



Polish Armed Forces in the West
in Antoni Wasilewski's drawings

Preface

This modest album containing the art of Antoni Wasilewski which you hold in your hands came about almost by accident. The project started when we stumbled over several original drawings in the collection of Hyżne primary school while preparing a small exhibition devoted to General Władysław Sikorski. Our interest piqued, we dug deeper. The result was that we found several dozen interesting and never before published drawings done by Antoni Wasilewski while he was serving in the Polish Armed Forces in the West. We decided the pictures were worth making available to a larger public, in book form.

The educational character of the publication also encouraged us to publish this album in electronic form, at www.antoniwasilewski.pl. This, we thought, would be a more interesting and accessible way of telling the story for young readers, and the unusual format would be attractive for those who already know and love the subject matter.

We realise the pictures chosen by us will not interest everyone; nor will they be to everyone's taste. But we believe Antoni Wasilewski's work provides an interesting and unusual look at the Second World War in general and at the Polish Armed Forces in the West in particular.

In a world dominated by photography and film, these graphic artworks have something of the hand-written letter in them: they bear the author's imprint, revealed in the free expression of the draftman's line.

But instead of discussing the artistry (or lack) of the pieces gathered here, let us embark together on a journey through a world created by pencil, crayon and aquarelle...

First, though, there remains one very important matter. We would like to warmly thank all the institutions and individuals without whose generosity this book could not have been published, in particular the Polish Military Museum in Warsaw, the General Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne and the Palace of Art of the Society for the Friends of the Fine Arts in Cracow.

The Authors



ANTONI WASILEWSKI

Was born on 17 February 1905 in Stryj. In 1915–1918 he attended the Jesuit Care and Educational Facility in Chyrów. In 1918, he fought in the Polish-Ukrainian war. He passed his high school finals in Krakow in 1924, where he completed his studies. As an auditing student he attended the Academy of Fine Arts and the Ludwika Mehoffer's Free School of Painting and Drawing in Krakow. In 1924, he began to work as a journalist in the press company "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny". In 1930–1939, he was the editor-in-chief of the satirical magazine *Wróble na dachu* (*Sparrows on the Roof*).

On 24 August 1939, Wasilewski was mobilised as a rifleman to 20th Infantry Regiment; three days later he was called up to the headquarters of the Corps District Command V where he was responsible for organisation of a propaganda unit. In early September, together with the staff of Corps District Command V he headed for Lviv via Łańcut, Pruchnik, Kańczuga and Przemyśl. From there, through Halych, Stanyslawiv, Kolomyia and Sniatyn he reached the Romanian border and crossed it on 18 September. In Romania, he was interned and transported to the Roșiori de Vede camp, from which he escaped on 11 November. He reached Bucharest and on 6 March 1940 he left Romania. Travelling by train across Yugoslavia and Italy he got to France. On 11 March 1940, he crossed the French border in Modane. In France he

was once again active in military propaganda units. He was the author of many propaganda leaflets and posters, amongst others – "The enemy is watching and listening". He left France on 22 June 1940 aboard SS "Clan Ferguson". He reached Scotland. In the camp in Douglas he published *Dziennik Żołnierza* (*Soldier's Daily*). He also set up a satirical bi-weekly *Werinajs*. In 1942, he got an assignment in London where he worked in the editorial office of *Dziennik Polski* (*Polish Daily*). From London he returned to Scotland where he established Polish clubs, soldier theatres, concerts, and exhibitions.

After WWII he decided to stay in the UK. He attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Edinburgh. He became a prominent illustrator. His works were published in *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza* [*Polish Daily and Soldier's Daily*], as well as in many English and Scottish periodicals. He also appeared on London BBC television drawing "live".

He returned to Poland in 1957 and lived in Krakow. In 1959 and 1963 he had individual exhibitions of his works in the Friends of Fine Arts Society in Krakow. During a painting event in 1961 the Society awarded him a Bronze Medal. In 1974, he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his journalist career. Antoni Wasilewski died on 18 April 1975 in Krakow. "The War and military environment were not

particularly conducive to artistic work. It was in Scotland that I resumed drawing. Oftentimes, in tents I worked with charcoal... taken from under a field kitchen. I also made one allegorical work on the wall of the social room, one decorative piece in the corridor of the barracks. I managed to steal some time to sketch an interesting landscape of Scotland, an architectural element or a portrait of an elderly Scotsman. These odd little projects were shown in 1941 during the first Polish exhibitions in Scotland, in Douglas and Forfar. Only later did we organise the collective exhibition of 'Five Polish soldier artists'. The five included: Andrzej Wart alias Adam Bunsch, Zygmunt Haupt, Stanisław Mikuła, Aleksander Żyw and Antoni Wasilewski. The exhibition went on tour around the whole of England, from London to Scotland to Ireland. After the War, I started to cooperate with *Evening Dispatch*, then with the prominent paper *The Scotsman*, *Weekly Scotsman*, *The Bulletin*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Sunday Express*, etc., where I would publish my drawings under the pseudonym 'Tony'. It was my work for *The Sketch* that turned out to be my ticket to London newspapers. I often appeared on BBC producing my drawings or drawing on air characters of popular artists. I needed 14–20 seconds to complete a sketch of a portrait. That's why the TV host, Lady Malcolm, once introduced me as 'a renowned Polish artist, perhaps the fastest in the world'. As my greatest successes I count my participation in the Royal Academy ex-

hibitions as well as my individual exhibitions at the great annual Edinburgh Festival of arts and music. At the end of 1957, after 18 years spent in Scotland and England, I returned to Poland – the country that I have rediscovered, always fascinating and beautiful.”

(An excerpt from Antoni Wasilewski's memoir published in the *Poland* monthly, no. 6, June 1959)

“Antoni Wasilewski... A charismatic speaker and memoirist – chronicling his times with drawings and words, an artist in love with Krakow where he is one of local celebrities... Krakow most of all, its people, the everyday life of both the city and its new districts – such as Nowa Huta, as well as the surroundings of the city, Zakopane, Krynica, local types and scenes... – all of this inspired Antoni Wasilewski. Not much earlier he showed an equally keen interest in Polish soldiers fighting in WWII. The realism evidenced in Antoni Wasilewski works is convincing due to the passion exhibited by the author. What is visible in his images is the great mastery and the unique skill of quick and accurate capturing of the subject matter. Wasilewski is the illustrator of life in the noblest of senses who uses words, situations or jokes as punchlines to his drawing...”

(Excerpts from the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibitions presented at the Fine Arts Association in Krakow, 1963).

Self portrait
(From the collection of the Fine Arts Association in Krakow)

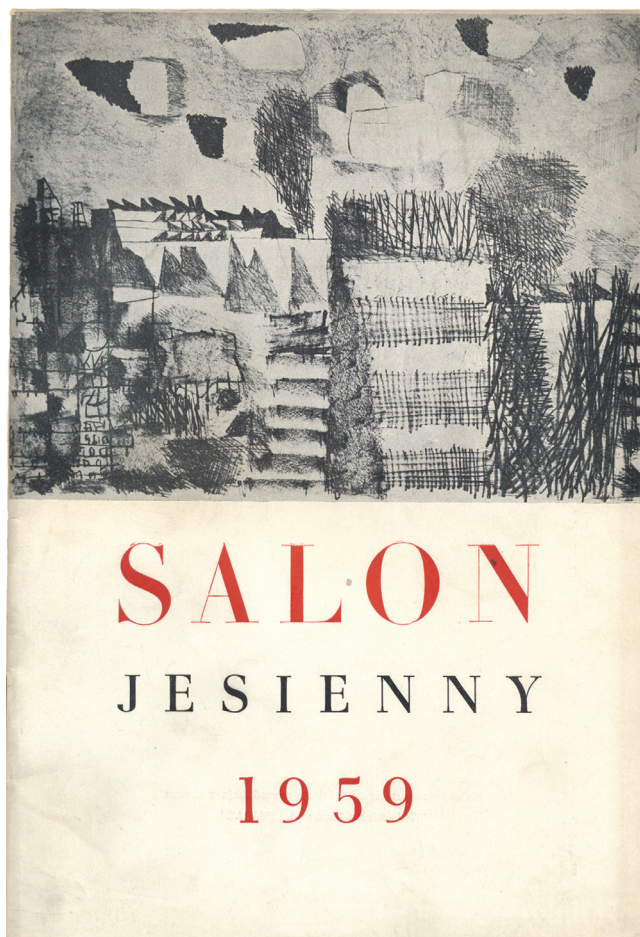
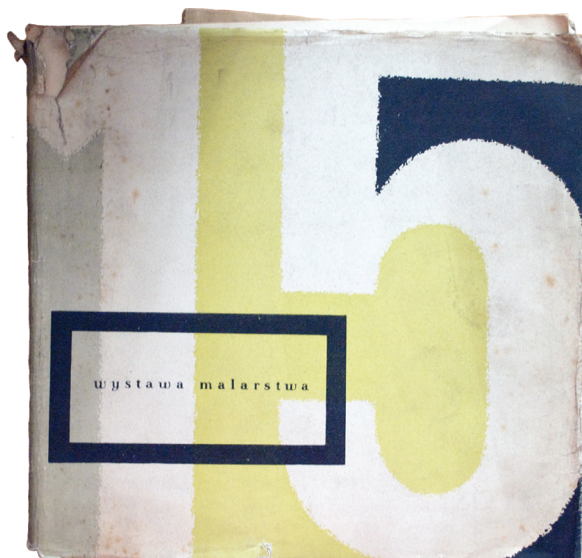


