its strength and power.

Repin, the emissary of the Czarine, committed against the Polish Parliament all kinds of violence, and even he ventured to seize and to deport in Russia the refractory members of the Senate.

Against these visible violations of the sovereignty of the Polish state, there was organized in Bar, in 1768 a confederation, headed by Joseph Pulaski, the father of Kazimierz.

The 21 year old Kazimierz took an active part in it. Extremely brave, devoted to the cause of Poland, as soon as he appeared at the stage, he drew the attention of the leaders of the confederation on him. He became famous by his gallantry and courage and his extremely skilled art of warfare against an enemy which always surpassed him in number.

As a colonel and finally as the Commander in chief of the confederated troops — he led stubbornly the struggle during 4 years with the overwhelming Russian forces. Surrounded from all sides he always succeeded in escaping, he excelled in the guerilla war. Kazimierz Pulaski withstood to an enemy 5 times surpassing him in number during 3 weeks of siege in the Berdyczow Monastery. Twice, besieged by the Russian general Drewicz he defended with success the Czestochova fortress. He organised the line of defence on the Dunajec river against general Suvorov who advanced from Lublin. He fought in Podolie, in the Carpathian region, near Lwow, in Volhynia, in Podlasie, extremely mobile and enterprising he participated in every energetic movement. He appeared as the most idealist personality among the members of the Bar confederacy. After the decline of the confederacy he left Poland. In Turkey, once more, he continued the struggle and took command over the remains of the Bar Confederacy. But at this time Turkey concluded peace with Russia. Pulaski went to Paris and after to America.

In autumn 1777 he fought on the American soil as a general brigadier of cavalry, and later he commanded a separate corps. He fell in the battle by Savannah on the 9 October 1779.

His prominent feature was the devotion to the freedom which is common to all Poles. When he yielded in the struggle against the overwhelming Russian impe-

rialist power, he left Poland for the country where there was a struggle for freedom — he went to the United States.

We must not suppose that the Polish romantic nature forced him to seek the struggle for freedom everywhere. It was a consequent, logical action, it was the will to reach the aim of his life, a strong will of a man who knows what he is fighting for and for what he dies.

He fought just as Kosciuszko fought on the American soil « for our freedom and yours », likewise Sulkowski in Egypt, Dombrowski in Italy, Joseph Bem in Hungary, just as the one-eyed hero of the present war from Tobruk, the general Kopanski, the conqueror of Monte Cassino general Anders, the Commander of the Polish Armoured Troops in France general Maczek and general Bor-Komorowski, the defender of the inflexible city of Warsaw, already covered with immortal glory.

God assigned to Poland the fate, that she is the « inspiration of the world ». And where blood is shed for freedom — there cannot fail the Polish blood.

(Broadcast on 11th October 1944 by British Forces Radio Station - Rome)

NAZI SALUTES



1939

Reis W. Kowadko

(Kurier Polski)

1945

A well-known pacifist once tried to soften George Clemenceau's hatred towards Germans.

"Is your prejudice arguable?" asked the apostle of reconciliation, "Do you know them? Were you ever in Germany?"

"No!" replied Clemenceau.

"I've never been there and I've no intention of going, but twice in my lifetime the Germans have come to France!"

THE LITTLE PEOPLE AND THE BIG LANDOWNERS

(Two letters)

« SOMEWHERE IN EGYPT »

27 October 1944.

Hello Zamorski,

Was very glad to hear from you, takes me quite a while to answer letters any more, but better late than never. I think that you Polish people are taking a very blue view point of the situation in Poland. I guess the big landowners are crying over losing their land, but there will be thousands of little people who will have a chance to own a few acres for themselves. Things will change for the better after the war is over, if you people up there kill enough Germans so that there aren't enough to bother us again... Best wishes,

Yours, etc.

Pawsey

« SOMEWHERE IN ITALY »

19 December 1944.

Hello Pawsey,

. . . . My attention has been drawn to what you have written about the Polish landowners and the distribution of their possessions among thousands of little

people. It is obvious that — as it is most often the case — you receive information onesided and exaggerated, if not false altogether. Someone is apparently very anxious to give such information to American opinion. Just for that reason I am not at all surprised you think the cry is made by the « big landowners » exclusively. All you know about what is happening in Poland, you learn from the press and radio and these institutions simply repeat what is being sent to them from the present masters of Eastern Poland.

Did you know for instance that Monte Cassino was captured by... Slav troops? But this is what Moscow radio told the world. Speaking of landlords, however, they never fail to pre-fix the adjective « Polish ».

Now don't be surprised that we squeal with angry laughter when looking at American films depicting « Polish » life, or, when reading some English journalists who think it their duty to attack Polish statesmen, because they dare oppose the new Munich or « social reform » in Poland.

Well, happily I am in possession of the « Polish Yearbook, 1938 », so I'll do best to give you some figures on the matter.

In 1931, 60.62% of holdings in Poland, were under 50 ha (about 120 acres), or 76.26% excluding forests. Of the latter number only 18.07% were in private possession, the rest being in state ownership or in that of self governing institutions. As to land reform we were — I am sure — a country unique in the world, having a ministry whose full title was « the Ministry of Agriculture and *Agricultural Reform* ».

Between the years 1919-1937, 696.400 new small holdings were cut out of the greater estates, or, in other words, 2.535.600 ha (over 5 million acres) were parcelled out.

In 1931, long before the war, not thousands but exactly 12.473.900 people had « a chance to own a few acres for themselves ». I have taken only the figure for small holdings: 2-10 hectares). In the last years before the war, land reform went on at an increasing pace and, believe me, there were not many big landowners left to « cry over losing their land »...

So take it easy and write again soon. All the best.

Yours, etc.
Zamorski.

A COMMA THAT SAVED A HUMAN LIFE.

Maria Feodorowna accidentally caught sight of the following note appended to the bottom of a death warrant. It was in the handwriting of her husband, Alexander III. It read as follows:

"Pardon impossible, to be sent to Siberia".

Maria transposed the comma so that it read:

"Pardon, impossibile to be sent to Siberia". Whereupon the convict was released a free man.

POLISH AIR ACE VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT JAPS

THE representative of the Central News Agency at Chungking has had an interview with a Polish fighter ace who volunteered to fight against the Japs. We have pleasure in reprinting the interview.

« The Japs are your enemy and they are also our enemy ».

Thus said Major Witold A. URBANOWICZ, one of the Polish air aces of this war and the first Pole to volunteer for service in China, in an exclusive interview with Central News, when he was asked what had made him come more than halfway round the globe to fight the Japanese over Chinese skies.

For a Pole it is merely another way of saying, « For Our Freedom and Yours » the battle-cry of the Polish Army, which has its origins in the days of the First Partition of Poland.

As to the word « Japs », Major Urbanowicz had probably picked it up while he was in the United States, where he was assistant air attaché to the Polish Embassy in Washington.

There he picked up these things too. He learned to, in his own words, « admire your country and love its old culture ».

Major Urbanowicz came to Chungking on a leave from «somewhere at the front». But China is no longer new to him now. Neither is what he described as «your and our enemy ». Since he set foot on Chinese soil he has escorted two bombing missions of the Fourteenth U. S. Air Force over Japanese territory as a « guest » fighter pilot.

The air ace has not come to grips with the Japanese yet in so far as air combat is concerned, but he is eager to, one of these days. « Witek », as he is called in Polish, has seventeen German planes to his credit — a record for Polish airmen fighting overseas up to the end of the Battle of Britain. When asked whether he would like to shoot down at least as many Japanese planes, he replied, « I would like to » his soft voice ringing clear and determined.

He said in reply to another question that he had not been in action together with Chinese fighters, for whom he had high respect. « They are very brave », he said, « and I look forward very much to fight the Japs with them ».

Major Urbanowicz arrived in China on 11th October. He had a special reason to remember that date because he came up all the way from India in the same plane with Dr. T. V. Soong, the Chinese Foreign Minister. At this point he produced a neatly typed letter bearing the emblem of the Kuomintang sun, and swelling with the pride of a mother over her first newly born baby, showed it to the correspondent. It read in part: « Major Witold A. Urbanowicz... has volunteered to fight the Japanese in China — and any courtesy shown him will be highly appreciated ». It was signed: « T. V. Soong ».

In the Fourteenth U. S. Air Force, Major Urbanowicz occupied a unique position. He still retains the

rank of Major of the Polish Air Force. He still wears the smart looking air-force blue uniform of the Polish Air Force, but for distinction he has the official emblem of General Stilwell's Headquarters pinned to the left breast pocket of his coat.

Major Urbanowicz hoped to be in China for « several » months, after which he was not sure where he would be. « Maybe I am going back to fight in Europe, which is my second business now », he said.

Aged thirty-five, Witold Urbanowicz has a soldier's bearing. He is not tall by European standards, but has exceptionally broad shoulders. His face does not bear any special battle marks, but shows the effect of the strain of air combat. Below a high forehead is a pair of piercing clear blue eyes.

Major Urbanowicz is in every sense a flyer's flyer and an ace's ace.

Before the war he was an instructor in the Polish Air Training School. At the outbreak of hostilities he received orders to take his group of fifty cadets to Rumania. Once he shepherded his pupils safely across the frontier he returned to Poland to take part in fighting.

He went to Britain in January 1940, and in the middle of August he shot down his first German plane while a member of a British squadron. In that very first encounter he revealed the qualities which were so conspicuous in all his later successes — soundness of decision, courage and vehemence.

On 5th September of the same year he took over the command of the now famous Polish Fighter Squadron 303, which was on the eve of its most glorious achievements. With it he won glory for Poland and laurels for himself. It is the most famous of all the Polish squadrons and it shot down 126 German planes for certain and 24 probably during the Battle of Britain.

Towards the end of 1942 he was sent to Washington as assistant air attaché to the Polish Embassy to recruit men in the United States and Canada for the Polish Air Force.

When the correspondent finally took leave, he went away with the hope that Major Urbanowicz will soon be shooting down his first Japanese plane and that many more will follow.

(« Skrzydła », No. 1, 15 January 1944)

WHAT IS SO RARE AS THIS DAY IN JUNE?

Jan III Sobieski, King of Poland in the 17th century, was born, crowned, married, and died — each time on the same date of the year—June 17.

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

by P. F.

IT is early morning, on the 12th February 1944. We are on the border of a forest. The forest is thick and extends from Szczuczyn to the great forests of Myszyniec. Our feet are aching after having marched 18 kilometres in the night, through paths hidden in the snow, between the protruding roots of trees, through ravines and turnings amid forest thickets. The north wind is whipping our faces stiff with the morning frost.

A road leads from the forest to the village of Bojary. We cannot distinguish the village, but smoke rising to the creamy sky from the chimneys, is visible against a background of thin shrubs.

This is the spot where we shall await the enemy. At any moment some rascals from the « Jagd-Kommando » may come here. The rascals have taken a fancy to the village of Bojary and nearly everyday, on the pretext of conveying timber or transporting goods, they plunder and ill-treat the inhabitants.

We must put an end to these criminal proceedings. Lt. Szczesny, OC 77. Home Army Infantry Regt., has charged 2nd Lt. Grodniak, OC 1st Platoon with the task of organizing an ambush.

Our men beset both sides of the road. An observer is sitting on the top of a tree.

— « First I shall fire a salvo from my pistol, after that shoot all together! » — says the 2/Lt. Grodniak. It is 8.30; for one hour we have been whipped by a raging February snow-storm.

The smothered voice of our sentry on the hoary top of the tree reaches us:

— They are coming!

— How many?

— Some ten men!

— To your posts! Arms ready!

We perceive the sound of the approaching group. The march in the middle of the road.

The bolts of our rifles closed silently.

The armed group is still approaching. They have passed by the shrubs and in a moment they will reach the half of the platoon which is lying hidden. The frost is intense, but it is not the cold that makes our hands tremble. We are waiting, all our nerves are strained.

At last 2/Lt Grodniak's pistol barked and poured out a long series of shots in the very middle of the German riflemen. All our rifles crackled.

The Germans have no time to shelter. They fall down and reply with fire.

The duel lasts only a few moments and then a white rag waves, fastened to the barrel of a lifted rifle. They surrender.

Fire has ceased. Four human shapes with raised arms approach us... Some of them are wounded. When they see our uniforms and the Polish badges, their amazement became indescribable.

Regular troops!...

Our medical orderly dresses their wounds.

The amazement grows higher.

— « You may go back to the « Jagd-Kommando » — says 2/Lt Grodniak — « But remember, let us never

see you again in this village. No plunder and no beating, otherwise » and he pushes his pistol under the nose of the nearest German.

This action is more understandable than words. The Germans withdraw and cast distrustful looks around. A treacherous volley may still be fired at their backs.

At last they have disappeared behind a bend. On the road they have left the corpses of their killed. We have captured a new Belgian light machine-gun, an automatic pistol, some grenades and rifles.

(Translated from Polish Underground Press, April 1944)

"It is nobody's fault if he is born a slave. But a slave who is not only alien to the struggle for his freedom but also justifies and eulogises his slavery — for instance by calling the throttling of Poland a "defence of the fatherland" of the Great Russians — such a slave is a knave and a scoundrel who arouses a just feeling of indignation, contempt, and loathing".

Lenin : « *Collected Works* », Vol. 18, pp. 100-1.

*No strength will wipe us from the earth
From fjord to China sea,
The powers of ocean, land and air
Must recognise the free.*

*Though spurned, disdained, through storm and stress,
Despair is degradation.
God trusted us with manliness —
The everlasting nation.*

*Fate hammered us with heavy hand
And hunger wrote our story,
But hope, our splendid standard, rose
To lead us on to glory.*

*Though bombs may flay and tanks may slay,
Steadfast we hold our station —
Oksywie's fort or Chaumont's hills —
The everlasting nation.*

*When demon power of ravenous foes
Against our breast we rend,
Mankind's green wood will grow again,
Satanic night will end.*

*From sea to sea, from steppes to hills,
We stand before creation,
Foremost singers of freedom's song —
The everlasting nation.*

(Translated from « An Anthology of Underground
Warsaw Poetry» Warsaw 1940).

UNDER - COVER WAR



THE game at the point in R. has already lasted more than an hour. A little radio apparatus on a table in the corner is ticking quietly. The Morse signals carry the encyphered text of war despatches to some half-way station in Algiers, Cairo or Morocco. The operator, bent over his machine, knows only that the desired station has come in, that he must send out all his own messages as quickly as possible, and stand by to take

down information and orders for the Underground Army.

Haste! Haste! Any minute there may be a German « reconnaissance. » It is always thus in this service. The German detector stations are working without a pause. They catch the wavelength of the station broadcasting, fix its position, and give the alarm to the motor « reconnaissance » patrols. Before they arrive, before their magnetic instruments can discover the whereabouts of the station—the « game » must be finished.

It is certain that this « reconnaissance » will soon appear. The German radio service and its spies trail the Polish stations furiously and untiringly. These stations are the ears and lips of Underground Poland. Without them the fighting land would be only a deafminute.

Emit . . . receive . . . get out. That is the «game.» Seconds are decisive. One cannot always count on one's luck. The stake in this game of « hide-and-seek » is life, and more than life.

The key of the apparatus clicks faster. The emission is almost ended.

Outside the windows it is a sunny March morning. Three armed men stand on guard. An O.S. patrol. A shield. And what a patrol. These are the same « pests » who not long ago liquidated a German detector station hidden in a little factory in Goclawek. This station, equipped with over thirty of the most precious instruments, did much damage to the Polish communication with the outside world. It was overcome, and the German specialist killed. Almost at the last moment, three days before the day it was to have been moved to Poznan (the Telecommunication Centre).

This was an irretrievable loss for the Germans. The Berlin factory of these instruments is in ruins.

Emission ended. Now for the reception.

At this moment. . . from the empty street comes the hum of engines. It grows nearer. Stops. Close—close—a German patrol?

There is a thunderous roar. The windowpanes shiver, plaster falls on heads and the radio. A patrol . . . The outpost alarms the radio station by the bursting of a grenade, and holds up the oncoming Germans. They retreat from the street into the house, and ran upstairs. A chain of green uniforms spreads among the little buildings. From the top windows one can see the streets back and front. On both sides advance the chain of « beaters ».

Treachery? . . . The Germans surround the house as if they were hunting for a prey already sighted. This time they are quicker. One group runs up under the window. They take grenades from their belts.

« Leave the room, » shouts the leader of the « shield. » The sending key throws its last signal into space. A dramatic signal: « I am in danger. Message ends. » Someone far away, hundreds or thousands of miles, notes these words in a trembling hand . . .

The operator tears himself away from the apparatus. His task is finished. Only the defence has command.

The Germans shoved into the house. Their iron-shod boots clatter on the stairs, along the passage.

The defence commander, dragging the operator with him, runs from the room into the kitchen. They stand against the walls at either side of the door. The rest of the defence lurks in the room.

A violent blow from a heavy boot bursts the door from its hinges. A red hand pushes though the splin-

tered planks. A shot. The hand hangs limp, hit by the operator's bullet. Confusion and yells. They are not coming in.

The defence leader passes someone a hand grenade, and himself takes aim with an automatic pistol. The grenade flies out into the passage. First there is the clatter of hurried escape, then a deafening roar. Too late. The Germans, dragging the wounded man with them, manage to get away. The leader and the operator rushed out after them. A burst chased them down the stairs.

Then . . . an earthquake? . . . Terrific explosions seem to split the house in two. A hurricane blast hurls people against the walls. The ceilings fall in clouds of chalky dust.

The Germans are attacking with hand grenades. Several hit the window. The explosions tear all the furniture to pieces. The walls crack. Everything is covered in smoke and dust. Three people lie on the floor. The defence. Are they dead?

No. No-one has been touched. The explosions did not reach them as they lay. They leap up. One rushes to the shattered window and hurls a grenade into a group of Germans. They are deafened by the explosion and can hear nothing. The grenade explodes as if noiselessly, shattering one S.S. man in a pillar of flame and smoke. The rest dash from the yard into the street. Heavy fire from machine guns rains on the outer walls. It seems as if the retreat is to be cut off.

We must force our way out. Our patrol leaves the ruined room. It is not possible to find the shattered radio apparatus under the heap of splintered furniture. The station has finished its last task.

The operator and leader sweep the Germans from the front yard. From the shelter of a wooden shed

they fire down the street, their bullets searching out the green uniforms. One man lies dead under the fence. But the Germans are fighting hard. Bullets spatter on the stones. Dully, as if through a thick layer of cottonwool, one can hear the explosions of hand grenades. A stray fragment hits one of the defence. A wounded thigh.

We must force our way out.

Both streets, running parallel, are posted by the hunters. The only way out is through yards and gardens under fire from both sides. But there is no choice. Two men protect the operator. With pistols in their hands, they run, firing on both sides.

The leader stayed behind. He is fighting for the life of his wounded comrade. It is a hopeless fight. The wounded man cannot walk a step. They will die together, defending themselves to the last bullet, killing two more Germans.

Bound by bound, among fences, washing lines, small trees, the rest of the patrol cut a road for their « player. » In the coldest blood they press forward. Behind them the fatal uproar, the last fight of their leader, dies away.

Then, when they have only a side street, and a mass of German barracks before them, from behind a small building jumps straight out at them an S.S. man with a rifle. A trembling youngster. He stutters out something. The defence's pistol is quicker. Two . . . clicks. Neither rifle nor pistol has fired. The German takes to his heels. There is a gap. A soldier of the defence throws himself through it. Alone. The others have turned off between the buildings. He is saved.

The « player » hidden by hanging bedclothes, runs into a shed. His pistol is empty. Both magazines are used. He hides in the loft. Thence he can see his

second companion following the first, who has got through. He himself is already too late. He can only wait. For death.

Only now does he feel that he is wounded, that his leg is bleeding fast. But here come the Germans. They ransack the house, question the inhabitants. No. No-one saw the fugitives (they did not want to). The wounded man can hear their conversation a few yards from where he lies hidden. Perhaps the Germans will search the loft. Whether they are afraid, or don't want to take too many risks, or believe the owner of the house—they go away. Look further on. Come back. At last go away altogether.

One must take advantage of this moment. The wounded man comes down. Everything is quite quiet. An hour and a half has passed (it seems impossible) since the beginning of the fight. The defence patrol has lost two brave men; the Germans four dead, two wounded, two fatally wounded.

Disguised in a uniform cap given him by some brave soul, the wounded operator slips away by empty streets behind the Germans. He still has six kilometres of painful way to make.

At that moment a series of other radio stations of the Underground Army are sending out the usual foreign service. Perhaps they will soon give a short report of the battle in R. on 5/3/44. In cypher they will salute the memory of the dead members of the defence patrol.

(« Polska Walczaca », No. 29)

THANK YOU, POLISH SQUADRON OF LWÓW

by A. E.

«**W**HAT strange and unimaginative creatures the British are ». I feel sure that the remark was made many times by Poles arriving in this country after the capitulation of France.

Before you took refuge here, only a small percentage of the people of Great Britain knew very much about Poland and its inhabitants, but during the last four years the daring and remarkable feats performed by the Polish Forces have won for you worldwide admiration both in the free and occupied countries; and since you have been here it has brought together two great nations which, in the post-war years, will help to lay the foundation of a strong, free, and independent Poland.

We all know that Scotland has stretched out a friendly hand to the Polish Army, who has grasped it firmly; but the Navy and Air Force have also won the hearts of people wherever they have been, and this brings me to giving my reason for writing this article.

Until recently, there was a Polish Squadron stationed near a South-West of England town for many months, and I want to say on behalf of the citizens how

much we appreciated having you, and to say a few words of thanks.

During your stay in that area, a great friendship was formed between you and the citizens of the town, and it was more than a coincidence that the crest of our City should be the same as the crest of the Polish city that the Squadron is named after, and I feel that this has formed an even deeper bond of friendship between us, which can never be broken.

We thank you most gratefully for all you did for us: you patrolled our coasts, you guarded our city (especially when the Hun took it into his consideration, you gave money to the city, and last, but not least, you have paid us the highest honour possible, by presenting us with your country's flag and your Squadron badge; it is an honour we can never forget, and it holds for us very pleasant memories.

Wars cannot be fought without the tragic side coming to the foreground, and now that you have left us, and wherever you may go, I know that both in your hearts as well as in ours there will always remain one small corner of our city that is forever Poland.

I hope by now that you have changed your opinion about the « strange and unimaginative British ». We have shared in your joys and in your sorrows, and it is hard for us to realise, living quietly here, the horror and torment that your country has suffered and is still suffering, under the pressure of occupation; but do not forget the saying made famous by Rousseau: « Poles, if you cannot prevent your neighbours from swallowing you, you can at least secure that they will not succeed in digesting you ». And now I wish you all God-speed, a quick victory and a victorious return to your beloved country which, I hope, one day I may be fortunate enough to visit, and that you will be celebrating your

fourth birthday in true Polish style and in the Squadron's original mother-town.

Please, Squadron of « Lwów », do not forget us and the many friends you have made in our city, for we shall not forget you. Our crests are the same — surely that is enough to remind us — « SEMPER FIDELIS ».

(« Skrzydła », No. 3, 15 February 1944)



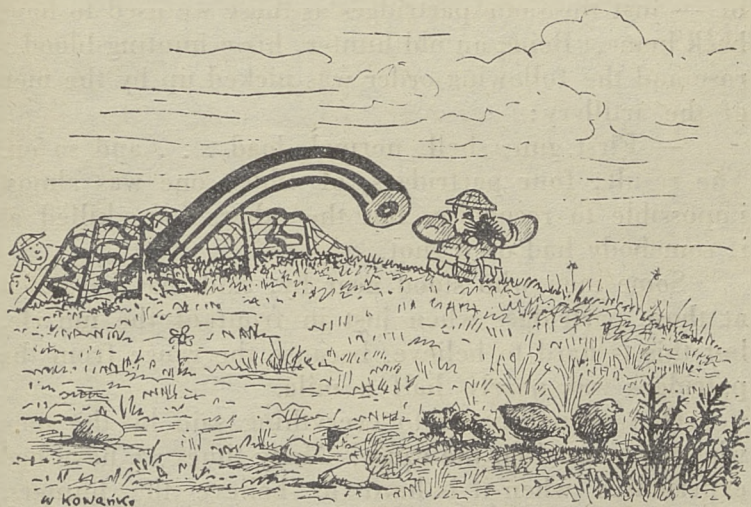
(Kurier. Polski)

THE HAUNTED FOREST

HITLER: *The forest becomes thioker.*

There is no exit. I think I lost my way.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING WITH ARTILLERY



Believe it or not, but it remains a true fact, that one of the Kresowa Light Artillery Regiments started the partridge shooting seasons with their own guns.

Of course there were a few opponents from the heavy artillery who said that this new world famous method belonged to them and not to those of the light artillery. But the quarrel was soon fixed up when a local investigatory committee decided to measure the crater which had been formed by the shell. And actually they found out that this method was invented by the light artillery alone.

Here is the story: on November 6th 1944 a Polish unit of the Kresowa Division attacked a hill, heavily

defended by the Germans. The observer, who was with the unit taking part in the attack, put down heavy fire on the enemy and it fell just before our own infantry. How great was his astonishment, when through his field glasses, he discovered a flock of partridges landing near by — just the same partridges as those we used to have back home. Being an old hunter, his « hunting blood » rose and the following order was picked up by the men of the artillery :

— First gun, shell, normal, load . . . and so on. The result: four partridges, of which one was almost impossible to recognise, but the others were killed as if somebody had used shot.

Some men who stood near by, said that he aimed at those partridges when just in front of the muzzle, but this is hard to believe, because the range from the partridges was nearly half a mile.

One cannot listen to everything said by the men who commented on the cause. Many times we have had experiences when it is hard to believe the hunters. They seldom talk truly.

Who knows the truth in this case. Anyhow it remains a fact, that four partridges were killed by a shell of the Kresowa Light Artillery on 6th November and that even the G.O.C. of the Polish Corps Gen. Anders while on inspection of the sector was invited to a dinner party on November 8th, and those partridges were served on the table.

Post war plans concerning shooting partridges with artillery were discussed at the party, at which was also present a rival from the heavy artillery, who was still unsatisfied, with the local investigating committee. He made a statement in which he said that shooting partridges with field pieces can hardly be called a sport.

(« Dziennik Żołnierza A.P.W. », No. 202, 19 November 1944)

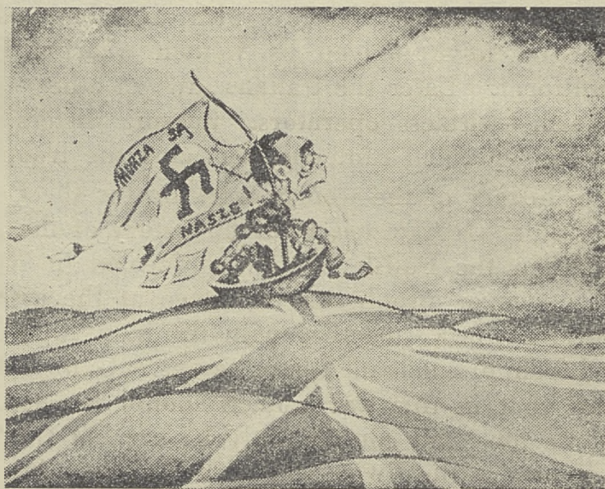
THE STORY OF POLISH A. T. S.

ONLY a few hours after the capture of ANCONA by 2 POLISH Corps, the civilian Italian population watched with interest lorries with supplies passing through the town, driven by women wearing Polish army uniform. Later the Italians saw yet other women in uniform—wireless operators, nursing sisters, and others who operated canteens, servicing the troops.

The history of the women working for the POLISH Army is closely connected with the history of the Army itself; When the Polish Army was formed in RUSSIA in 1941, women also began to arrive at the assembly point at BUZULUK, together with the men who were released from prisons and labour camps. Gen. ANDERS' idea was that in this war women should be employed in various jobs and consequently he created the institution known as the PWAS — Polish Women's Auxiliary Service.

The women joining the ranks of the Polish Army, represented mostly the Eastern areas of Poland and their standard of education and technical knowledge varied greatly. Almost none of them had any previous military training. Thus the volunteers had to undergo training in elementary military knowledge in the shortest possible time as well as in their respective trades including canteen work and nursing.

The women started working in offices, tailors shops, laundries, canteens and theatres, but above all, in hospitals. Lists were made of women physicians, those qualified as hospital nurses, as well as those who desired to work in medical installations. The work was more than difficult. Men who were joining the Army were in bad health as a result of diseases contracted in the Far North. The hospitals lacked even simple equipment, there was no fuel, and the temperature in the wards



PROPAGANDA AND REALITY

(Orzel Bialy)

used to drop down far below zero. Nursing sisters had to go through snow storms in a temperature of 60° below zero, in order to get from one ward to another. Their hands were numb from the frost and when they opened sterilizing apparatus, they used to find a frozen injector and a block of ice in bottles which contained medicine. There were no hours of rest, instead of beds a cold stone

floor, the ill slept together with the healthy, and they used to give their own blood for transfusion. Then came the difficult task of evacuating the sick personnel to the South of Russia, to UZBEKISTAN, the care of these in the trains, the pitching of hospital tents in new places. Qualified nurses and sometimes the matrons helped their friends to scrub the floors, carry water, and material required to recondition the wards and cook-houses. Yet more soldiers came to join the Army, from the districts where the incidence of typhus was high, and thus this terrible disease was brought into the Army. The period from February to June 1942 may be called the fight of the entire Polish Arm in Russia against typhus, a fight in which the women medical personnel played a prominent role. 85% of these personnel contracted typhus from the patients. The patients were lying on lousy blankets, there was neither linen nor soap in the hospitals, empty ex-ration tins were used as buckets and utensils.

New ranks of yet unqualified nurses were still coming in. The nurses had to sleep on the floor, beside their sick girl friends. One morning a nurse was found sleeping, after night duty, beside the dead body of her girl patient. During the evacuation of the Army from Russia, the care of patients, civilians, including women and children, who were proceeding with troops to Persia, fell mainly to the nursing sister.

Once the Polish Army reached the Middle East, a systematic training of women in the various branches, was made possible. Still more nurses were trained, and other women went through Signals, Administration, Canteen work and Driving Courses. The general idea was that those women formations should become completely self-contained. Consequently, whether in a Transport

or a Canteen Coy, all jobs are being carried out by women who could not only drive a vehicle, but who had to be conversant with administration.

Some women were employed in the Educational Branch of the Army. Elementary schools for children were organised in Russia, where the Polish volunteers taught the children, using wooden sticks in lieu of pencils, and sand in lieu of notebooks. A school for young PWAS was organised in the Middle East, and is still functioning in Palestine. It includes an elementary school, a secondary school, and a commercial school. The volunteers after their Matriculation either rejoin the ranks of the PWAS, or depart to Gt Britain. Large numbers of Polish volunteers went in 1943 to Great Britain, where they are now in the Polish WAAF. A certain number of PWAS is employed as teachers in schools for young soldiers in Palestine and Egypt.

With 2 Polish Corps in action, the PWAS commenced a new and difficult stage of work. Military decorations worn by many of the Polish girls prove how difficult and full of responsibility is their job, and that they are carrying it out in a splendid manner.

Approximately 1500 Polish girls are engaged in medical jobs servicing four Polish General hospitals, two Casualty Clearing Stations, Convalescent Camps, Bacteriological Laboratories etc.

Modern warfare does not provide a so-called safe hinterland, and thus the work of those girls was sometimes carried out under enemy arty fire, particularly during the battle for Cassino, where the Casualty Clearing Stations were very close to the front line.

Trained wireless, fullerphone, telephone exchange, and cipher operators, these girls also operate Advanced Dressing Stations and Supply Points.

Field canteen coys supplied food for men on artillery positions. Dressing Stations and Casualty Clearing Stations, which, during the period of the battle for Monte Cassino, were situated along the famous Inferno Track, every inch of which was covered by enemy observation. Many Allied soldiers became acquainted at this time with the work of these Polish girls who many a time supplied approximately 1,500 rations daily.

During the last two months of the fighting on the Adriatic sector, Polish Transport Coys drove more than 600,000 miles, transporting 300,000 tons of ammunition, petrol, water, and food and more than 20,000 men on the heavy 3-ton lorries.

The Polish Womens Auxiliary Service in the Polish Army, in addition to its normal duties such as nursing or wireless operating, fulfils another important role in continuing the education, preparing and teaching various trades, and thus enabling the Polish women to take up all kinds of employment in their reborn Mother Country.

(Polish Press, November 1944).

ON OFFENSIVE PATROL

by STANLEY MAXTED

J would like to tell you about the men aboard a famous terrier ship — a destroyer, and about the weirdest four days and nights I have spent since the invasion broke loose.

When we steamed out from a British port and headed across the channel, we were in company with a light cruiser and a Polish destroyer, teaming up with the latter to form a forward pair of watch-dogs ahead, and to the flanks of our heavy-hitting cruiser. We were fairly bolting through the water — forcing aside hundreds of tons of it into a boiling maelstrom astern of us.

I had met the Captain as soon as I came aboard. He is young, in spite of his greying hair, and keen and joyous. He wears the ribbons of the D.S.O., and the D. S. C. with bar — and that means a whole lot of prodding of Dame Fortune and being smiled upon in return. Number One is tall and slim with a wide square jaw — a self-effacing yet determined young man. Then there is the lovable one that I think of as «Rufus» — he looks fierce but isn't, with a terrific red beard.

The navigator is an easy-going fellow, who seems to use a bloodhound's instinct to plot the ship's course and keep her on it. «Guns» came up from the lower deck. «Sub» and the young «Pay» are engaging

youngsters who seem to laugh at anything resembling excitement, and blindly follow their young Captain with a faith that comes from on high, in his genius. I am inclined to agree with them now.

On board with me was Lieut. Austin Willis of the Canadian Navv — a good broadcaster, and a good fellow. We were going to do a little « by-standing » together. We were headed round Brest and down into the Bay of Biscay on an offensive patrol. I used to think that word « offensive » meant something that did not smell nice and maybe it still does — but it means a whole lot more when it is linked up with a patrol.

The following afternoon found us down in the south end of the Bay, near La Pellice. We sighted a fleet of small French fishing vessels becalmed in a shimmering, glassy sea — well inshore. The cruiser and the Pole stood off while we went in — gliding along at half-speed — until I wanted to jump overboard and swim back from that rapidly approaching shore. I could hardly believe it; I would wake up in a minute.

I could clearly see every building and structure ashore with the naked eye. The enemy must have been dumbfounded, too, because he forgot to do anything about it for about half an hour — or else he was so mad he could not see to sight the guns of his shore batteries. Those fishing ships were colourful, their sails were pastel shades, and all had three different colours; one had a red mains'l, a blue fores'l and a yellow tops'l, as did many of them. They seemed to be painted on that unreal sea — so motionless were they all.

A frantic flashing had been going on for some minutes from a German signal tower ashore, but the Captain told his yeoman to « pay no attention » to it. The flesh at the back of my neck was crawling by now.

The tower flashed in English asking the name of the ship. The Captain gave the signalman the only rude message he could put into German words — and it was pretty rude — *and* it was sent by the stony-faced one who worked the shutter of the lamp, and did not know what he was sending.

We did — but that rude message seemed to have touched a raw spot, or else the shore batteries had recovered from their coma, because there were heavy, dull thuds from the shore, and a quick, wicked screaming in the air, and crashing spouts of water rose about thirty yards from us. The Hun fairly showered us with venom. Bits of sizzling hot, jagged high explosive spattered on the quarter deck, as the Captain ordered « Hard a starboard. Full steam ahead both. Make smoke ».

It seemed as though the ship were a quivering, live thing as she slammed into top speed, and seethed in a great arc, angrily billowing black smoke to form a screen between the cruiser and the shore. Then *we* turned behind it. The shells were still coming through the smoke, but they were haphazard, and finally, gave up.

I asked the Captain if he thought he had made Jerry mad enough to follow it up and do something about it. He grinned at me and said he thought that might be possible. That turned out to be a nice clean-cut piece of understatement.

As dusk deepened into that neutral condition that is neither day nor night, that little while when men at sea fairly strain their eyes out of their sockets, and when the brain and eyes play weird tricks, a menacing shadowy shape droned out of the near darkness ahead of us. It was all shockingly sudden.

A black, smoky trail shot ahead from the enemy plane for, perhaps, fifty yards, and a gadget like a small fighter plane with short wings whistled over us and over the cruiser and into the sea. Every short range weapon in all three ships made a cone of tracer converging on the bomber. He had sent a glider bomb at us, but it was a poor shot. Plenty of shots seemed to be right on him but we did not bring him down — and he disappeared into the darkness astern. Thus ended my first glider bomb.

After darkness really fell, millions of stars came out — the sky was powdered with an extra ration of them, it seemed — all saved for that night. Much later a red, smoky moon stuck the top of its head out of the sea, had another look — then shot up quickly into the sky. It slowed down to the proper tempo then.

Hours later, Jerry had another try. There was a faint throb on the starboard boy and the gunners on the close range weapons all swung in that direction. In that moonlight the bomber's two engines were very plain. A stick of bombs straddled the ship; his machine-gun was hosing the decks. High spouts of water rose on both sides, and I could see vicious little spouts — many of them marching at great speed along the ship's side in the water — bullets from the machine-guns.

On one of the starboard oerlikons was a little guy who had never fired in action before. In his practice shoots he was good but he had never fired *at* anybody. He fired two bursts, and explosive tracer licked into the nose of the enemy plane. Flame licked from its belly. He veered, and down he went, burning, into the water. As he hit, the bomber broke up all over the sea. The fuel and oil spread like a marine forest fire, lighting up the whole ship — for he crashed not three hundred yards off our portside.

Well, that had been a very close thing. Austin Willis and I talked to the gunner who shot the Jerry down. He was a lad of nineteen from South Wales. He seemed such a baby, so rosy-cheeked, and as shy as a girl. He told Austin he came from Llanelly. When asked what it felt like to shoot down your first Jerri, he said, « Oh — I felt quite happy like ».

Next day we tried the nip and tuck stuff with shore batteries again — and once again the batteries snarled back at us — and spat shells. Once again those orders came from the bridge and we tore through the water, shooting that time was not good — thank goodness.

As the afternoon got under way, a tiny dot was reported ahead circling in the sky. Closer in we could see a little column of smoke. We could also see that the plane was one of ours — it was circling over something in a protecting sort of way. That something was finally visible as a yellow rubber dinghy with two very wet R.A.F. sergeants sitting in it. I have never seen anything or anybody quite so lonely as lads in a little dinghy the size of an oval rug, floating in the middle of an apparently limitless sea. They kept so still and so silent — you would think they were not quite sure whether the ship was going to pick them up or not.

After we got them aboard and into some dry clothes, they turned out to be the crew of a Beaufighter. They had attacked a big enemy merchant ship that had been loaded with all sorts of guns for defensive fire — Sperrbreckers, they are called — and had hit it and set it afire. But its guns had brought them down. They had been in the water for about half an hour — and were they glad to see our ship loom up!

I suppose ditching your aircraft in the sea must shake you up quite a bit besides the strain of wondering

when you will be picked up — *if* you will be picked up — and by whom, friend or enemy. Anyway the two airmen were very tired — all they wanted to do once the excitement and worn off was to sleep and sleep — and then sleep some more. They said they wanted a cigarette, too, because the only one they had had between them was a wet one — and they had put it on the side of the dinghy to dry. It had washed overboard.

It was almost pathetic to see how the crew that were not on watch crowded around those two, trying to do things for them. These salty kids, that had already taken chances with shore battery, shells three times, in a little steel ship in which there is nowhere to go, but just stay where you are, in which you get bombed and machine-gunned from the air, torpedoed or mined from under the sea — these kids had almost a reverence for the lads who fly the skies. « Imagine blokes flying in one o' them things — with blokes shootin' at yer! Coo! ». Up on the bridge later, the airmen confided me that they were petrified — would not sail in a warship for all the tea in China.

The data they gave the Capitain about the ship that they had set afire sent us off at a gallop towards the spot. When the enemy ship was just a smudge on the horizon, the cruiser's big guns spoke. They spoke in salvos that crashed into the target. Then as *our* range closed, all three were blasting at the enemy ship. Salvos from a battleship are majestic and awful — and one after another went around and into her.

Finally, the Polish destroyer could be seen tearing in close and going hard over to bring her broadside to the nemy. Then she let one of her torpedos go, and a second after a mighty waterspout rose slowly into the air at the stricken ship's side. She was sinking by the stern and heeling over, too. It is a pretty grim business

watching a ship sink — anybody's ship, but when the cruiser was quite satisfied the German was a goner, we steamed away, and on sea where a dangerous enemy vessel had been, there was just a smudge — like a dirty fingerprint on a page.

The two airmen were on the bridge for this event, and I was wondering what they must have been thinking. They said it rather evened things up, but there was no gloating over it.

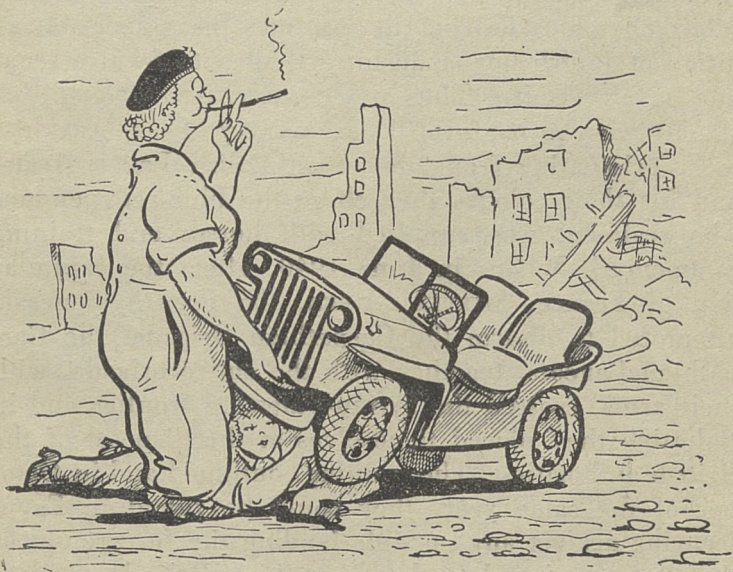
It was their job to try and sink the Jerry, and it was the Jerry's job to « prang » them — that's all, just as simple as that. First Jerry was unlucky, then they were, then Jerry was *very* unlucky. If they can come through this war and out the other end still with a sense of fair play ingrained in them, the world will be a better place for that.

Something along the same lines struck me next morning early, when in the morning haze we slid inshore for a fourth time — at another place still. I was dozing, I suppose, because my head came up with a jerk as shells shrieked and exploded astern of us. We pulled away in the now time-honoured manner, and I asked the Captain why we didn't knock out some of those installations ashore — such as signal towers and so on. He pursed his lips and shook his head: « Couldn't do that, » he said, « might be some French people about you know. » So, we let them shoot at us with free penalty shots all the time.

I had a taste of what he so jauntily brushed off — it had been given to me to marvel that such manner of men should be, not only in this case, but all through the Navy. And they literally *hate* you to talk about them. It makes their toes curl within their sea-boots. In a way they are like their ships. Like the one that, not many hours ago with the cruiser and the

Polish destroyer, drove across the Channel in line ahead, their jobs well and truly done — a proud, coursing ship she was as the line slipped in between the guardian headlands that last saw her out to sea. But now, with battle ensign flying aloft, and among her signal pennants one denoting « survivors aboard, » and memories — lurking wherever a ship's memories lurk — of Murmansk convoys; of driving into Vaagso harbour with her guns blazing; of trading blow for blow — outgunned but not outguttled — with « Hipper, » when her Captain lost an eye and gained a V.C.; of twice feeling the steps of Britain's King on her deck plates; now — with new but unimportant scars — scars for a fighting ship to disdain, ONSLOW is home again.

(Allies Branch British Ministry of Information -
Middle East Service).



(Lazik)

CARPATHIAN LANCER REGIMENT

IN April 1940 the French ship ATOS II anchored at one of the Syrian ports. Aboard this ship were the first Polish soldiers who, after the defeat of Poland, together with the Polish Army already formed in France, were to form the foundation for the Carpathian Rifle Brigade. A large percentage of these troops were cavalrymen who, desiring to continue the splendid tradition of Polish horsemanship, decided to form a separate cavalry unit. Thus the CARPATHIAN LANCER Regiment was born, formed exclusively from cavalrymen, originating from almost all Polish Lancer regts, and for their colours they chose the blue-red pennon. The regiment was supplied with horses and training commenced. When in June 1940, after the capitulation of France, MITTELHAUSER, the French General, attempted to disarm the Carpathian Brigade, the Carpathian Lancers, together with the entire brigade, with their arms, crossed the Syrian-Palestine frontier and in Palestine they placed themselves at the disposal of the British authorities. The training continued and in October of the same year, they could be found in Egypt securing against any possible landing the foreground of the sector assigned to the Carpathian Brigade.

On 24 September 1940 Mr Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, was the guest of the Carpathian Brigade and was among the spectators at the exhibition of horsemanship staged by the Lancers.

In February 1941 the Carpathian Brigade took part in Wavell's offensive, pursuing the Italian divisions. The Carpathian Lancers were transformed into an Armoured Cavalry Regiment and on the 8th of February 1941 came the historical moment in this war for all these cavalymen. The regiment handed in its horses. Tears appeared in the eyes of the old lancers, both officers and men. A feeling of deep sorrow at the separation from their true friends to whom each man had been attached for so many years was replaced by a firm conviction that the modern war demands from a lancer new methods of fighting. Without horses, as an infantry unit, the regiment took part in anti-invasion operations at SIDI BARANI and BUG BUG. In June, with German bombers flying overhead, the regiment began training with their new motorised equipment. In August the Carpathian Brigade was on its way to TOBRUK. Carp. Lancers relieved the 18 Indian Cav Regt and took up the coastal sector of the defence line. Day and night the patrols of this regiment slipped through the enemy outpost lines. The besieged fortress had to have information about the enemy. One of the squadrons penetrated deep into enemy lines, fought against enemy pill-boxes and brought back prisoners. Capt. Antoni SMODLIBOWSKI and L/Cpl KUTA were the first to receive British decorations: the Military Cross and Military Medal. Later the regiment handed over its coastal sector to an Australian Battalion and was itself assigned to defend the highground in the area of MEDAUAR hill, occupied by the enemy and 100 - 300

metres away from the Polish position. Stalking and crawling through mine fields and barbed wire the Poles returned with prisoners from their patrol missions. The Lancers were overjoyed when one of these patrols returned with a captured horse. During the entire stay of the brigade in TOBRUK the Lancers were constantly in the first line and their casualties during the four months amounted to 14 killed and 96 wounded (incl. 11 officers). Gen. Sikorski, then C. in C. of the Polish Army, decorated officers and men of this regiment during his visit to TOBRUK.

In December 1941, when the enemy was withdrawing from his positions near TOBRUK the regiment was ordered to pursue the enemy in the direction of ACROMA. This was the first operation carried out by the regiment using its new equipment. The lancer charge under the new conditions brought the regiment to ACROMA where it joined the King's Dragoon Guards. GAZALA was reached by patrols. This entire operation resulted in the capture of 66 German prisoners.

Then the regiment left the line and began a period of intensive M.T., armour, and wireless training. When Rommel's army was at the gates of Egypt, the Carpathian Lancer Regt as the only Polish unit formed part of the Army of the NILE and was ordered to prepare the defence of the NILE delta at BARRAGE (60 km from CAIRO) with patrols operating in the foreground of the desert up to EL ALAMEIN.

The order to concentrate in IRAQ all Polish forces in the Middle East, where the Polish Army from Soviet Russia was brought, took the regiment from Egypt.

During the entire 1942 and part of 1943 the Lancer Regt took on the responsibility of training the newly formed armoured units within the Polish Army in the

Middle East. The regiment supplied instructors and lecturers.

After large-scale manoeuvres in Palestine in which the entire Polish Army in the Middle East took part, the regiment moved to Egypt where it underwent its final manoeuvres with the British Household Cavalry Regt. Bidding each other farewell the Polish officers expressed their hope to meet soon at the front. A few months later, in the attack on the GOTHIC Line on the FANO-PESARO sector, Polish Lancers had the chance to meet and to fight side by side with this British Unit.

In the Italian campaign the regiment operated as an infantry unit covering the assault on MONTE CASSINO, under incessant enemy fire, with 1000 enemy artillery shells and mortar bombs daily; later used in the attack, resembling a cavalry charge, on PASSO CORNO and MONTE CAIRO, the highest ridge held by the Germans and finally came operations on the Adriatic sector, where they were able to use their armour. Here, the regiment was the first to fight out the crossings over the river MUSONE, then, again, it was first to enter ANCONA and in the last phase of the fighting for the GOTHIC Line it was first in PESARO.

The Carpathian Lancers Regt. groups to-day in its ranks representatives of all districts of Poland and all social classes. The blue-red pennons on their collars with a silver half-moon and a palm (souvenir from the desert) are worn to-day by peasants, labourers, farmers, teachers, lawyers and physicians. In its ranks, together with simple lancers, fights a member of one of the oldest Polish families Count Andrew TARNOWSKI; in the fight for ANCONA fell one of the best Polish publicists and political writers Adolf BOCHENSKI.

(Polish Press, October 1944).

WINSTON CHURCHILL ON LORD CURZON

T HE so-called « Curzon Line » is one of the « general terms » that are being used much too often. Who was Lord Curzon?

Winston Churchill in his book, « Great Contemporaries » says of Curzon that he received a very careful education in his parents' aristocratic house, and studied for six years in the famous school of Eton, and later on for four years at the University of Oxford. He showed considerable literary talent, and took some interest in history, but at the same time it was rather superficial. Already as a student he took a very active part in politics even neglecting his studies a little and became the leader of the young Conservatives. « He wrote very much and spoke incessantly », states Churchill, caustically.

When 22 years old, Curzon was « a man with a future open to him ». In 1886, he very easily becomes a member of the House of Commons, but here all defects such as talkativeness, self-assurance and superficial knowledge made their appearance. Everybody regarded him as a man who could not be treated seriously. « Curzon cannot » — so says his outstanding biographer

— « either change people's opinions, or inspire great events ».

It was only after 5 years of the Conservative government's regime, that he got his first post as Under-Secretary of State for India, and later became Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office.

During the first world war, Lord Curzon became a permanent member of the War Cabinet, and Chairman of the House of Lords. He collaborated with Lloyd George from 1916.

Finally (after Balfour) he became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in 1919-1924.

The most surprising thing is that in the whole of this biography, there is no word about the matter that is discussed so much to-day and which was then supposed to represent « the point of view of British policy ». This so much discussed problem was « the Curzon Line ».

This idea completely disappeared in the historical perspective, so that even such a shrewd biographer as Churchill did not pay attention to it.

Finally it must be pointed out that no serious encyclopedia such as the « Encyclopedia Britannica » or « Larousse XX » mentions any « Curzon Line ». It may be for the reason, that these works were published in the quiet atmosphere of scientific research and objectiveness.

However, it is worth remembering that, on the 15th of March 1923, when Great Britain formally recognized the Polish Eastern border, fixed on the basis of the Polish-Soviet Treaty of Riga — the British Minister of Foreign Affairs was indeed — Lord Curzon.

ANTI-TANK MEN GO MOUNTAINEERING

by MELCHIOR WANKOWICZ

To have a smack at the Germans was the anti-tank man's dream.

But anti-tank guns — are creatures appreciated mostly in the Lybian desert where they are not asked to jump over rocks. So commanders rushed the anti-tank personnel to mortars.

Capt. Rozanski, the commander of the heavy A/Tk artillery meditates, and shows obvious strain in his efforts to come to the best solution.

It is true, that his anti-tank gun called with tenderness « the little gun », is in fact a colossus of two and a half tons.

But then the anti-tank man is born with the sentiment for risk and for creeping under the enemy's nose.

Among anti-tank traditions, only the Carpathian Brigade preserved carefully the memory of Sidi-Rezegh.

Capt. Rozanski shakes his head. He cannot understand how his soldiers can be expected to leave guns representing such great fire-power and devote themselves to the careers of medical orderlies and ammunition carriers.

Above the valley hidden in the clouds of smoke can be seen the walls of the ruined Monastery, blackened by explosions. The northern wall rises two storeys

high. Grottos and dug-outs on Monastery Hill belch fire and seem to sneer at the attack as if they were defended by some Unclean Power.

The A/Tank man looks greedily: if only he could come close to such a tank and let go his seventeen pound shells with their original velocity of 3.000 feet and their terrible penetrative power. His weapon was tried out in Iraq: from a distance of 1200 metres they fired at concrete one and a half metres thick. Nothing was left of it.

Looking at the confounded hill and remembering that concrete wall in Iraq, Capt. Rozanski heaves a hungry sigh and a heart-felt « Damn it »!

He goes to major Choroszewski, commander of 3 A/Tk Regt, from maj. Choroszewski to Col. Peszek, commander of the I.Bde whose job is the attack on the hills surrounding the Monastery.

The old « Carpathians » like the idea: after all, our chaps are several hundred metres from the Monastery — by A/Tk fire is effective and extremely precise at a distance up to 3000 metres.

The only trouble is that these boys clamber up the hill at night whereas the A/Tank gun is not a mule with hoofs feeling for the path, but an inert mass of two and a half tons.

They walk up and down; they meditate, they walk again, and again they meditate...

How they would catch the Germans unawares by introducing a new and unexpected fire element!

Col. Peszek suggests:

— What about climbing up « 324 »?

Maj. Choroszewski and Capt. Rozanski make a recon of the terrain on the 29th of April.

Reaching the peak of 324, they stop their eyes and their hearts beat hard under the strain of the effort.

It's nothing—only three kilometres of bends up the hill! First: the mule-path to the Indian cemetery. From there, another 800 metres through strong pathless terrain. Nonsensical plans, of course.

Even the mule-path is narrower than the chassis of the gun. Apart from this, there are hundreds of other difficulties. But this obstacle alone is enough.

Thus they gave up their day-dreaming and went quite quiet. A breeze coming from the valley, absorbed their perspiration. Complete darkness and silence reigned. Only from behind and below the patient grating of climbing mules could be heard. It was just on time for the daily « unwritten armistice » — when both sides drew supplies.

The pulse of both officers was becoming steady. The moon appeared from behind the Monastery, and its contour stood out black as a mean silhouette. The Mountain spoke with its everyday fire, bringing death and forcing everybody to keep low and look for cover.

— What about towing her to the top on the six pounder chassis?

They started to descend taken up by the new idea... They had to crawl from one rock to another — after each of those rocks their idea seemed to be utopian. How one can think of bringing a gun up the mountain, on a chassis narrower than the gun itself when here, eight hundred metres from the cemetery and away from the path you couldn't even handle the baby-cart?

And when they were descending the mule-path they measured the 60 degree slopes by the effort of their muscles.

« Home » again they found the youngsters preparing for the « Hannibal-like » achievement of conveying elephants across the Alps.

« The baby-cart cannot go through » — they say —
« then you can carry it over ».

So at dawn on the 30th of April the A/Tank men decided on the « Columbus » task of putting the egg on table, upside down.

On the same day Licut. Ptasznik, commander of the 9th hy battery left for a recce.

I presume that even now the reader's heart swells with sympathy and I really do not know how to commence my eulogy of him, because the lieutenant... ladies and gentlemen... was in civilian life... a Foreign Office official.

I remember a scene in a variety theatre « Qui pro Quo » a certain individual makes love on a lake-side bench to a girl whom he's just got to know. When his spirits are nearing extasy he learns that the girl works with the Public Insurance Sanitary Centre.* He throws the girl into the lake.

Men ruled by vivas, allowances, certificates, passports, closed doors, office hours, ironed trousers, white spats and very fashionable umbrellas carried even during the finest weather please give credit to this « Foreign Office Saul » who, because of war became an « Anti-tank Paul ». Lieut. Ptasznik is as laconic as the A/Tank gun itself, has a forehead as massive as the seventeen pond shell and above his forehead lies hair as thick as the cannon-brush.

We shall see...

Lt. Ptasznik climbs up the hill during the second night and ponders. It is quite evident that you cannot compare two and a half tons with a baby-cart.

* TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A hated by all institution aimed at bringing medical assistance to the workers of public institutions, which proved a failure.

He reached the top of this « 324 » — the wicked Monastery spoke to him with Nebelwerfer-fire. The acoustical devices fastened to the heavy shell whistle — everybody in the Polish trenches squats down because of the terrible concussion. The devil on the Monastery mountain howls and cackles, clanking the tin tied to his tail — laughs at the A/Tank chaps who would like to be goats.

It flashed once again from the mountain and it flashed in Lieutenant's head:

So you can't take the gun to pieces, can you? — asks Lt. Ptasznik himself in the Palestinian manner.

He returns to his boys. The idea reaches the boys of the battery. They think it over, in their slow, patient brains:

— The shield — that's nothing — you can take it off.

— It won't help much — only 200 kilos.

— Well, every small part less and...

— The chassis — one ton... the barrel?...

— 1200 kilos — the staff serjeant disappoints them in a solemn voice.

— What about unscrewing the block?

— Go away, you fool!

— Nobody had ever tried to unscrew the block. It was usually done by heavy L of C Workshops. For artillery men the barrel and the block make one component.

This barrel and the block became a problem for them: after all the block weighs 400 kilos.

— Nobody has unscrewed it so far? So what? Find someone who has brought A/Tank guns to the top of the mountain! If we have decided to try to tow guns, we can also try to unscrew the block.

They unscrewed it. It was not so difficult either.

On the 2nd of May at the « dispersal point » the Commanders assembled a chosen party of men — 70 of them — ten strongest chaps from each battery.

They formed three parties, supplied with ropes. Their position was: one party at the « dispersal point », the second half way to the Indian cemetery and the third — and strongest, at the Indian cemetery — at the place where it would be necessary to say « Good bye! » to jeeps.

Two bantams were tied together with ropes. They put the breech on the first bantam and the block of it on the second. The chassis of the six-pounder and the barrel were on tow behind the second jeep. The chassis of the seventeen pounder and the shield would be taken when the first transport returned. After all, one has to bear in mind that along this path the mules bring supplies for the division. The number of mules to-night is 400. The time for the transportation of the first party of guns must be calculated so that the Indian cemetery is reached before the mules catch up. After the mules have passed, the second transportation with the gun chassis must be completed before dawn.

But what is to be done, if the gun blocks the path at some steep curve and all efforts to move it fail? After all nobody is able to calculate it precisely.

The decision is clear: In case of blocking the roads with the gun -- it won't be taken back, as that would result in blocking the way for the mules and the supplies wouldn't reach the division. The gun must be thrown into the abyss.

They had to wait for the moon because it is impossible to guide such a convoy in complete darkness. Behind the wheels were the best and the most expe-

rienced drivers — cadet-officer Wawrzyniak who in the good old days took part in many touring club raids and Pte Pustul (They did not show them the road in order not to discourage them too early)!

Just before leaving, mortars wakened as usual by the moonlight, welcomed this « expedition » with a rain of shells but fortunately enough did no damage.

The first party strained — they were towing Wawrzyniak's jeep...

. . . his jeep moved-slowly, slowly...

. . . slowly, slowly the rope stretched towards Pustul's jeep...

. . . Pustul's jeep moved slowly, slowly..

. . . slowly, slowly stretched the rope towards the chassis of the sixpounder with the barrel...

. . . Two courageous « brake-men » closed to the chassis, pushing it — and the climbing began.

When the jeep isn't able to take the curves and has to « back », these « brake-men » have to brake immediately in order to prevent the chassis from slipping back. At the same time it is possible of course that the chassis will push them against the wall and run them over.

Not long — the first steep curve — the jeep's engines are growling and mens' backs strain to the utmost trying to lift the terrible weight.

It does not pass!...

And at each curve, breathless, exhausted men are lifting, pushing moving bantams and chassis complete with barrels. They hurry as time goes by, and there are the mules to think about.

What will the division say if they have to throw the gun off?

But by the time they heard behind them the noise of sixteen hundred hoofs — they had reached the Indian cemetery.

They took the barrel off and put it aside. From here bantams were of no use.

They looked at each other — seventy men in all. The parties from below knew that this party would not be sufficient and on the way they collected men, who had done their work. They towed with ropes twenty metres long. When the road was not too rough the drivers drove as fast as possible in order to gain speed to take the next deep curve. Breathless men, with lungs working like bellows, ran in front of jeeps, along the narrow path to start towing the car as soon as she reached the curve, to cover the gun-chassis and the gun with their bodies, to push, to pull, to jerk the gun up the mountain in excitement, and ecstasy, disregarding everything.

No wonder that they were amazed at seeing themselves, all seventy, at the cemetery.

They descended weak with exhaustion... they passed the mules, came down and began the next task—the seventeen pounder chassis (after all the seventeen pounder will not fire from the sixpounder chassis on which the barrel had been put).

At the brakes grappled cadet—officer Nienartowicz, known for his strength and the small, sturdy, sharp as a needle « Kubus » (so-called from the diminutive of his name—Jakubowski).

When taking sharp curves they have to brake with a force equal to a ton!

Some infantry troops are passing them—they give them a look full of respect! Oh boy! what guns they are carrying, those boys of ours!

They brought the chassis to the cemetery — there is time to take the barrel and the block that had been put aside.

They put a strong rod through the hole in the block, and carried a dead-weight of 400 kilos through the rocks.

And later helping themselves with sticks they dragged and pulled the terrible mass of four hundred kilos for eight hundred metres up the mountain.

When they had carried the barrel and block, it was nearly dawn and actually the work should have been stopped. But the idea of leaving the block with the barrel already turned on, tempted them too much. They prepared everything and started to screw it on. What a fairy tale that it was only a job for the heavy workshops — it was the easiest thing in the world! But... after making three or four turns it became clogged. They want to screw it back — it does not go! The strongest men plus « Kubus » grappled with the poles — nothing doing! Wood from the poles on which the block was carried, got into the furrows of the barrel and blocked it.

During the second night they carried the shield to the position and lifted the chassis. Men started to take more exact measure of things. In order to unscrew the block a piece of rail was brought from below. The ten strongest people grappled with it. Their eyes were blood-shot. It seemed as if the barrel had moved one millimetre but it was only an illusion. They lost their temper « measuring things », and... bent the rail.

During the third night — having given up the attempt to unscrew the barrel — two more barrels with blocks and one chassis more were brought to the cemetery. They knew every rock, every curve.

They had learned all the efficient grips and tricks.

And finally during the fourth night the chassis was brought into position.

The Monastery in the moonlight — it stood there menacing like a haunted monastery. It did not see them. They pressed the guns close to the rocks. They didn't put on the shields as they were big and could be easily observed by the enemy if placed so, on the top of the mountain. The guns were covered with muddy cloth. Both guns lay on « 324 » like sand vipers, of the same colour as the rocks and ready to strike, when the « D » day came.

And now the men must look for cover and camouflage themselves too. The fifth night they dig shelters on the back slope. The hill on which they are now, is being observed by the enemy from the Monastery, from Monte Cairo, from Cifalco and all movement during daylight is impossible. On one side of them is the camouflaged reconnaissance platoon of the 6th battalion commanded by Lt. Hess.

At night they bring ammunition — one « fire unit » to one gun — 90 shells. The box, with two loads, weighs a hundred pounds. From the cemetery they carry shells on their backs.

And when daylight comes and the Monastery is still in its cloud of smoke, it is time for the final detail: checking position and instruments.

And then all that remains is just to wait.

On the 9th of May at 22.00 hrs Capt. Rozanski, 2-Lt. Krzyztoporski and Cadet-Officer Drelich left for the observation post of the heavy mortars on the slopes of « 324 ». There they waited close to the ground, their comrades at their guns, camouflaged with muddy rags.

On this part of the mountain at another point of the slope was the ruined observation post of our predecessors. All that was left were the remains of blood-stained blankets and a bone-shattered foot protruding from a shoe.

The signalman fixing the telephone communications was filled with pity.

« I'll build a shelter for you », he said.

At half past two, very satisfied with himself he reported the completion of his masterpiece. They looked at it and were terrified! Under observation from the Monastery there rose a wall built from rock and arranged very nicely! It seemed to say humorously.

« Ha! Ha! silly, here I am! »

Swearing because of this unfortunate « help », and working in a great hurry and with puffing and blowing to complete their task before dawn, they destroyed this masterpiece of architecture. And so, at the sunrise, all the sun saw was the same shoe and bones, framed against the sky on the shell-torn earth.

Somewhere down below the shoe, the « Jewish artillery » began to fire and at 11.10 hrs the third shell was located on the Monastery wall.

The Monastery was not used to heavy mortars. It began to tremble from the explosions — seeking the mortar-nests, and the observer. Perhaps something of the architectural achievements of the signalman remained or perhaps it was just « Hill 324 » on which A-Tank men moved constantly and had made too much noise during several nights, so making it suspect — but in the afternoon the « Nebelwerfer » destroyed the observer's shelter, inherited from his predecessors and cut the tree in two.

When the smoke disappeared the observer, who was not hurt, saw two corpses of Italians, who were just escaping from the Monastery to our side. One of them was cut in half; his dog howled the whole day at the corpse of his master.

And the A/Tank men too were preparing themselves for the battle. When « The Day » came, it would find them with guns aimed precisely at 23 targets which consisted of enemy HMGs, concentrations of mortars and advanced observation posts.

(From « The Battle for Monte Cassino »
Translated by Roman Toporow)



*Stampato dalla Casa Editrice
"L'Arciere" - Roma, presso
le Arti Grafiche Onorati, Via
Sforza Pallavicini, 12-14, Ro-
ma - Telef. 51-024 - per conto
della Polish Army, Public Re-
lation Branch - Addì 20 feb-
braio 1945*

s i x p e n c e