

THE WARSAW UPRISING—THE VIEW FROM LUBLIN

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In the last days of July 1944 Operation Tempest came to the province of Lublin. Tempest, the culmination of years of planning for the moment when resistance would become insurrection, was put into effect over a six-day period at the end of the month and helped the AK to play a significant part in the liberation of their region. The importance of this operation in Lublin lay in the fact that the province was in territory that both the Soviet Union and the Polish government-in-exile agreed was Polish. With this in mind central command had ordered the AK *Delegatura* in Lublin to fight alongside the Soviets and then to busy themselves by reconstructing their government once the Germans were cleared. The central idea of this was to impress on the Soviets the fact that the exiled government was exiled no longer. Yet the AK's policy of disclosure did not work, neither in Lublin nor in the east. It meant that the intelligence the Soviets had gained from local AL and Soviet partisan units was massively expanded—disclosure was to reveal to the NKVD thousands of AK partisans in the region. Yet this first wave of arrests did not destroy the AK in Lublin. 'Marcin' the regional AK commander had been worried enough about the Soviets to order the creation of a secret reserve command in June. Whilst disclosure was to fail, the AK's decision to hand in weapons and disperse its forces meant that a significant number of his troops were able to avoid the first wave of arrests. Therefore the arrival of the Soviets did not herald the end of an organized underground in the province. Rather in the first few days the NKVD was occupied with the soldiers taken after Tempest, in clearing the rear of the front and reconnoitering the region.

It was against this backdrop that the uprising in Warsaw was launched. This event was to have a significantly disruptive effect on the Lublin region. The effects were immediate with the removal of the remaining AK *Delegatura* figures from the towns of the province. Equally the uprising in Warsaw raised huge questions of the men that had avoided the first wave of arrests. Across the region, area commands and individual units held discussions on whether to help their comrades in the capital. In the event many of them did go and merely walked into Soviet forces, seriously undermining 'Marcin's' hopes to weather the storm. This allied with the fact that the eastern front was to unexpectedly halt to the west of the province for nearly six months, meant that 'Marcin's' idea was to be destroyed—without guidance from London the regional AK had to attempt to survive NKVD arrests in a weakened state whilst also going to Warsaw's aid.

Yet the underground that did remain, much weakened as it was, was able to retain its structure and to redirect some of its activities much as 'Marcin' had hoped to. 'Marcin's' successor, Żak, after witnessing Soviet

actions in Lublin firsthand, was to become a convinced believer that a Third World War was coming between democracy and communism. As such he reoriented the activities of Lublin AK's intelligence and propaganda agency, the BIP, to resist the moves of the communists in the region. Recruitment to the Berling Army was resisted, desertion encouraged and infiltration of the PKWN organised. Due to the early weakness and division of the PKWN, AK forces were able to penetrate many of the new structures of the fledgling administration, including even the security services. The PKWN's early attempts to reach out to elements of the underground did not have the immediate effects that they hoped for therefore. Rather as the uprising in Warsaw went on without serious Soviet help, the people of the province became increasingly polarised. Equally for the NKVD in the province, it took them time to establish their base, to extend their intelligence networks and to familiarise themselves with the whole of the region. As a result during the first few months of the Soviet presence in the region they were not able to cut off AK radio communications, nor destroy its command networks in Lublin. By the end of the period of the Warsaw Uprising the AK in Lublin was still very much operational.

By the summer of 1944, the Lublin district of the Home Army had become one of its strongest. Z. Mankowski and I. Caban estimate that the total strength of the Lublin AK at the beginning of Tempest was around the 60,000 mark.¹ In addition to this force the 27th Volhynian Division also reinforced the region's numbers, as its campaign trail had brought it through Lublin. In total around 12,000 armed AK partisans in Lublin were to fight to clear the province of its German occupiers between July 20th and July 26th.² Quite often the AK and the Red Army were fighting shoulder to shoulder throughout the province at the end of July and in total underground partisan forces in the Lublin region were to launch around 150 raids during Tempest. This yielded, in military terms, 1,000 German dead, 1,200 German soldiers captured, seven enemy tanks destroyed, 31 enemy armoured cars captured or destroyed, and 24 guns and mortars captured or destroyed. Whilst it would be a gross exaggeration to state that the Lublin AK liberated their province, they did play their part, taking numerous towns and villages across the region, sometimes by themselves or more often in conjunction with other forces.

Once Part A of Tempest in Lublin had been fulfilled, Part B, the re-establishment of independent Polish government in the province was put into action. In the city of Lublin itself, from the 25th of July onwards the AK

¹ Z. Mankowski and I. Caban, 'Związek Walki Zbrojnej i Armia Krajowa w Okręgu Lubelskim 1939-44', (Lublin 1971), pp. 259-274.

² M. Ney-Krwawicz, 'The Polish Home Army 1939-1945', (PUMST 2001), p. 68.

Delegatura was busy attempting to re-establish the apparatus of government. On the 25th Władysław Cholewa, 'Paśnik', read out a proclamation in the city centre announcing that the legal Polish authorities were now in power in the city. The new headquarters of the local government, the *Miejska Rada Jedności Narodowej* (MRJN), was on the city's main street, at number 51 Krakowskie Przedmieście. It was a central and symbolic choice of location, at the heart of the city, within a stone throw of the city's old town. It was a clear declaration to the people of Lublin and to the Soviet forces in the city that the exiled government was exiled no longer. As ordered, the AK *Delegatura* was making a resounding declaration to their Soviet liberators that this was Polish territory and that it was the Polish government. Along with the declaration the news was posted on walls, doors and notice boards throughout the city. In addition to this announcement, the serious work of attempting to create government began. Units of the PKB, *Panstwowy Korpus Bezpieczeństwa*, became the city's new police force, and started patrolling the city. One of the new government's key roles was to station PKB men outside key public buildings and to ensure that basic services could continue running. As a part of this the new police force was placed outside the gas, electricity and railway stations, along with the city's abandoned shops to prevent looting. On the same day the commander of the PKB in Lublin, 'Adam' announced that PKB units were to take immediate control of policing in 60% of the region, and in accordance with their orders not to work with the Polish communists, that the new police force were to disarm any Poles that were not part of a force subordinated to the AK or PKB.³

Equally the AK forces in the city, which had been led by 'Konrad' during the fighting in the absence of Stefan Dębicki, 'Kmicic', formally revealed themselves. 'Kmicic' set up a new headquarters for the city command at number 4 Ulica Górna, which was about a five-minute walk from the new MRJN base. Despite the fact that his men in the city had been disarmed on the 23rd, a Polish flag was hung outside the building, in an overt display of their intentions to establish themselves as the clear government force. Throughout the 26th and the 27th the process of the installation of government continued with the appointment of an official town president and the appointment of ministers for public institutions and industry. The *Delegatura* even began printing, with a new agency, *Lubelska Agencja Informacyjna*, being created. As the *Delegatura* was now attempting to fulfil its long held aim to return as the government, so the local AK was beginning to return to the role of a conventional armed force. At least this process can be seen to have begun in the announcement by the new

³ P. Gawryszczak, 'Podziemie polityczno-wojskowe w Inspektoracie Lublin w latach 1944-1956', (Lublin 1998) pp. 37-40.

government of the re-establishment of the army and its calls for a regional mobilisation into the Lubelski Battalion. This was the first stage of the R.A.F. (Reconstitution of the Armed Forces) plan that had been planned during the German occupation, and it was a plan that, according to the AK, met with a strong initial response.⁴

The next day, July 27th, can be seen to be one of the most crucial days in the history of the province. At the beginning of the day the central commands in Lublin, both civilian and military, were still operating freely and openly expanding government and recruiting new men to their cause. By nightfall however the picture would look very different. The key to this change was the swing in the weight of numbers between communist and non-communist forces in the city during the day.

On the morning of the 27th the Armia Ludowa started concentrating their units surrounding Lublin and entered the city in a conspicuous show of force. On the same day units of the Berling Army started to enter the city. The entrance of large Polish communist forces inspired local communist groups within the city that had previously remained quiet to set up People's National Unions. Just as ominously, even though Radio Moscow had announced the creation of their new Polish puppet committee, the PKWN in Chełm on July 21st, in reality it was from the 27th that this communist alternative was functioning in Lublin's eastern city. After the events of the 27th therefore, Lublin must have seemed a very different place.

Shortly after the arrival of the Berling Army in Lublin, the regional delegate of the PKB, Józef Dolina, 'Zych', was invited to Berling's headquarters for a meeting. In this meeting it was demanded that the PKB forces in the city subjugate themselves to the command of the local AL commander, now in the city, Korczyński. Dolina replied that he could only follow the orders of the legal authorities, and Berling said that that being the case he would meet with 'Paśnik' himself at 13.00. This promise was never kept. Instead on the night of the 27th and 28th the *Delegatura's* new government building on Krakowskie Przedmieście was stormed and captured by Berling's forces.⁵

On the same day 'Marcin' had been invited to a conference with the commander of the Soviet 69th Army, General Kolpaczka, in which he was faced with the option of joining his forces to the Berling army or being

⁴ A.G. Kister, 'Komenda Okręgu Lublin; Armii Krajowej 1944 roku', (Warsaw 2000), pp. 111-115.

⁵ Kister p. 115.

disarmed. 'Marcin' chose the later of the two options. He decided to disperse his troops, however both he and his officers continued in talks with the Soviets and were kept under guard until July 29th. In taking this option, 'Marcin', was following the orders given to him on July 12th by central command. In these orders, he had been told to resist recruitment into the Berling Army and that only 'in the last extremity' was he to disband units and stash arms.⁶ It is not known what was said at the meeting but it must have given 'Marcin' the feeling that his forces were facing the last extremity. During the meeting, General Kolpaczka had asked 'Marcin' when he was given the order to fight the Germans. Further from this Kolpaczka asked him when he was given the order to attack Soviet units. Naturally, as no such order had been given, 'Marcin' denied this claim.⁷ When added to the news that his forces were being disarmed in Lubartów and Hrubieszów, this line of questioning must have confirmed for the regional commander that he was in an incredibly difficult position—disarming and dispersal would at least save the bulk of his forces from being targeted by the NKVD.

Therefore the order to disarm and disperse was given, and around 1,000 soldiers of the AK in Lublin City handed in their weapons to the Soviets on the 28th on Ulica Narutowicza.⁸ These weapons were given over to local AL units who would ultimately form the core of the communist police force in the region, the MO.⁹ The AK units in the rest of the province would follow, but some not until August. Most importantly however, it meant that all across the province, AK units that had not yet come into contact with the NKVD were to stash their arms and return to their homes. 'Marcin's' report back to London on July 31st is very telling as to why he took the second option presented by the Soviets.

Alarm – Marcin.

Although the Soviets attitude towards the AK is bad I feel that it is crucial to reveal our units in other areas. It proves that our posture is correct. It will open Soviet eyes to the fact that we are the true rulers of the area. There is no result of recruitment

⁶ 'Documents on Polish-Soviet relations 1939-1945, Volume II 1943-1945', (Heineman London 1967), pp. 284-285

⁷ 'Depesza Szyfr number 517/VV/999, wanda 1', sent 3rd August 1944, received in London on 3rd August 1944. PUMST London.

⁸ 'Charakterystyka nr 5 nielegalnej organizacji AK-WiN obwodu Lublin-Miasto działającej w okresie od lipca 1944 do kwietnia 1947', p. 6, From the IPN archive, Lublin.

⁹ Gawryszczak, pp. 37-40.

to the Berling Army. This is a brilliant social attitude. The KRN can be seen to be a complete fiasco.¹⁰

From the archival evidence available, 'Marcin' seems to have believed that in the face of the Soviet stance his forces would adopt a position of passive resistance and refuse to mobilise into a Soviet controlled army. This sense of waiting for the first wave of Soviet repression to pass and to allow Anglo-Saxon diplomacy to be brought to bear, is equally clear in another message that the command had sent back to London on the evening of July 29th. In this cipher the command talks about being squeezed by the 2 million Soviet troops that were coming into the province and how the Soviet aim was to 'freeze out' the Anglo-Saxons in a policy of AK destruction that was about 'interference in the name of power'.¹¹ The logic of 'Marcin's' response was dictated by several assumptions therefore. That first the Red Army would continue its advance through eastern and central Poland as quickly as it had done through western Ukraine. Secondly that ultimately the Anglo-Saxon powers would intervene to stop the destruction of their Polish allies, and finally that the attempts of the Polish communists to recruit men and create a government were unfeasible—there seemed to be no support for this either at home or abroad. To 'Marcin', the AK had to remain open to weather the storm, and the Soviets would eventually change their stance. Disbandment meant that most of his forces would stand a chance of surviving what was probably hoped to be a short-lived period of misunderstanding between the allied powers.

In addition to the logic of dispersing his forces, 'Marcin' and the Lublin command had clearly expected that the Soviets would be hostile to their attempts restore the government-in-exile in the province. It is not known when the order was issued but at some point between late June and early July, 'Marcin' had ordered that a shadow command be created in the province, so that in the event of his arrest by the Soviets the Lublin AK would still be able to function. Lublin was not alone in the creation of a shadow command, other regions were to adopt this fall-back position. What is important is the fact that in the middle of 1944, the decision to establish a shadow command was very pragmatic, and allied with the decision to disperse forces, it meant that the initial wave of Soviet arrests did not destroy the AK in Lublin.

¹⁰ 'Depesza Szyfr number 14/XXX, wanda 28', sent 31st July 1944, received in London 1st August 1944. PUMST London.

¹¹ 'Depesza Szyfr number 1467/XXX/2/999, wanda 7', sent 29th July 1944, received in London 29th July 1944. PUMST London.

The pragmatism of this approach to the Soviets was borne out in the events of the next few days. With the PKWN waiting in place in Chełm, a matter of miles to the east, in the city of Lublin the *Delegatura*'s governmental apparatus was being dismantled. On July 28th the local PKB delegate was summoned to the Soviets and in front of two witnesses, the demand for the subjugation of the PKB was repeated. This time 'Zych' decided to disarm and disband the PKB—from now on the *Delegatura* had no effective police force, it had no way of enforcing its law on the city it was attempting to govern. Whilst the storming of the *Delegatura*'s headquarters the night before had not signalled the end of their administration, the disarming of the PKB represented the symbolic end. In response to the closure of their offices on Krakowskie Przedmieście, the *Delegatura* had moved to number 7 Ulica Chopina, but by the evening of the 28th this building had been captured as well. The leaders of both the AK and the *Delegatura* were arrested within days of this.¹²

The NKVD had been given specific orders to effectively destroy AK forces in Lublin from the very moment that they had stepped into the region on July 20th—they were to impress officers and put AK other ranks and NCOs into the Berling Army.¹³ The day after this order, on the 21st of July, NKVD units operating in the area received another order that assigned sections of this force to creating and controlling holding centres, or prison camps, for local AK units. These camps were to be created rapidly in areas where the NKVD had met AK forces at the end of July. By July 1944 this had become standard operating procedure for the NKVD, clearing non-Soviet forces from the rear of the front. Therefore virtually all of the forces that had held talks with the NKVD/Soviet Army in July were to be *filtered* in this manner. For example the 27th Division and elements of the 8th Infantry had met with Soviet forces in the village of Skrobów outside of Lubartów after Tempest. This meant that within hours a NKVD unit under the command of General Fokanov had arrived along with ultimatums and arrests.

Once the ultimatums of disarm or join Berling were given to this AK force, the NKVD had to create a holding centre for the thousands of soldiers there. According to AK sources in the first weeks of August around 6,000 men were held at this temporary camp near Lubartow. Once camps such as Skrobów were liquidated, the prisoners were deported to the USSR or sent to Lublin with NKVD minders to begin their role in the forces of People's Poland.¹⁴

¹² Kister, p. 115.

¹³ N. Davies, 'Rising '44; the battle for Warsaw', (Macmillan 2003) p.475.

¹⁴ J. Wołoszyn, 'Charakterystyka niemieckiej i sowieckiej polityki terroru wobec społeczeństwa i podziemia zbrojnego na Lubelszczyźnie w latach

These initial arrests however were not focused on the whole of Polish society—the NKVD were mechanically removing the non-communist armed groups, whose presence they were aware of, from the rear of the Red Army. The reasoning behind the NKVD's policies in the region were that the force under the command of Ivan Serov was there to clear the areas to the rear of the Soviet advance. The fact that Serov was sent to Lublin after leading the arrests in Soviet-claimed territory is indicative of the continuity of the NKVD's policy towards the AK.¹⁵ Therefore there was no tangible difference in the treatment received by the AK in Lvov or Lublin, they were behind Soviet lines and therefore must be neutralised—it did not matter that they were part of a force that was allied to an ally of the Soviet Union.¹⁶ During the first days of the Soviet occupation the NKVD were primarily occupied by two aims; to disarm the independence underground and force AK other ranks into the Berling Army. With Operation Tempest the AK had enabled the NKVD to seemingly achieve these aims very quickly, within days of the Germans leaving the top commanders of the region would be arrested and after 'Marcin's' dispersal order, the other AK units in the region had returned to their hiding places. After the fighting to clear the Germans from the province many AK units and the cryptonyms of their members became known to the NKVD. This was to mean that in the first few days of the occupation Soviet security forces were able to compile lists of AK officers and their cryptonyms—information that would ultimately prove to be vital.¹⁷ In many senses therefore it was primarily due to 'Marcin's' order to disperse that the AK was able to continue in organised strength at all after Tempest.

1939-1947', 'Podziemie zbrojne na Lubelszczyźnie wobec dwóch totalitaryzmów 1939-1956', (IPN conference, Warsaw 2002), p. 24

¹⁵ On 6th and 7th July 7,000 AK soldiers under the command of 'Wilk' in Vilna had successfully launched Operation 'Ostra Brama'—the liberation of the city. The operation reached its successful conclusion on the 13th and 14th of July. 'Wilk' signed an agreement with the commander of the Soviet 3rd Byelorussian Front to create a Polish Home Army Corps. On the 17th 'Wilk' was told by the Soviet commander that the agreement was now void and that his men must hand in their weapons and his officers detained. After this Ivan Serov as head of the NKVD forces in the region oversaw the arrests and destruction of most of the AK in Vilna and then Lvov. Lublin, on Soviet-recognised Polish soil was his next assignment.

¹⁶ Wołoszyn, pp. 20-24.

¹⁷ Kister, pp. 64-65.

It was set against this background, with the regional commander under guard, some of its men in the hands of the NKVD and with the others dispersed and returning home, that the central command in Warsaw launched their uprising in the capital.

The outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising sent shock waves through the ranks of the PKWN in Chelm. If the uprising were to succeed then Stalin, the Red Army and the PKWN would themselves be presented with a *fait accompli*. The response to this was to begin arresting more members of the underground. 'Marcin' was arrested on August 3rd and only an Adjutant, Antoni Wiczorek returned from the meeting with the Soviets in the city of Lublin. The NKVD had released him in order to return with the vice-commander of the region Franciszek Żak. Wiczorek informed the command about the meeting but he was not sure what had happened to 'Marcin'. There followed a period of inaction by the shadow command that was probably due to their attempts to understand what was happening in Lublin and how best to combat this. At least part of the shadow command was composed of new officers and was based in Tartak, near Lubartów, around 25 kilometres north of Lublin City. Those officers that remained from before changed their pseudonyms. The arrests of key figures in the Lublin underground were to take place across the region in the first week of August. For example, to the south in Zamość on the 4th of August the *Delegatura* leader, 'Wiącek', was forced to leave his post in favour of a member of the Polish Worker's Party, Dubiel.¹⁸

Within two weeks of arriving in the region, on August 11th, the NKVD sent out their first groups of deportees from Świdnik to Kiev. Amongst the first people deported from the Lublin region were around 40 members of the local AK *Delegatura* and eight officers of the AL.¹⁹ It is unknown when the NKVD began using the recently-vacated German concentration camp at Majdanek to house captured AK soldiers, but it is certain that the camp began its new use at some point during the first two weeks of August. Janina Kiełboń estimates that it was probably on August 8th that the camp received its first batch of AK inmates—ten officers from the 3rd Infantry Division. From this time onwards, new prisoners were to arrive virtually every day into the camp. Very quickly another two branch camps were set up at Poniatowa and Krzesimów to deal with these numbers. This first phase of repression lasted until mid-August and saw the leaders of the AK *Delegatura* in Lublin, 'Marcin' and 'Paśnik' be sent to *Gulag* camps in the interior of the USSR—a fate that most of the inmates of Majdanek in

¹⁸ Z. Klukowski, 'Red Shadow; A Physician's Memoir of the Soviet Occupation of Eastern Poland, 1944-1956', (MacFarland 1997), p.8.

¹⁹ Wołoszyn, pp. 23-25.

the summer of 1944 would share.²⁰ Yet not all of the soldiers arrested were sent directly to Majdanek. By the middle of August, to process the arrests in the province the NKVD had set up five centres in and around the City of Lublin. In the city itself, the NKVD was operating from number 18 Ulica Chopina, 10 Ulica Świętoduska and 10 Ulica Skłodowska from the beginning of the month. In addition to this, Lublin Castle, recently vacated by the Gestapo, was being used as a NKVD prison by the middle of the month.²¹

Yet it must be stressed that the NKVD's ability to install PKWN men in Lublin province was still very much limited to the larger towns and cities of the south-east. Elsewhere, as 'Marcin' had suggested it seemed possible to weather the storm. From the second week of August though the NKVD was making its presence felt more and more—removing the *Delegatura* and replacing them with officials loyal to the PKWN. What can be seen to be happening is that given the weakness of the new Polish communist government and the polarising backdrop of the Warsaw Uprising, the NKVD increasingly took to policing the region in August 1944—it moved beyond its original remit to remove reactionary elements. The regional AK command noted in a report to London on the 4th of August that the NKVD were already beginning 'their work' in the regions cities and yet the same report states that at this time the 'Soviets' were operating in only some of the regions outlying areas. This is something that is often repeated in the messages sent back to London during the first half of August 1944. In the first weeks of the Soviet occupation the NKVD was a foreign force with little knowledge of the area and was without a sizeable Polish security force to liaise with. As the NKVD began to move out from their original bases in the towns of Lublin, and reconnoitre the outlying terrain, their ability to restrict and stop the governmental working and military activities of the AK *Delegatura* massively increased. This discrepancy between the experiences of the region's AK forces was not to last. To highlight the spread of the NKVD it is instructive to show how these reports back to London help to show how their reach was spreading across the terrain of Lubelszczyzna during the first half of August 1944:

'Sent to London on August 4th

²⁰l. Caban, 'Okręg Armii Krajowej Lublin', (Lublin 1996), p. 71.

²¹ J. Kiełboń, 'Dokumenty dotyczące obozu NKWD na Majdanku (1944)', 'Zeszyty Majdanka; Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku Towarzystwo Opieki nad Majdankiem XIX', Published documents and essays from the Majdanek archive, (Lublin 1998), pp. 98-105.

In the towns the work of the NKVD is starting, and in some villages the Soviets are operating'²²

'Sent to London on August 13th

In Łuck and Włodzimierz mobilization of Poles to Berling, Ukrainians to Soviet Army'²³

'Sent to London on August 17th

On 12th August the Government delegate in Tomaszów Lubelski was arrested along with 235 personnel'²⁴

'Sent to London on August 19th

Registration of officers and cadet officers in the counties of Zamość, Krasnystaw, Tomaszów, Biłgoraj'²⁵

'Sent to London on August 19th by the AK regional commander Żak

Mass arrests are taking place throughout the whole region by the NKVD'²⁶

In most of these reports it was stated that as communist 'government' was expanding, it was done so at the point of a NKVD rifle. On the 4th they were beginning their work, and by the 19th the regional commander could report that 'their work' was being repeated throughout the area of his command. In practice this meant that towns throughout the region were now receiving the same treatment as Lublin. Zygmunt Klukowski, an AK information officer in Szczebrzeszyn, recorded in his diary how the communist administration was slowly spreading out from its base in Lublin to the province's main towns:

August 20th, 1944- Sunday

The Soviets are slowly widening their influence. A Russian colonel travelling with the chief of the county National Liberation Committee, Dubiel, inspected the communes. He stopped in Szczebrzeszyn. We have here now a Soviet city

²² 'Depesza Szyfr, number 553/vvv/999, wanda 1', sent on 4th August and received in London on the same day 1944. PUMST London.

²³ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 22/2/xxx, mewa de 28', sent on 13th August 1944, and received on the same day 1944. PUMST London.

²⁴ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 11/xxx/999, Wanda 77', sent 17th August 1944, received in London on 18th August 1944. PUMST London.

²⁵ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 12/xxx/999, Wanda 77', sent on 19th August 1944, received in London on the same day 1944. PUMST London.

²⁶ 'L.dz.7081/tjn.44, Odpis Depeszy z okr. Lublin', sent on 19th August 1944. PUMST London.

commandant who is not only in charge of all military activities but also heads the city administration.

An NKVD officer took over three rooms of the Zamoyski Estate and also seems very much interested in the cellars, probably as a future prison. The inhabitants of Zwierzyniec are obviously extremely disturbed about this.²⁷

On August 23rd the *Stavka* had sent Soviet War Commanders to be appointed over every village, town and large town in Lublin. Their orders were precise and clear; they were to work only with the PKWN, their representatives and officials and no other group. In Zamość the NKVD had by the middle of August set up a prison in the city. Arrested Poles were put in a cold house, next to the butchers on Ulica Radziecki.²⁸ Aside from this, the NKVD during the first months of the occupation also set up camps at Chełm, Łuków, Radzyń, Krasków Włodawa and later outside the village of Susiec in the far south of the province.²⁹ Over 200 AK officers alone were sent to the camp at Majdanek during the first weeks of August, where they were held in *Pole III*, this number would eventually be much higher. The interned AK men were held next to the German POWs in *Pole IV* that they had perhaps helped to capture less than a month before. The efficiency at which large numbers of people were arrested and deported was truly impressive, on 23rd August around 250 officers and cadet-officers of the AK were taken from *Pole III* of Majdanek and under armed guard were forced onto 40 freight wagons from which they were deported to the Soviet Union. This was the largest single deportation out of Lublin in the first two months of the Soviet occupation.³⁰ At a stroke the NKVD had removed many of the AK's most experienced and respected officers from Lublin. In total eight transports deported around 400 AK *Delegatura* officers from Majdanek during August and September 1944 to the Soviet Union.³¹

It was against this backdrop that the AK regional commander Żak ordered the reorientation of his forces. Due to the creation of a shadow command and the dispersal order, the AK in Lublin was able to return to underground activities very quickly but not immediately. Whilst the initial impact of the post-Tempest arrests had been offset by the creation of the shadow command, the sheer number of Soviet troops in Lublin at this

²⁷ Klukowski, p. 15.

²⁸ Wołoszyn, p. 25.

²⁹ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 153/2/VV, wanda 77', sent on September 13th 1944 and received in London on 14th August 1944. PUMST London.

³⁰ Kiełboń, pp. 108-112.

³¹ Caban, p. 71.

point meant that whilst the regional command was still in contact with the Inspectorates, communications had been severely reduced. For example this was particularly acute in the Pulawy Inspectorate, which was to be home to a section of the new front line for nearly five months. In the light of this situation concerted action during the first days of August was very difficult.

Yet not all the work of the organisation had been stalled by the entry of the Soviets. For example in August Kazimierz Stępnia, codenamed 'Witek', and 'Witold', commanded an underground cell that was based at Ulica Dominikanski 5. Along with Mieczysław Zurawski, 'Włoczega', and Bohdan Kossowski, 'Zaorski', 'Witek' worked intensively forging fake identity papers and documents for underground members. In particular, this unit was responsible for issuing false papers to those members of the 27th Volhynian Division that had evaded capture by the Soviets at the end of July. To the north in the Biąta Podlaska area, elements of the 30th would still be in a position to attempt a march to Warsaw fully armed on the 12th. Equally, whilst the Red Army and NKVD were in the town of Biąta Podlaska itself, 'Marcin's' order to dismiss had not yet been enacted. According to the commander of the 34th, 'Roman', 'Marcin's' order was to be enacted on the morning of August 12th. As a part of it, the 34th and 35th were to return to their original place of concentration, stash their arms and appoint officers to liaise with the local Soviet command. To fulfil this, the 34th marched to Biąta Podlaska and the 35th marched to Łuków. Due to the fact that at this point the AK in this region still had a large degree of operational independence *vis-à-vis* the incoming Soviets, they were able to successfully stash most of their arms.³² This was not just confined to Biąta Podlaska either. In Lubartów the area's three largest partisan units the 'Brzechwa', 'Lekarz' and 'Uskok' units had avoided the incoming NKVD after Tempest, stashed their weapons in the woods and returned home. The weapons held by these groups were considerable at the beginning of August 1944. As well as the 200 weapons that each of the groups had possessed in July, during Tempest they had taken a German Army supply train in Lubartów, thus adding around another 100 weapons to their ranks. A similar tale happened in the Puławy Inspectorate where the vast majority of units did not hand in their weapons at all, and had also stashed them and returned home.³³

³² Z. Gnat-Wieteska, '30 Poleska Dywizja Piechoty Armii Krajowej', (Pruszkow 1993), pp. 81-86.

³³ From 'Charakterystyka nr 87 komendy Okregu Lublin nielegalnej organizacji "Armia Krajowa" /sierpień 1944-wrzesień 1945/ Część I/ opisowa/ Lublin-wrzesień 1984r.', p. 40, IPN archive Lublin.

By the middle of August the NKVD were firmly established in Lublin at number 18 Ulica Chopina and the city itself was now a very dangerous place for members of the AK *Delegatura*. Żak spent the rest of 1944 hiding in many different safe houses throughout the city. In particular, he used the flat of the Adjutant commander, Witold Engelking, throughout September and October. However, just as the AK command had done during the German occupation, they used a large network of safe houses to rotate and hide their commanders—this was to aid the organisation's ability to survive the first wave of NKVD-led repression. One such place was a church that was situated in the same district of Lublin as Engelking's flat, the 10th District.³⁴ The church was probably a centre of underground activity at this time, but the records, are as Anna Grażyna Kister points out, not definite on this.

Aside from the aforementioned safe houses, Żak used the following to meet with other members of the regional AK command in the period between August and November 1944: Apartments 1, 2, and 4 Ulica Kapucyński, an apartment on the corner of Nowy Świat and Bychawski, apartment 1 number 22 Ulica Lubartowska, number 58 apartment 5 Krakowskie Przedmieście, number 25 apartment 22 Ulica Karmelicka, number 9 apartment 1 Ulica Przemyslowejn and several rooms at the Catholic University. The fact that the AK command in Lublin used so many safe houses in the summer and early autumn of 1944 points to two things: clearly the new Soviet occupation was becoming as far reaching as the German one that it had so recently replaced, and secondly that the local AK had no shortage of locals who were willing to risk themselves by providing safe houses for the underground. Indeed the flat at number 58 Krakowskie Przedmieście was virtually opposite the new headquarters of Poland's communist government, the PKWN.³⁵

On August 10th an officer meeting took place in a flat in the city of Lublin, after which 'Nurt', the Lublin Inspectorate commander ordered all members in his area to remain in organised underground units and to resist the call up to the Berling Army.³⁶ Żak sent a series of commands to his subordinates starting from August 2nd that talked about the need to maintain operations. In each of these orders, constant reference is made to the 'legal government in London', and to the support of the Anglo-Saxon allies. For example on August 21st in a command that was sent to all

³⁴ Kister, p. 120.

³⁵ Kister, p. 121.

³⁶ From 'Charakterystyka nr 5 nielegalnej organizacji AK-WiN obwodu Lublin-miasto działającej w okresie od lipca 1944 do kwietnia 1947', p. 31, IPN archive Lublin.

Lublin region AK and BCh commanders he ordered that the PKWN should be boycotted and that it was their duty to resist call up to the Berling Army. In most of these orders he finished with:

'Soldiers!
We must follow the commands of the rightful government.
Long live Poland!' ³⁷

In these reports it is clear that the regional command increasingly believed that conflict between East and West was becoming inevitable and that the Lublin AK should prepare for this. The longer the uprising in Warsaw went without Soviet aid, the stronger in tone Żak's orders become. As part of this changing stance, from the beginning of August Bureau II of the AK command in the region reoriented its work towards the activities of the Red Army, PKWN, Berling Army and NKVD. By the autumn of that year the framework of a counter-intelligence operation had been established by Bureau II. Captain Antoni Wiczorek, 'Ścibor', later known as 'Kaktus', headed the counter intelligence unit in August. This unit was able to penetrate the workings of the fledgling communist organisation. During the period of the Warsaw Uprising unit II was able to receive hotchpotch information from workers in the Department of Public security, *Resort Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, a part of the PKWN. These contacts, along with men working around the area of the building, also enabled Bureau II to gain information on the activities of the NKVD at 18 Ulica Chopina, and at Lublin Castle. In addition to this, appointments to the PKWN's Department of Public Security and the Berling Army were monitored along with the movements of troops through the area and the attitude of the population towards these events.³⁸ Below the regional level the Lublin City BIP created a special section whose remit it was to infiltrate the workings of the PKWN. This unit was led by Zbigniew Flisowski, 'Mochort', until October 1944 and was able to successfully infiltrate the WP, UBP, MO and PKWN in the region. The city AK also created diversionary groups that were ordered to disrupt the installation of the communist administration. By the end of September 1944 in Lublin City there were three platoons of 24 people in such units.³⁹

It is clear then from the archival evidence that contacts between regional Inspectorate and *obwod* command were able to continue despite the

³⁷ From 'Charakterystyka-Geneza Powstania nr 2 AK-WiN powiat Lubartów', p. 7, IPN archive Lublin.

³⁸ Kister, pp. 130-133.

³⁹ From 'Charakterystyka nr 5 nielegalnej organizacji AK-WiN obwodu Lublin-miasto', IPN Archive Lublin, p. 24.

best efforts of the NKVD. In addition, many of the region's radio transmitters were still operational during the period of the Warsaw Uprising, meaning that a game of cat and mouse between the NKVD and the regional AK's wireless groups was taking place across the province. On the night of July 30th the NKVD had managed to capture one of Lublin City's transmitters and arrest its two operators, Antoni Kudela, 'Mis', and Piotr Potasiński, 'Cygan'. On August 20th Leon Rembarz, 'Dołęga', a member of the local AK's Bureau V established a radio communications unit that was composed of the best men available in the city of Lublin. Initially the unit broadcast from the home of Konstanty Machniuk, 'Rysia', at number 25 Ulica Bychawski, near to the city's main train station. However in order to evade the NKVD the unit had to quickly relocate to the village of Wilczopole a few miles to the south-east of the city. The unit managed to keep contact with London from this location for four days. From the village Konstanty Machniuk and Marian Gutka, 'Urej', sent back reports and they were also able to hide the transmitter and evade capture when the NKVD arrived after four days. On its return to Lublin, the NKVD discovered the position of the unit and once again the operators and the transmitter only just evaded capture. Other transmitter units were not so lucky. In the village of Babin a transmitter unit was able to function for three weeks before the Soviets discovered their presence, yet in the Chełm Inspectorate that region's transmitter operator, 'Marzec', was discovered, arrested and eventually deported to the USSR. Equally in the Puławy Inspectorate Wacław Herman, 'Fadina', was discovered by the Soviets and shared the same fate as 'Marzec'.⁴⁰

As a result of these setbacks it was decided by the regional command that it would be safer for the Lublin regional AK to move its central broadcasting unit to the Zamosc Inspectorate. This switch took place halfway through September and was part of several moves within Bureau V of the Lublin regional AK. Along with this, Leon Rembarz, the unit's deputy moved from number 43 Ulica 1 Maja to his sister-in-law's at number 19 Ulica Bernardynska. Rembarz took with him the files of Bureau V and hid them underneath a stack of coal. From this point onwards the commander of Bureau V, Major Mieczysław Komarski, 'Wojtek', reoriented the regional command's contacts with London to just two transmitters: Transmitter number 31 which operated out of the Radzyń Inspectorate and transmitter number 77 which operated out of the Zamość Inspectorate.⁴¹ The NKVD was not able to cut off the AK's internal communications in Lublin, and neither were they able to cut communications with London. It meant that people in the province could

⁴⁰ Kister, pp. 128-132.

⁴¹ Kister, pp. 131-132.

get news from the outside world, and in particular, that they were kept up to date with the progress of the uprising in the capital. With continued radio broadcasts reaching the region and with internal communications functioning in a reduced capacity the attempts of the regional command to centrally direct resistance to the PKWN were achievable in August and September 1944.

When the PKWN had its first party meeting in Lublin on August 5th therefore,⁴² it took place in a city where resistance was still organised and this surely helped to compound the many problems that this new body faced. Before the entrance of the Soviets into the region, aside from pockets of support, the PPR in Lublin had been small and had lacked popular backing. Unlike the Lublin *Delegatura*, which had strength of numbers and contained many people who had experience of local government, the PKWN faced an uphill task to expand rapidly from a tiny starting base. In the first few weeks of its existence the PKWN attempted to overcome this by discriminating between elements of the underground. In particular the peasants were to be courted and split off from the underground, whilst the NSZ and the officer core of the AK was to be eliminated. One of the first moves of the PKWN therefore was the creation of the Department of Public Security, *Resort Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*. Within this new department a section was devoted to the fight against the 'public enemy'—it was this branch that was to be trained and expanded by NKVD minders, and it was this force whose work was aimed against the forces of the underground in Lublin from August 1st 1944. The new security apparatus as it would emerge contained the RBP as well as provincial and district security offices. In practice this meant that during the first months of PKWN rule the Citizen's Militia, *Milicja Obywatelska*, provided the backbone to the administration. These forces were sometimes supplemented by units of the 'Polish Army', *Wojsko Polskie*, which played an auxiliary role in operations against 'enemies' of the new administration.

The new regional MO was based on Ulica Ewangelicki in Lublin City during the first half of August 1944. The new police force's core was composed of members of the local AL and in particular, the first command posts of the regional MO were dominated by members of the 1st Lubelski AL Brigade. For instance, the commander of the 1st, Grzegorz Korczyński, became the first commander of the region's MO, and he was eventually succeeded by another ex-AL man, Ignacy Borkowski, 'Wicek'. This AL domination was something that was also a fact in the lower level command posts of the region. In the city of Lublin itself the city's new police force was formed

⁴² J. Coutouvidis and J. Reynolds, 'Poland 1939-1947', (Leicester University Press 1986), p. 141.

from members of the local AL unit 'Bartosz', whereas in Zamość, the MO was created from the AL unit 'Marek'. According to Anna Grażyna Kister during the first months of the MO's existence around 50% of the force was composed of ex-AL partisans.⁴³ In addition the *Polskiego Samodzielny Batalion Specjalny*, the Polish Independent Special Battalion, was formed at this time. It was a unit numbering 200 people that was formed from men who had been operating in AL units in the region during the German occupation along with Soviet officers and soldiers who could speak Polish. Yet during the first weeks of the PKWN's existence its security forces were not in a position to utilise such knowledge—such was their weakness in terms of numbers. It was this fact that in part dictated the AK's actions in the province during the uprising, it was clear that Żak aimed to keep the PKWN weak and isolated in the province until either the success of Warsaw or the Mikołajczyk talks in Moscow. Until well into 1945 therefore the suppression of the AK and other underground groups was primarily in the hands of the NKVD.⁴⁴ This weakness is shown by the fact that as early as September 15th the PKWN approved measures to strengthen Communist Party cells within the MO—such was the level of infiltration of the new police force by members of the independence underground. This was quickly followed by a decision to sack over 50% of the MO's personnel due to their unreliability.⁴⁵

The fact that the underground was able to successfully penetrate the fledgling communist administration eloquently highlights the problems faced by any occupying power who wishes to enforce a satellite government on a foreign people. In the first few months of the Soviet occupation, the PKWN had to invent a government virtually from scratch. Although via the PPR and *Armia Ludowa*, the Soviet-led communists were to have a vital source of local intelligence and manpower, such was the relatively small size of these organisations, they were not enough to form a viable basis of government in the short term. In the first few months of the PKWN's existence therefore, given the size and organisation of the non-communist underground, any attempts to enlarge either the PKWN's civilian or military governmental apparatus in Lublin meant the potential employment of AK men into their new communist forces. The potential for

⁴³ A.G. Kister, 'Studium Zniwalenia; Walka aparatu bezpieczeństwa z polskim zbrojnym podziemiem niepodległościowym na Lubelszczyźnie 1944-1947', (Krakow 2005), pp. 50-56.

⁴⁴ Z. Jakubowski, 'Milicja Obywatelska 1944-1948', (Warsaw 1988), pp. 31-45.

⁴⁵ A. J. Prazmowska, 'Civil War in Poland, 1942-1948', (Macmillan 2004), p. 121.

infiltrating communist forces, such as the MO, the new communist police force, was huge therefore for the AK.⁴⁶

By the middle of August 1944 the Lublin AK had managed to survive the first wave of NKVD arrests and was attempting to orchestrate resistance to the moves of the communists in the region. The thinking behind the continuation of activities was that this was a temporary stage that the force had to weather. Yet the actions of the Polish alliance outside of the province during August and September 1944 were to make this already difficult task virtually impossible. It is interesting to note that during the second half of August, when London was being sent regular reports which must have been increasingly alarming to them, it is clear from the messages sent that during this crucial period in the history of the AK in the Lublin province, guidance from London was lacking. As the population were refusing *en masse* at this point to cooperate with the attempts of the Soviets to install their puppet administration, the terror of the Soviet forces seemed to be increasing. Yet London was clearly not issuing clear instructions to the Lublin command. Perhaps this was due to the fact that these reports were being sent during the Warsaw Uprising. It is most likely the case that the silence or delay from central command was the result of the overarching importance of the fight in the capital and the significance of its success or failure for the future of the AK's struggle. However it meant in practice that Żak was repeatedly feeding central command information about the arrests of his men, about the expansion of the Berling Army call-up age and about the weakening morale of the population and yet he was seemingly receiving inadequate responses. Now follows the last few lines of each of the messages that the AK command in Lublin sent back to London during the second half of August 1944:

'Sent on August 19th at 00.57 from Zamość Insp.
We request an immediate response to this radio station, what are we to do?'⁴⁷

'Sent on August 19th from Żak
Silence from London is worrying for us. We haven't received any directives for three weeks. The community demands guidance from London'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ R. Wnuk, 'Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN 1944-1947', (Warsaw 2000), pp. 70-123.

⁴⁷ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 12/XXX/999, Wanda 77', sent on August 19th 1944 and received in London on the same day. PUMST London.

⁴⁸ 'L.dz.7081/tjn.44., Odpis Depeszy z okr. Lublin,' sent on August 19th 1944. PUMST London.

'Sent on August 21st at 14.50

Resistance is weak, they are waiting on the results of talks involving Mikołajczyk—as how to proceed, because again send us guidance'⁴⁹

'Sent on August 21st at 17.20 from Żak

Arrests of AK soldiers are still going on. Resistance is weak. Please give us guidance.'⁵⁰

'Received on August 31st at 15.00 from Żak

Please General send us orders and directives'⁵¹

During the German occupation the regional command had received from the time of initial radio contact, constant instruction from their superiors in London. This had helped to maintain those bonds and to retain the relevance of the exiled government for those people on the ground. However in a sense clear orders were made possible by the fact that the Germans were the clear enemy of the Poles, the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Saxon powers. The events of August and September were to reveal the true nature of Poland's position in the grand alliance and it was a complex and desperate position. Once the Germans had gone from Lublin defining the enemy of the allies was much more complicated. Whilst those people leading the AK in Lublin were rapidly coming to the conclusion that the Soviets were the new enemy, in the corridors of power back in London, it must have seemed a lot less clear.

According to the work of Rafał Wnuk on this period, this lack of response can be explained by the fact that the government-in-exile was waiting for the results of the upcoming talks in Moscow with Stalin. This meant that during a crucial stage in the creation of the communist state in Poland, the central command in London was not issuing sufficient guidance to the AK in the provinces, rather it hesitated until October, waiting on the outcome of the Moscow talks and the uprising in the capital. This virtual radio silence from London was doubly damaging to the AK in Lublin and the other areas that were already behind the Soviet advance as during the first weeks of its existence, the PKWN attempted to follow a national front policy that appealed to the peasants and aimed to split apart the London alliance. This was happening hand-in-hand with the NKVD targeting the region's radio transmitters, but even though the region was able to send reports and requests to central command, they

⁴⁹ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 22/3/XXX, Wanda 28', sent on 21st August 1944 and received on the same day in London. PUMST London.

⁵⁰ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 27/VV, Wanda 28', sent on 21st August 1944 and received in London on the same day. PUMST London

⁵¹ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 134/VV, Wanda 77, decoded in London on August 31st 1944. PUMST London.

were not getting anything back. The other standard way in which the Lublin AK kept touch with Warsaw and then London was via runners that would be dispatched to the capital. Yet the front was to stay on the Vistula River for nearly five months meaning that hundreds of thousands of Soviet Army and Soviet security forces stood between Lublin and contacting central command overland. The net effect of this was to be the fact that from August 1944 until March 1945, the Lublin AK was in effect operating in a *de facto* independent state. This relative independence of the AK command was compounded by a growing sense of disillusionment with the central authorities in London. For example the commander of the Hrubieszow area, Marian Gołębiewski, 'Ster', described the silence from London as being the most hurtful factor in Lublin during the first months of the Soviet occupation. According to Rafał Wnuk the silence from London had a large, and depressive impact on many of the commanders in the Lublin region.⁵²

Yet one of the few orders that the AK members in Lublin did receive was the order to aid the uprising in the capital. During the first days of the rising Bór-Komorowski made it clear what regions such as Lublin had to do:

The battle for Warsaw becomes more intense. We are fighting against vastly superior forces. The situation calls for immediate reinforcements from outside. I therefore order all available units to march on the capital as speedily as possible, attack the enemy on the outskirts and break through into the city

Boor
C in C Home Army⁵³

Therefore by this point most of the region's AK had successfully returned to underground activities and were beginning to redirect their work. Whilst AK soldiers had been arrested after the withdrawal of the Germans and some were taken from their homes, the initial arrests had not destroyed the AK's internal structure and many from the partisan units remained undiscovered after dispersing—and had successfully stashed their weapons. Due to the nature of the fight in Warsaw and its significance for the future of the AK and Poland, many units did attempt to go to Warsaw's aid, and given the size of Soviet forces in the area the effects on such units attempting to fight through to Warsaw were often devastating. According to I. Caban many groups in the Lublin region started re-

⁵² Wnuk, pp. 70-123.

⁵³ Taken from 'Polish Labour fights 14th August 1944', 'Powstanie w Warszawie, Dokumenty rozne 8310/pol' from PUMST, London.

concentrating from the middle of August onwards. On the 20th of August the 'Wilków' unit attempted to march to Warsaw but was stopped by the NKVD. On the next day the 'Zapora' group from the Puławy Inspectorate concentrated in order to assist the capital. In the second half of the month soldiers from the Lubartów area along with other local AK units concentrated and began the march to Warsaw but they were intercepted by Soviet forces and stopped.⁵⁴ Outside of Lublin an AK force of around 700 men heading towards Warsaw was intercepted by the NKVD and arrested. Likewise, units of the Home Army marching from Krakow along with the AK's 9th Infantry division were intercepted to the east of Lublin province and forcibly dissolved before they could come to Warsaw's aid.⁵⁵

The largest unit from the Lublin Inspectorate to attempt the march to Warsaw was the unit of Tadeusz Pospiech, 'Brzechwa', which numbered around 120 soldiers. This unit was one of the best armed in the province and was based in the area around Firlej to the north of Lubartow. The force reached the Vistula but was unable to cross and terminated their attempt. Ultimately they were arrested and disarmed. A second grouping from Lublin Inspectorate along with other smaller detachments made it to the Vistula near the town of Dęblin. They found that Soviet detachments were based along the stretch of the river in this area, and once they had encountered them they were disarmed. Other units however did not even make it that far. For example the BCh regional commander of Lubelski, Jan Pasiak, 'Jawor', along with the commander of the sub-region IV B in Zamość, Edward Michonski, 'Lis', engaged in talks with the Soviets in their area with a view to marching to Warsaw. The result of these talks was that their request was refused and they and their men were ordered to join the Berling Army.⁵⁶ To the north after an agreement with the Soviets, units of the 34th Infantry were supposed to march to Biała Podlaska before their march to Warsaw. On the 9th as a part of this agreement only the 3rd Battalion under the command of 'Dunina', Józef Strzeciwiłk, actually went to Biała Podlaska where his men were forcibly integrated into the Berling Army and the officers interned. The other units of the 34th, suspicious of Soviet intentions never started the march.⁵⁷

An excellent example of the fate that met the units that attempted to help the Warsaw insurgents can be found in Hrubieszów County. On the

⁵⁴ Caban, p. 68.

⁵⁵ Taken from 'The Polish Daily October 3rd 1994', 'Powstanie w Warszawie, Dokumenty rozne 8310/pol' from PUMST, London.

⁵⁶ Gawryszczak, pp. 53-54.

⁵⁷ Caban, p. 63.

16th of August a group of around 1,600 people, including AK soldiers and a few dozen nurses and women from the WSK (*Wojskowa Służba Kobiet*—the women’s military service), set off to aid their countrymen fighting in the capital. However, the force came into contact with Red Army forces near the village of Ornatowic around 20 miles north of Hrubieszów. At negotiations between the two groups, the Red Army commanders refused to believe the AK commander’s story that the unit was heading north to aid Warsaw, and their further progress was halted. In reaction to this, the unit decided to march from Ornatowic to Hrubieszów. Around 6 miles outside of Hrubieszów as the column was crossing a cornfield, a plane was spotted circling above. This was then followed shortly afterwards by the appearance of two Berling Army officers in a jeep who ordered the column to march to Bohorodyca. In response to this the officers commanding declared that they needed a briefing with the Hrubieszów magistrate before they could determine their next move. As the force remained outside of the town, a woman who had successfully broken through the Soviet cordon around Hrubieszów was able to update the AK unit as to the latest situation there. They were informed that the Red Army had formed a cordon surrounding the town and that a military post had been created to process and disarm any persons or units leaving or entering. In reaction to this, most of the unit withdrew to the cover of the local woods, whilst one company chose to hide in the ruined buildings in the area. Their attempt to aid Warsaw was effectively at an end.⁵⁸

The experience of this force from Hrubieszów is telling of the AK’s greater problem in August 1944. As this story illustrates the countryside was crawling with Soviet troops; within a short space of time, they had encountered regular Red Army, Red Air Force and Berling Army, there was never any chance of such forces helping Warsaw. At some stage, usually an early one, they would come across Soviet forces that would prevent their progress. ‘Marcin’, like the cause of which he was a part, had been a victim of events out of his control, but his response had been the most pragmatic one available to him—he had at least preserved the biological stock of most of the underground. The march to Warsaw, allied with the halting of the front was to seriously undermine even this response. It did not destroy the underground but it added considerably to the cumulative effects of the summer of 1944. Many battle-hardened units with experienced officers, such as those mentioned from the 27th, left the homes or hiding places that they had had since ‘Marcin’s’ disbandment order, reformed and marched into Soviet forces.

⁵⁸ Wnuk, pp. 268-269.

The internal fabric of the regional underground was significantly weakened by the events of August and this is shown clearly in two reports from Żak at the end of the month. In the first report Żak mentions how anger was building amongst his troops towards the Soviets in the province. Crucially he stated that if his men broke orders not to attack Soviet forces then he would not be able to prevent this. He reiterated this threat in another report sent on August 26th:

Society is disorientated by the silence of London and the unpunished conduct of the NKVD which threatens us with destruction. Its resistance weakens, but among AK soldiers it grows stronger. A spontaneous armed uprising against the Soviets, which I cannot stop, threatens to occur and would have terrible consequences. In the case of spontaneous action I will be forced to lead it. I request instructions. Spontaneous acts will cause unpredictable acts of retaliation from the soviets.⁵⁹

If Żak's report is accurate then many AK in the region were sticking to an order from London that was hugely unpopular, whilst the NKVD was arresting their comrades, Warsaw was burning and the Lublin command was receiving no guidance from the centre—this was certainly a recipe for weakening the bonds between the exiled government and Lublin.

Such heightened tensions were shown by the increase in attacks by the AK units that were still active. In the district of Hrubieszow, the commander of the district, Captain M. Gołębiewski, 'Ster', led over 100 men into the town on the night of the 19th of August. In this raid, 'Ster's' unit was able to take control of the town prison, and free 12 members of the AK, and in the process re-take the arms that the Red Army had confiscated from them. Another good example of local AK units attempting limited operations during August 1944, was in the Zamość district. At the end of the month, Józef Smiech, 'Ciąg', led a unit that attacked the prison in the city of Zamość. The attack resulted in the freeing of 18 political prisoners from the prison in the city.⁶⁰ The fact that such operations were now happening is indicative of the heightened tensions caused by Soviet actions. The arrests in the province set against the backdrop of the failing uprising in the capital was leading to a dangerous polarisation of the region's population. These tensions were also articulated by the increasingly strong language now being used about the Soviets in the underground's

⁵⁹ 'Depesza Szyfr, number 137/II/XXX, wanda 77, 09 sent 26th August 1944, received 30th August 1944. PUMST London.

⁶⁰ Wnuk, p. 269.

newspaper—the *Information Bulletin*. In fact the term ‘second occupation’ was now being used in the press agencies of the underground. The usage of this term first appeared in the Lublin region on August 20th, and was to be used regularly from this point onwards.⁶¹

Clearly the events of August and September 1944 were crucial for the direction of Polish history. Initially, as those who have written more exhaustively about the PKWN have shown, some amongst the Polish communists were talking about creating some degree of inclusive government, equally the AK in the region were bracing themselves for a short occupation by the Soviet communists. Two months later, after the launch of the Warsaw Uprising and the halting of the front, these positions were becoming increasingly unrealistic. Once the uprising was launched it became the only realistic way for the exiled government to restore itself—everything was staked on the success of this. Whilst the repression of the NKVD and the Polish communists was by no means a blanket one at this stage, a pattern of repression and reaction was being established. Increased communist repression would increase the will of elements of the underground to resist—talk of new occupations show clearly how these processes were starting to feed off of one another. Equally, the fact that the AK had not been destroyed in Lublin by the initial wave of arrests post-Tempest meant that in turn a small group of Polish communists were attempting to install their administration in an area where a significant part of the population was armed and opposed to their operations. The ever-present background of the fighting in Warsaw added extra bitterness to these processes. By the end of September, therefore, the storm that ‘Marcin’ had originally envisaged weathering was obviously going to last a lot longer than it seemed during late July.

⁶¹ Wnuk, pp. 60-123.