Photography of Antoni Wasilewski
(From the collection of the Fine Arts Association in Krakow)





The cover of the brochure prepared for the exhibition devoted to Antoni Wasilewski
(From the collection of the Fine Arts Association in Krakow)



Covers of the brochures of exhibitions
where Antoni Wasilewski's works were exhibited.
(From the collection of the Fine Arts Association in Krakow)

Polish Armed Forces in the West

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939 concluded between Germany and the Soviet Union in Moscow was one of the reasons for the outbreak of World War II and the military invasion of the Second Republic of Poland launched by both states. On 1 September 1939, Poland was set on fire by the Nazi armed forces, and on 17 September, Stalin – Hitler’s most loyal ally – invaded its eastern lands.

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Despite the pacts of mutual assistance signed between Poland and western powers – France and Great Britain – the invaded country received no help from either in that September. The Polish Armed Forces put up fierce resistance against the Wehrmacht and the Soviet Army, but already on 6 October 1939, the last of the regular forces of the Polish Army laid down their weapons.

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The Second Polish Republic suffered a military defeat, but it never signed an act of complete capitulation. Already on 30 September 1939, the new government of the Republic of Poland was established in France, headed by General Władysław Sikorski as the Prime Minister. The government was promptly recognised by almost all European states that had not yet surrendered to the Nazi or Soviet rule. On 7 November 1939, Maj/Lt Gen Władysław Sikorski became the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. He held this position until 4 July

1943, being followed by Lt Gen Kazimierz Sosnkowski (until 30 September 1944) and Maj Gen Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski until 8 November 1946 (during his internment, Maj Gen Władysław Anders acted as the Commander-in-Chief).

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From autumn 1939, regular military units were being formed outside Poland, based on military alliances with France and Great Britain. The units of the Polish Armed Forces in France recruited former soldiers who escaped Poland. In total, by May 1940, approx. 24,000 soldiers crossed the Polish-Romanian border as well as approx. 10,000 civilian refugees, most of whom were young people from the scattered units of the Polish Army as well as in the pre-conscription age. Other destination for retreating soldiers (approx. 40,000 of people) was Hungary. Under the pressure of Soviet invasion, Polish soldiers escaped to Lithuania (more than 14,000 soldiers in total). Taking different routes, non-mobilised reservists were heading for France. The Polish Army was also recruiting Polish citizens residing in France (who had migrated there for economic reasons).

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In mid-June 1940, the Polish Army in France and the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria) numbered 84,500 soldiers. Apart from ground forces, also Polish Air Forces were formed while the Polish Navy was being expanded (it stationed in Great Britain; it initially

comprised ships that made their way there from Poland – destroyers “Burza”, “Błyskawica”, “Grom” as well as submarines: “Wilk” and “Orzeł”. Polish units fought in the Battles of Narvik (Polish Independent Highland Brigade led by Brigadier Zygmunt Bohusz-Szyszko, as well as Polish ships, 8 May–8 June 1940) and in the Battle of France (1st Grenadiers Divisions – commanded by Brigadier Bronisław Duch, 2nd Infantry Rifle Division – commanded by Brigadier Bronisław Prugar-Ketling, part of the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade. The pilots from Polish Air Force shot down 52 German planes.

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Already in spring 1940, the Carpathian Rifle Brigade was formed by the French command in Syria, led by lieutenant/brigadier Stanisław Kopański. After the capitulation of France the unit moved to Palestine, which was the British territory. After regrouping and rearmament in 1941, it took the name of Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade. It numbered 5,674 soldiers, and the infantry battalion commanders were: Major Stanisław Kopeć, Major Tytus Brzóska, and Lieutenant colonel Józef Sokół. The commander of Carpathian Lancer Regiment was Major Władysław Bobiński. In the second half of 1941, the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade reinforced the Tobruk garrison (“The Rats of Tobruk”). In April and May of that year, it repelled a number of attacks of German-Italian forces led by Lt Gen Erwin

Rommel. In summer, the attackers comprised mainly Italian troops and the German 90th Light Infantry Division. The task of the Poles and Brits from the 70th Infantry Division was to relieve the Australian 9th Infantry Division, which did not complete until October. Also the Czechoslovak 11th Infantry Battalion was redeployed to Tobruk to help protect the fortress, led by Lieutenant colonel Karel Klapálek and subordinated to the Polish brigade. Since the beginning of October the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade manned the western sections of defences. During the fights soldiers used captured equipment and weapons of Italian and German troops. On 14 November, the Polish soldiers in Tobruk were visited by the Commander-in-Chief – General Sikorski.

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In December 1941, the Allied Forces, known as the 8th Army, broke the blockade of Tobruk. It was the result of the full-scale “Crusader” offensive that had been launched on 18 November with the aim of capturing Sidi Rezegh, lifting the blockade of Tobruk and taking over Cyrenaica. Auxiliary operations to the offensive were carried out also by the defenders of Tobruk, including the Poles. Desert warfare requiring particular mobility proved the superiority of the German forces in this respect. In fact, the main reason why General Rommel’s units withdrew from Tobruk on 5 December was the shortage of supplies they suffered, while

the Brits remained well-stocked. On the night of 9/10 December, the 2nd and 3rd battalion of the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade seized the important hills: Ras-el-Medauar and White Knoll. During the pursuit, the Carpathian Lancers Regiment cut off the enemy's retreat route in the vicinity of Acroma. In mid-December, the Polish Brigade (without the Carpathian Lancers Regiment that had been excluded from it), as part of the British 13th Corps, took part in the Battle of Gazala. In the area of Carmuset er Regem hill, the defence of the Italian 7th Bersaglieri Regiment from the 102nd Motorised Division "Trento" was breached. Later on, a separate unit led by Major Brzóska moved towards the goal of brigade's attack – Nesuet El Mlebach. The aim of this operation was to capture a section of the Gazala-Derna road. On 17 December, near Medinet ez Zeitün, the soldiers of Bersaglieri battalion were taken prisoner. A Carrier platoon captured a supply column of the German 15th Armoured Division and 11 Italian tankettes CV 33. This triumph of the Polish brigade contributed to the retreat of Italian forces that stopped only upon reaching the border of Tripolitania. The success of the Allied Forces was a short-lasting one; however it brought an end to the 104 days spent by the Polish soldiers in Tobruk. In late 1941/early 1942, the brigade's artillery units took part in capturing Bardia – the second largest fortress in Cyrenaica. From 26 January, the Inde-

pendent Carpathian Rifle Brigade – together with the Free French Brigade led by Edgard de Larminat – shielded the south wing of the 8th Army. The perimeter defence was based on the old Turkish fort El Mechili. On 4 February, the Polish unit was subordinated to the 1st South African Armoured Division under the command of General George Edwin Brink which defended the Gazala position from Gazala Bay to Alem Hamza. On the night of 17/18 March the brigade was withdrawn from the front. In total, 156 soldiers of the unit were killed in combat (127 in Tobruk), while 467 were wounded and 15 – lost. In the words of Major/Lieutenant colonel Mieczysław Młotek (PhD), a soldier of first the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade and later of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division: "It is hardly possible to find any other unit in the history of the Polish armed forces that would resemble the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade, though there may be some similarities when you look at the 1st Brigade of the Polish Legions that took part in WWI. As a unit, the Brigade had no pre-war tradition, but it built one for itself. It also managed to form a distinctive type of soldier – unlike any soldiers before the war. This new soldier took immense pride in his nationality and the Brigade, being very resilient to external factors. The Brigade staff exhibited a great sense of obligation, willingness to make sacrifices, esprit de corps, entrepreneurship, intrepidity, abhorrence of formal

discipline while maintaining strong discipline of the internal kind. The popular saying “Each soldier is an ambassador of Poland” was not a slogan in the case of Brigade soldiers – each of them really felt like one. They realised that their behaviour was a yardstick proving the virtues of Poland and its people. For this reason, they showed nothing but integrity and friendliness towards civilians. Of all of the nations that formed the Allied Forces, only they earned the nickname “*Boloni dobra*” [*the Good Poles*] in the Middle East.” [M. Młotek, “Samodzielna Brygada Karpacka” in *Zeszyty Historyczne* 1967, issue 12, p. 136]. In May 1942, the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade was restructured and became part of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division.

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In the face of the capitulation of France, the Commander-in-Chief and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland – Maj Gen W. Sikorski – flew to London on 19 June and in the presence of Polish ambassador talked with Prime Minister Winston Churchill about the evacuation from France to Great Britain of those soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces who had reached ports still not captured by the Germans. Based on a mutual agreement, in mid-June 1940 a part of soldiers was evacuated to Great Britain and Palestine (approx. 20,000 people). In the course of fighting, almost the entire Polish 2nd Rifle Division reached Switzerland.

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Already in late June the first Polish soldiers were stationed in the camps located near Glasgow, Scotland. Amongst others, in Coatbridge soldiers from the former 3rd Infantry Division were stationed, in Braughton from the 4th Infantry Division. Ballahaughton offered shelter to Highland Rifles, and Glasgow – to some of General Maczek’s people, the Ministry of Military Affairs and other central state offices. By the order of the Commander-in-Chief, on 28 September 1940, the Polish 1st Armoured-Mechanized Corps was formed in Scotland. It was hoped that in the future, once the unit was supplemented with more people, it would develop into an army consisting of a number of operational units. The organisational structure of this unit was determined. It was to comprise, amongst others, the Headquarters, tank regiment, sapper battalion, but most of all – two rifle brigades and three cadre brigades, and other auxiliary services and units. Already at the end of 1940, the Corps was charged with the task of defending the English coast from Firth of Forth to Montrose. In October 1940, first units of the Polish Armed Forces began to arrive at their stations. At the beginning of November, the 2nd Rifle Brigade was renamed as the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade. Eventually, the organisation of ground forces was determined on 29 April 1941 during a Polish – English conference

organised by the British War Office. British standards were adopted as the organisational basis. However, due to the insufficient number of privates, the Polish Army was to retain its cadre-based character. The English side refused to accept any obligations as regards transforming the corpse into an Armoured Motorised unit. In September 1941, the 1st Tank Regiment was renamed as the 16th Armoured Brigade. On 9 December 1941, by the order of the Commander-in-Chief, the Command of the School Brigade was established composed of the disbanded 3rd, 5th and 7th Cadre Rifle Brigades and the Armoured Weapons Replacement Centre. The objective of the School Brigade was to train soldiers to have them ready for the future expansion of the army and creation of special forces. On 23 September 1941, the 4th Cadre Rifle Brigades was renamed as the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade. In February 1942, General Sikorski ordered the formation of the 1st Armoured Division (the initial composition: 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade, 16th Armoured Brigade, 1st Reconnaissance Division, 1st HMG Squadron, sapper battalion and auxiliary units). In August 1942, during a Polish-English conference, it was agreed that the 1st Armoured-Motorised Corps (after the transformation of April 1941) will comprise the 1st Armoured Division, 1st Rifle Brigade (led by Brigadier Gustaw Paszkiewicz), group of auxiliary units (1st Motorized Artillery Regiment,

1st Anti-Aircraft Regiment, and 1st Rifle Battalion) and division services.

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What is more, the 1st Armoured-Motorised Corps included the 1st Grenadiers Division (cadre), which in August was renamed as the 4th Infantry Division. The subsequent division commanders were: Brigadier Bronisław Duch (until 6 August 1943), Colonel Tadeusz Zieleniewski and Colonel Kazimierz Glabisz. The official number of soldiers in the units was 23,787. 1. The 1st Independent Parachute Brigade was directly subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief, and thus excluded from the 1st Corps. In September 1943, the Command of Armed Forces in the Great Britain was established, which was to supervise units located in both Scotland and England. The Command was in charge of: 1st Armoured-Motorised Corps, 1st Independent Parachute Brigade (but only in administrative-economic sense), training centres, replacement units, local and administrative services, central offices in charge of accommodation, administration and economy (field headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, Military College, Archives of the Armed Forces, Military Tribunal, Branch of the Propaganda and Education Office, Main Standing Orders Commission, Military Geographical Institute, Accountancy, Military Administration Development Course, which in fact was the Polish school for intelligence operatives).

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In autumn 1944, new units of the Polish Armed Forces were formed. It was possible due to the influx of Poles – former prisoners of the German army. They were a large source of new recruits. Apart from the 4th Infantry Division, also the 16th Independent Armoured Brigade and communications battalion were formed. In addition, after losses suffered in battle, the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade and the 1st Armoured Division were reinforced. Despite the fact that the 4th Infantry Division and the 16th Independent Armoured Brigade have been fully formed, as on 8 May 1945 – the day when WWII ended – they still were not combat-ready. The number of soldiers in the Polish ground forces in Great Britain, including the 1st Armoured Division, amounted to approx. 70,000 soldiers; it was 1/3 of the Polish Armed Force operating in exile. The subsequent 1st Corps commanders were: Maj Gen Marian Kukiel (from 3 October 1940), Maj Gen Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz (from 26 September 1942), Maj Gen Józef Zając (from 10 March 1943), Brigadier Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz (13 August 1943 – 10 March 1945) and Brigadier/Maj Gen Stanisław Maczek (23 May 1945 – September 1946).

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From the beginning of the War, the Polish Navy ships helped to protect convoys in the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean and the North Sea; also they took

part in landing operations of the Allied Forces, e.g. in Narvik, Dieppe, North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy. Polish pilots fought during the defence of France. From 1940 they took part in the Battle of Britain (pilots from the Polish Fighter Squadrons nos. 303 and 302 as well as those fighting in British squadrons shot down 203.5 German planes in the total number of 1733 planes lost by Luftwaffe). They also took part in raids over Germany and in North Africa (the Polish Fighter Team, the so-called “Skalski’s Circus”, in March-May 1943, 15 pilots shot down 25 German and Italian planes, becoming the most effective unit in North Africa), as well as in the invasion of France where they fought German submarines and shot down flying bombs V-1. They carried out air drop of weapons and equipment to the occupied countries, including Poland, during the Warsaw Uprising; to support the underground organisations, they transported people (316 “Cichociemni” operatives and 28 couriers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs). Polish teams performing such missions belonged to the 138th Special Duties Squadron, “C” (Polish) squadron and then to the 1586th Polish Independent Special Duties Squadron.

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Based on the Polish-Soviet agreement of 30 July 1941 (the Sikorski-Mayski Act), the Polish Army in the USSR was to be formed. Also “imprisoned Polish citizens were to be released”. On 4 August

1941, Brigadier Władysław Anders was released from the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. On 11 August he became the commander of the Polish Army in the USSR, known as the Anders' Army. On 14 August, a Polish-Soviet military agreement was signed on the establishment and organisation of the Polish Army in the USSR. It was to become a part of the Polish Armed Forces. A number of arrangements were made. