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*Future of
the Polish Army
Navy and
Air Force*

Documents and Opinions



No. 2

Introduction

THE documents and opinions printed in this pamphlet are in connection with the decision of the British Government to demobilise the Polish Forces in the West. Read in conjunction with the earlier pamphlet entitled "Documents on the Return of Poles to Poland," this pamphlet gives the whole picture of the reaction of the Polish Government in London, and of all Poles who are free to express their opinions, on the very painful subject of the liquidation of the Polish Army, Navy and Air Force of the nation which was considered throughout the years of war as the most faithful Ally of this country.

It is to be hoped that this documentary evidence will serve in the future as a record of the tragic fate of brave soldiers, a fate which has come upon them through no fault of their own, but because of the departure of their victorious Allies from the very principles for which the war was fought.

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Foreign Secretary's Statement in the House of Commons

IN this House on 20th March I expressed the hope of His Majesty's Government that as many members of the Polish Armed Forces under British Command as felt able to do so would recognise it as their duty to return to Poland in order to take part in the reconstruction of their country. As for those who decided that they could not return I made it clear that His Majesty's Government could not preserve them as an armed force under British Command. I said that the problem of their settlement would be studied with sympathy. What plans could be made would depend very largely on the numbers of those still remaining but, in any case, a demobilisation plan would be worked out. If these men had been British soldiers, most of them would have been demobilised already under the age and service scheme. The particular circumstances of their case meant that orderly demobilisation would take some time. There was no question of discharging them overnight.

I am now able to give some further details of His Majesty's Government's plan. Those of the Polish troops who have volunteered to return to Poland are being repatriated under arrangements which we have made. They return to Poland as soldiers, sailors and airmen. Since it is for the Polish Provisional Government to decide whether to retain them as members of the Armed Forces or whether to demobilise them, and since in the latter case the Polish Provisional Government has promised them the same rights to grants of land as the demobilised soldiers of the Polish Forces in Poland, men returning to Poland have not hitherto been paid gratuities from British funds. We have, however, recently reconsidered this matter and have decided that those men who return to Poland from this time on shall be eligible, subject to their having the necessary periods of qualifying service, for war gratuity, a money grant equivalent to not more than eight weeks' pay in lieu of release leave, and an issue of civilian clothing.

As for those Poles who do not wish to return to Poland, it is our aim to demobilise them as quickly as possible and to arrange for their settlement in civilian life either in Great Britain or overseas. Those serving abroad will be brought back to this country, starting with those in Italy. Since it would be both impracticable and unfair to these gallant men, many of whom do not know our language, to launch them wholesale upon the labour market here and leave them to their own resources, His Majesty's Government are going to enrol them into a specially created Resettlement Corps, which will be a British organisation and will for convenience be administered by Service Ministers. Enrolment in this Corps will give an assured status to its members. Conditions of service and rates of pay will be the subject of a detailed announcement later.

The Resettlement Corps will be essentially a transitional arrangement, designed to facilitate the transition from military to civil life. They will therefore be discharged from the Polish Armed Forces and

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enrolled in the Resettlement Corps with a view to their transfer to civilian life as soon as this becomes possible. Those for whom approved jobs can be found will go to them immediately. The others will be employed by His Majesty's Government to the fullest possible extent in useful productive work such as reconstruction, and in appropriate cases will be given training for civilian employment pending their eventual return to civil life, whether in British territory or in foreign countries. As soon as settlement is complete the Corps will cease to exist.

As a first step to demobilisation and the formation of the Resettlement Corps, **His Majesty's Government have decided to bring the Polish 2nd Corps from Italy to the United Kingdom.** It is our intention to move their families from Italy to the United Kingdom as soon as administrative arrangements can be made. The ultimate reunion between the men of the Polish Armed Forces and their Polish dependants now in America, Africa, India, Germany, the Middle East and elsewhere overseas is receiving the attention of His Majesty's Government, and the steps which will be necessary to bring it about are now being studied.

His Majesty's Government will continue to give every facility to any Poles who wish, and are able, to return to Poland, and indeed will continue to use their influence with them to go back to their own country. I am happy to state that the Joint Consultative Committee, consisting of the Trades Union Congress and the British Employers' Federation, has agreed to co-operate with the Government in carrying out these plans.

(Hansard, 22nd May 1946, Vol. 423, No. 144.)

Proclamation

Issued on 24th May 1946 by the President of the Polish Republic, Mr. Wladyslaw Raczekiewicz, to the Polish Armed Forces.

"SOLDIERS,

"During the long years of the most terrible war recorded in history you have added new victories to the long list of battles won by Polish arms: your share in the Battle of Britain and the defence of Tobruk, the capture of Monte Cassino, Ancona and Bologna, the battle of Falaise, the capture of Breda and others. In this war, the Polish nation has made the biggest sacrifices on the altar of freedom, and by its lonely, heroic though hopeless resistance to the German onslaught in 1939, it enabled an unprepared world to work out its salvation from German rule. The defeated but unconquered Polish nation has not laid down its arms after the September campaign, and throughout the whole war the underground Home Army waged a superhuman battle against the might of the invaders. That sacrificial faggot—charred ruins of Warsaw—will for ever be remembered in history.

"The struggle waged by Polish soldiers, sailors and airmen will

live in the memory of our nation—it will be a cause of pride to future generations—because, indeed, you have well deserved of our country.

“It was your wish and the wish of our whole people, who are proud of you and the object of their love, that you should be in a position to return to a free, whole and independent Poland, as military formation and under your own banners covered with glory. This wish of yours has not been fulfilled yet, though you have given everything that can be given by patriotism, honour and courage.

“No nation knows better than the Poles that the issue of battles is decided not only by arms but also by the spirit. This was often the only weapon left to Poles, but armed with it they often conquered.

“Though the din of battles, the heavy thud of guns and the drone of war planes is now at an end, you remain the soldiers of the Republic and you go on fighting for her armed with the strength of the Polish spirit. If you keep that spirit in your hearts the future will be yours, because no human force has ever succeeded, nor will ever succeed, in matching the spirit. Your service is not over yet. Whatever organisational form will be imposed upon you by circumstances, you will remain true to your soldierly oath engraved in your hearts. You will keep and maintain the spirit of brotherly unity and moral discipline which has distinguished you throughout the years of battle. You will trust your commanders and confidently follow their instructions. Tribulations will not get the better of us. Your attitude will be worthy of the sons of a gallant nation. In your dealings with foreigners, wherever fate might scatter you, you will behave in a way calculated to increase the good repute of Poland. You will spare no effort to keep and strengthen the ties of friendship and brotherhood in arms which you have forged between yourselves and the Allied nations.

“I am also sending a warm message of thanks and encouragement to you, Polish soldiers of the September campaign and of the heroic Home Army. It was not given to you to join the ranks of your brotherly forces and you remain unflinching in conditions even more difficult than those meted out to your comrades abroad. I declare that you form an integral part of the Polish Armed Forces, that you are entitled to the same rights and protection which our Allies are granting to the Polish Armed Forces in exile.

“Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen keep your unbending faith in the future, and you will live to see the day when God will reward your sacrifices, when justice will prevail and with our Free Nation you will celebrate the triumph of victory in your native land.

“WLADYSLAW RACZKIEWICZ.”

London, 24th May 1946.

Statement of the Polish Government

(London, 24th May 1946)

THE statement made by H.M. Foreign Secretary in the Commons on 22nd May 1946 marks the beginning of the implementing of the

decision of the British Government (announced on 20th March 1946) to disband the Polish Armed Forces in exile. It will be remembered that at that time the Polish Government lodged a solemn protest against this decision.

For six years Poland carried on the struggle, faithful to her alliance with Britain, she fulfilled all her undertakings under that treaty of alliance at the heaviest cost to herself; and she threw all her forces and resources into that struggle both at home and abroad.

Even after our allies had agreed at Teheran and Yalta to surrender half of Poland to the Soviet Union and to impose upon what remained of her a foreign-sponsored government, the Polish people have continued their relentless struggle at home and abroad, and went on making enormous sacrifices of blood and treasure for the common cause of the Allies.

Even in the days when it was already obvious to all that the Soviet Union aimed at the control of the whole of Poland, the Polish people, faithful to its alliances, undertook, in an unprecedented sacrificial spirit, vast military operations carried out by the Polish Army, of which the hard battles fought against the Germans in Volhynia, in the Wilno area, in Central Poland and particularly the unparalleled heroism of the Warsaw rising, are especially memorable.

The Polish people deeply believed that the independence of our country was a question which genuinely stirred the conscience of the world, and that the restoration of that independence would automatically follow the victorious conclusion of the war.

The Polish Armed Forces fought until the very end of the war, true to their oath of allegiance to the Polish Republic and faithful to their comradeship in arms with the British Armed Forces and to the cause of the United Nations. Many thousands of Polish soldiers laid down their lives in these battles, while many more have been wounded or maimed in them. By their gallantry and devotion to duty the Polish Armed Forces have earned the respect of the British people and other Allied nations.

They were entitled to expect that after the victory of the United Nations they would return, headed by their commanders, with their arms and under their own standards, to a free and independent Poland.

The present decisions threaten to make such a return impossible. These decisions are taken at a time when in Poland the so-called Provisional Government are postponing the elections, thus breaking their own pledges, and furthermore terrorising the Polish people into submission and depriving them of every form of free public life.

The debt contracted by the Allies towards Poland and her Armed Forces cannot be repaid by the friendly assistance which the British Government may extend to Polish soldiers now turned into exiles. Poland must be free. Only then the Polish soldiers could return home with a clear conscience, with the knowledge that they have discharged their duty to the very end and that the seven years of their struggles and sacrifices have not been in vain.

The gallant 2nd Polish Corps in Italy is to be the first victim of the

decision to disband the Polish Armed Forces. This Corps, which under General Anders' command has captured Monte Cassino and Ancona, pierced the Gothic line and victoriously entered Bologna, is the first to cease to exist. This has a tragic eloquence of its own.

The Polish Government are convinced that they express the feelings of the Polish people when they declare that the Polish Armed Forces have well deserved of their country and of the common cause of the Allies, and they will live forever in the hearts and affections of the Polish people.

Whatever conditions may be imposed upon them the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces will never cease to be the soldiers of the Polish Republic; and no one can deprive them of their duties.

The Polish soldiers and the soldiers of the Polish Home Army who have been freed from German captivity were, and are still, full-pledged members of the Polish Armed Forces. The Polish Government will not cease to demand that the treatment meted out to them by the Allies be just and equitable and similar to that which is accorded to the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in exile.

The soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces remain faithful to their oath which orders them to defend their country, its integrity and independence and to obey the orders of the President of the Polish Republic, their lawful superiors and the law. The Polish Government are confident that in all circumstances these men will remain faithful to their oath as they have always been for the past seven years.

The Polish Nation which has endured so many blows and maintains its unflinching will to resist and regain its independence, will, in the face of these new hardships, close its ranks once again by the banner of its free, integral and independent Republic, and it will keep its faith in the final victory of its cause which is so indissolubly connected with the cause of freedom for all nations and a lasting world peace.

General W. Anders' Order of the Day

(1st June 1946)

"THE 2nd Corps is now faced with a hard and painful reality for soldiers representing the free Polish Nation in its tragic and lonely fight for independence.

"Our banners shine in the glory of our victorious battles, in which we have so proudly ascertained Poland's right to freedom, territorial integrity and independence. In the course of almost seven years, during which we were always in the thick of the battle, we had not only to break the ranks of the enemy but also to overcome the various crises which were the sequence to international bargains in which Poland was used as change money. To-day we are again facing such a profound crisis. We must overcome that crisis in order to keep in mind the aim which the Polish Nation is pursuing.

"As you already know, the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Bevin, has announced in the House of Commons on 22nd May that, in pur-

suance of the declaration of the British government of 20th March 1946, the demobilisation of the Polish Armed Forces, and of our 2nd Corps in the first place, will begin forthwith.

“As your Commander, I will not, and can not, attempt to mitigate the stern portent of this decision.

“Demobilisation means that gradually the time is drawing near when the 2nd Corps, as a fighting unit, will be disbanded according to the British decision. A similar fate awaits all other units of the Polish Armed Forces, on land, on the sea, and in the air.

“These decisions are being taken after six years’ hard fighting, side by side, and in a brotherhood of arms and blood, with the forces of the western United Nations. They are being taken at a time when Poland has not yet recovered her full independence. We fought so that our country could be free and independent, that our people could be master in their own house, and the rebuilding of such a Poland was promised us in the most difficult moments of the war by our Allies, bound to us by public and definite treaties of alliance.

“In the first phase of the demobilisation plan we are to leave Italy on the eve of the expected signing of a peace treaty between that country and the Allied Powers.

“We have marched across almost the whole of Italy, from south to north, repelling the Germans step by step and faithful to our historical device: for your freedom and ours. The centuries-old friendship between the Polish and Italian Nations was cemented anew in the course of these battles of ours waged on Italian soil. On this soldierly track of ours, from Monte Cassino to Ancona and Bologna, we have renewed our old brotherhood-in-arms with the people of Italy.

“Nor shall we ever forget—we, ourselves, as well as the Polish people in generations to come—that we fought under the very eyes of the Holy See and for its liberation.

“We are now going to Britain. We have been given assurances that our families in Italy, in the Middle East and in other countries of Western Europe will be allowed to join us there. Similar assurances have been given in respect of those families of our soldiers which are in Africa, India, Mexico, etc.

“In Britain, with the other members of the Polish Armed Forces, we are all to be enrolled—in uniforms and with the badges of our ranks and under our own commanders—into a new formation, sponsored and organised by the British, to be known as the Polish Resettlement Corps.

“The purpose of this Corps will be to prepare soldiers, airmen and sailors for new work in civil life and resettlement in the British Isles and overseas. This Resettlement Corps is to provide a framework which the Polish soldier is expected to fill with his tireless efforts, best behaviour, zest and zeal.

“As your commander, responsible to the Polish people, to future generations and to you who have given me your friendship and your confidence, I have long meditated on what I ought to do at this crucial moment. An exact examination of my conscience and a

realistic appreciation of the political situation have caused me to accept this heavy decision—this one-sided decision of the British Government.

“We shall leave this land of Italy, we shall go to the British Isles, but we shall always tread the unknown road to Poland, to the Poland for which we fought, to the true Poland which no Polish heart can imagine without Lwów and Wilno.

“No one can cause us to swerve from that road, that path of our historical mission. Our duty is not done yet; our period of service is not yet at an end. Our march towards a free, independent and unmutilated Poland goes on.”

The Surrender of Polish Naval Units in Britain to the Warsaw Administration

It is reported from Polish Naval Headquarters in London that the Admiralty recently approached the Commander of the Polish Navy, Vice-Admiral Sir George Swirski, with the request to surrender to the British authorities those Polish warships (still afloat) which had escaped from Poland to Britain in 1939: the destroyers *Blyskawica* (Lightning), *Burza* (Tempest), and the submarine *Wilk* (Wolf), these ships were to be handed over by the British to the Warsaw administration.

The first ship whose surrender was demanded was the destroyer *Blyskawica*.

The Commander of the Polish Navy lodged a protest in writing against the surrender of these ships, both with the Board of Admiralty and the Foreign Office; since, however, no means to prevent this were at his disposal, he was compelled to order the lowering of the flag from the *Blyskawica*, to instruct her crew to vacate her and to hand over the ship to the British authorities.

These orders were carried out on 28th May at 3.20 p.m.

The Commander of the Polish Navy also issued the following order of the day addressed to the crew of the *Blyskawica*:

“The political situation leads to ever new tragic consequences for us, and we have to endure many a heavy blow and bitter disappointments.

“Now we are compelled to hand over to the British authorities our fine ship—the *Blyskawica*.

“For her crew she was a powerful instrument in the struggle against the Germans, and a home for exiles; for all of us sailors and for all Poles, those in Poland and those scattered all over the world, she was—throughout the years of the war against Germany—a bit of Polish territory, on which the independence and sovereignty of our country found a refuge.

“With this in mind, you, her crew, and those who manned her before you took over, have done your duty well; you have stuck to your job in good and bad days; you have braved every danger and you were always ready to shed your blood and to give your lives for

the honour of our flag and the right to take an active part in the struggle for the freedom and independence of Poland.

"To-day this ship ceases to be our ship. Her record of service is a long and fine one.

"She was built with her sister-ship, the *Grom*, in the English stock-yards (Samuel White) from Polish blue-prints and partly from Polish materials; she was launched in 1936 and a year later arrived in Poland; she was one of the two finest and largest destroyers plying in the Baltic.

"On 1st September 1939 she arrived in Britain.

"She joined the battle on 3rd September by the side of the Royal Navy.

"Throughout the war she took part in the battle of the Atlantic and besides:

"In 1940 she took part in the naval operations off Narvik, where she suffered heavy damage and had many casualties. She fought in the defence of Skiofjord.

"In May 1940 she fought again off Dunkirk where she rescued the crew of the French destroyer *Sirocco* and tugged the damaged British destroyer *Greyhound* to safety in a British port.

"Late in 1943 she escorted the Anglo-American landing forces to North Africa, and fought off Algiers and Bougie where again she suffered damage and casualties.

"In 1943 she took part in the bombardment of Tunis.

"In 1944 she was dispatched with the Polish destroyer *Piorun* to operate off Norway by the side of a task force of the Royal Navy.

"Later she formed part of the force which escorted and protected the landings in Normandy; the task force to which she was then assigned encountered several German destroyers and destroyed two of them.

"In July 1944, as part of another British task force, she helped in sinking two German transport ships and one minesweeper off La Rochelle.

"Later—again with the *Piorun*—she transported arms for the French Maquis and lastly landed troops in the Channel Islands.

"The ship has gallantly and successfully discharged her duty to Poland under the flag of the White Eagle, the symbol of Poland's freedom and true independence.

"The ship and her crew stood confidently, like all of us, by the side of Britain, and have faithfully discharged to the very end the role expected from a loyal and trustworthy ally.

"This role of the *Blyskawica* has now been brought to an end as far as we are concerned.

"With heavy hearts, full of bitter disappointment and sorrow, all Polish sailors see you, the last crew of the *Blyskawica*, lowering the flag and leaving her decks.

"This does not mean, however, that we give up all hope and say good-bye to the *Blyskawica* for ever.

"The world is still shaking in its foundation, and the true peace, for which the whole of mankind is longing, seems still to be far off.

"We trust that a day will come, perhaps sooner than we might expect, when the *Blyskawica*, which to-day we must relinquish under the impact of circumstances, will survive this period of anxiety and anguish, through which we all live now, and will become again a ship of a truly free and independent Poland.

"Long live Poland.

"The Commander of the Polish Navy,
"SWIRSKI, *Vice-Admiral*."

Statement of the Council of Polish Political Parties

(London, 30th May 1946)

1. His Majesty's Government's decision concerning the future of the Polish armed forces determines the fate of the soldiers who took a solemn oath of allegiance to the Polish republic and to her legitimate authorities.

2. Poland took up arms against the German invader to defend not only her own soil and integrity but that of other European states as well. Poland fought an uneven battle, mindful of her pledge to Britain that she would not "conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement."

3. Despite Poland's well-known contribution to the war against Germany the Allied Governments expressed their opinion at Yalta Conference that the eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon Line, which was tantamount to the provisional cession to Russia of a territory which she obtained on the strength of the Russo-German treaties of 23rd August and 28th September 1939. Following the Yalta agreement the Allies withdrew their recognition of the legitimate Polish Government. Disregarding the sovereign rights of Poland these Powers agreed later, without the freely-expressed will of the Polish Nation, to the formation of the so-called Provisional Government of Warsaw. In fact the whole of Poland has been delivered to Soviet domination. This was determined upon in contradiction to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and regardless of numerous assurances given by the British Government that Britain's obligations towards Poland would be fulfilled. Decisions contrary to the letter and spirit of the Anglo-Polish Agreement, taken at that conference, without the knowledge and consent of the Polish Government, have not been and will not be recognised by the Polish Nation.

4. The Yalta decisions weigh disastrously on the fate of Poland and that of the other European countries. The so-called Provisional Government of Warsaw is but a foreign instrument to further the aims of a communist dictatorship in Poland. That government does not even conform with the conditions under which it has been rashly recognised.

Without an adequate reaction the Great Powers watch the systematic sovietisation of Poland and the activity of the Communist regime imposed on that country as—by use of terror—it drives on relentlessly to eradicate all elements representing independent opinion.

Poland's position is worse at present than that of Germany's satellites whose fate is to be finally settled by the forthcoming Peace Conference. Whatever their situation now is they can, at least, hope for the termination of the Soviet occupation.

5. The disbandment of the Polish armed forces at the present stage, before the Peace Conference has been convened and before even the conditions of Poland's existence as an independent state had been established, is a decision which will, obviously, furnish considerable encouragement to the Communist rulers of Poland.

6. If the present situation is allowed to exist it will lead inevitably to a still firmer establishment of Soviet rule in Central Europe and will tend to enhance Russia's potential, which will subsequently enable her to embark upon a new campaign of aggression.

7. In view of the present state of affairs in Poland and in Central Europe and in view of the effects it may have on the world's peace, the Polish Nation expects that the Peace Conference will introduce a new order into international relations in Europe, safeguarding the return of freedom and independence to Poland and to other subjugated nations.

8. So long as no decisive change comes about in Poland the overwhelming majority of members of the Polish armed forces abroad, former POW's and members of the Home Army and Polish Underground, as well as a large proportion of Polish displaced persons and refugees who endured the torture of German and Soviet concentration camps, will refuse to return to their homes, while a large number will not be able to go back without risking their very lives. The Allied Powers cannot dismiss this problem without due consideration.

9. The position in which large masses of Polish soldiers, displaced persons and refugees find themselves to-day creates the necessity of taking care not only of the demobilised men but of all the others whose return home has been rendered impossible under the present circumstances.

In view of this it is obvious that a special responsibility falls on the governments of Great Britain and the U.S.A. who were signatories of the Yalta Agreement.

The problem of the compulsory emigration of Poles, demobilised soldiers and civilians alike, must be considered as one.

We believe that Great Britain, whose history gives undeniable evidence of a true devotion to the cause of freedom and human rights, will not allow that a state of affairs be established in international relations contrary to the very essence of justice.

COUNCIL OF POLISH POLITICAL PARTIES.
Chairman: T. FILIPOWICZ.

And representatives of the Foreign Committee of the Polish Socialist Party, the Foreign Committee of the Democratic Party, the Foreign Committee of the Christian Labour Party, Peasant Party "Freedom" and the National Democratic Party.

Victory March (Polish Armed Forces)

Mr. Teeling asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs how many of the Polish airmen who took part in the Battle of Britain will take part in the Victory March on 8th June; how many of the Polish armed forces who fought side by side with the British forces, and who are now in this country, will take part; and what were the terms of the invitation to the Polish forces to take part.

Mr. McNeil: His Majesty's Government contemplate the inclusion in the R.A.F. contingent in the March of a representative party of twenty-five Polish airmen (including one officer) who fought in the Battle of Britain. There will be no separate representation of other Polish armed forces now in this country, since these do not form part of His Majesty's Forces, but the Polish Government have been invited to send a contingent of three high-ranking officers, three aides-de-camp or staff officers and a flag party of three men, followed by a detachment of twenty-four men representative of the Polish fighting services.

(*Hansard*, 21st May, 1946, Vol. 423, No. 143.)

Major Hugh Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he is aware that the contingent of Polish airmen he has invited to take part in the Victory Parade have refused to do so, in view of the absence from the Parade of any Polish sailors or Polish troops associated with His Majesty's forces, especially at Falaise and Monte Cassino; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. McNeil: I am aware of the difficulty referred to in the first part of the Question. Allied governments have been invited to send contingents for the Victory March, representative of their fighting services, and in response to that invitation the Polish Provisional Government are sending a contingent from Warsaw. His Majesty's Government still hope that it will also be possible for a party of Polish airmen who flew with the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain to be included in the Parade. While fully mindful of the magnificent services which were rendered by the Polish soldiers and sailors who fought side by side with His Majesty's forces and to which they gladly pay tribute, His Majesty's Government much regret that they do not see their way to arrange for them to be represented in the March.

(*Hansard*, 4th June 1946, Vol. 423, No. 153.)

Winston Churchill: Poland is denied all free expression of her national will. Her worst appetites of expansion are encouraged. At the same time she is held in strict control by a Soviet-dominated government who do not dare have a free election under the observation of representatives of the three or four Great Powers. The fate of

Poland seems to be unending tragedy, and we, who went to war, all ill-prepared, on her behalf, watch with sorrow the strange outcome of our endeavours. **I deeply regret that none of the Polish troops—and I must say this—who fought with us on a score of battlefields, who poured out their blood in the common cause, are to be allowed to march in the Victory Parade. They will be in our thoughts on that day. We shall never forget their bravery and martial skill, associated with our own glories at Tobruk, at Cassino and at Arnhem.**”

(*Hansard*, 5th June 1946, Vol. 423, No. 154.)

Poles Turn Down V-Day Invitation

Twenty-five Polish airmen, veterans of the Battle of Britain, who were to take part in the Victory Parade next Saturday, have now refused to participate.

The reason, according to Polish military circles, is that as their compatriots from General Anders' Army, the Polish Tank Corps and Polish Navy were not invited, they will abstain as well.

They prefer not to be the sole Polish representatives.

(*Sunday Chronicle*, 2nd June 1946.)

Poles Who Will Not Be There M.P.'s Protest Over Victory March

To the Editor of the Daily Telegraph.

SIR,

Polish dead lay in hundreds on Monte Cassino in 1944. The Poles fought at Tobruk, Falaise and Arnhem. Units of the Polish Navy took part in most of the major actions at sea from September 1939 to VJ Day. Polish fighter pilots shot down 772 German planes between July 1940 and VE Day.

The Polish Underground Army was the biggest and best organised in any of the occupied countries.

The Polish Army and Navy who fought under British command have not been invited to take part in the Victory March on 8th June.

Insult has been added to injury by asking the Polish Provisional Government, a non-elected government, to whom the men in the Polish armed forces outside Poland owe no allegiance, to send a contingent 'representative of the Polish Fighting Services'.

In view of the above it is not surprising that the Polish Air Force,

which was to have been represented by one officer and twenty-five men, has refused an invitation to take part in the March.

Ethiopians will be there; Mexicans will be there; the Fiji Medical Corps; the Labuan Police and the Seychelles Pioneer Corps will be there—and rightly, too.

The Poles will not be there.

Have we lost not only our sense of perspective but our sense of gratitude as well? We fear so.

Yours, etc.

TUFTON BEAMISH.
CONOLLY H. GAGE.
HINCHINGBROOKE.
E. H. KEELING.
JOHN MAITLAND.
CYRIL OSBORNE.
D. L. SAVORY.
E. A. TAYLOR.
W. M. F. VANE.
D. WALKER-SMITH.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

(*Daily Telegraph*, 5th June 1946.)

Opinions

GALLANT EXILES

. . . . When all is said and done, however, and even assuming that the best possible has been said and will be done, the disbandment of such a force in such conditions is a sad event. The first country to fall a victim to Nazi aggression is not the scene of any triumphant return of the sons who fought hardest and longest for her liberation. **Crusaders are to slip away into being civilians in exile.** At least individuals can do something to atone for the inevitable defects of policy, and help to ensure that as civilians they receive every chance of a happy and prosperous career.

(*Daily Telegraph*, 23rd May 1946.)

A FUTURE FOR THE POLES

Mr. Bevin's plan for the future of the Polish forces seems fair and sensible. After all the persuasion Warsaw and London could exercise, some 100,000 troops overseas and about 60,000 in Britain prefer to remain outside Poland. The British obligation to them is not in doubt. . . . **It is fortunate that the question of their demobilisation should come at a time when, particularly in agriculture and the coal mines, Britain is faced with a severe labour shortage.** There will presumably be no violent opposition from the trade unions (in spite of the hostility of the Communists to all non-returning Poles); but the T.U.C. will certainly ask for safeguards. . . .

(*Economist*, 25th May 1946.)

WILLING HANDS

. . . . It is generally accepted that we have assumed an obligation towards these Poles which we must discharge. They fought gallantly beside us at a time when we were hard pressed; now, through no fault of their own, they have become refugees and need our help. The problem has been how to demobilise them as a military force—a step which, politically and financially, is long overdue—while at the same time continuing to provide for them.

The proposals which the Government put before the House yesterday sound like a good practical compromise. . . .

(*News Chronicle*, 23rd May 1946.)

POLES IN EXILE

. . . . But the Polish soldiers are fit men in the prime of life, able to contribute their quota of hard and useful work to the reconstruction of the country which is to become their home. The sooner the Poles

can pass through the rather ambiguous but honourable status they will possess as members of the Resettlement Corps, and emerge trained to take their places as ordinary members of the community in its ordinary work, the better for all concerned. . . .

. . . . This country owes a debt of honour to these Polish forces, whose contribution to the common victory of the Allies was no small one, who fought so well and so long, on sea and in the air, and in so many lands. It will loyally accept the burden which the payment of that debt involves. **But Britain is not the only country whom the Poles helped to victory. . . .**

(*The Times*, 23rd May 1946.)

A DEBT REPAID

. . . . On the other hand we owe these men a debt which we must repay. We cannot forget their courage and sacrifice in the dark days of the war, and it is generally agreed that in all the Allied armies there were no braver men than the Poles. . . . **The majority are simple, decent men who have suffered much hardship in the Allied cause.** If some of them bear a grudge against the Soviet Union the fault is not necessarily on one side. . . .

(*Manchester Guardian*, 23rd May 1946.)

POLISH TROOPS

. . . . **The choice before the Poles is between exile and return to a country dominated by Russia. Mr. Bevin's figures are not surprising. Some 29,800 have chosen to go back. About 160,000 remain. . . .**

. . . . What is desirable but difficult of achievement is that these men who have fought with us for freedom should be regarded as having earned the right to be treated as far as possible as British citizens. Britain has benefited from the presence of foreign immigrants in the past. It may be that she could do so again. There is, of course, another side to the story in the existence of a not altogether unjustified xenophobia in some districts. But can this country expel from its protection men who have served the common cause, as the Polish forces have done? In the resettlement corps they will be under British law and not under alien jurisdiction, which is an advantage. . . . Our power does not extend far enough to secure for these men the certainty of political freedom in their own country. We ought to do what we can to give them the possibility of shaping their lives in freedom within our own political system.

(*Scotsman*, 23rd May 1946.)

POLES IN EXILE

. . . . But it is painfully clear—and not only to the Poles—that if they did return the least of their troubles would be economic. **The present**

Government in Poland have not a notably encouraging record, either in their attitude to potential repatriates or in their treatment of political opponents. Their stubborn refusal to hold the long-promised free elections is of itself sufficient to daunt many who would wish to opt for return. . . .

(Glasgow Herald, 21st May 1946.)

POLAND'S ARMY

. . . . No people on the side of the Allies during the war did more for the common cause than the Poles. Although they found themselves between the upper and the nether millstones they fought fiercely at home and abroad; **and it is a remarkable fact that Poland was the only occupied country that never produced a "Quisling". . . .**

. . . . It is encouraging to learn, however, that the British intend to do their best for those Polish troops who do not wish to go home. Very properly, as we think, Mr. Bevin refuses to entertain Mr. Churchill's suggestion of a kind of Polish Foreign Legion, which promptly would be dubbed a "White Guard" by the Russians. The Poles have had enough of fighting. They deserve at least to be enabled to live out their unhappy exile in peace.

(Irish Times, 25th May 1946.)

"The Polish Nation has not yet regained its freedom, although it was the first to start the armed struggle against both the Prototalitarian powers—the Nazis and the Soviets. The whole world knows that Poland to-day is ruled by servile agents of Moscow, having nothing in common with the Polish action from Narvik to Cassino.

"We do not intend to be forced into a system foreign and hostile to us, and shall therefore remain faithful to our Allies, even against their will.

"GENERAL ANDERS."

(11th June 1946.)

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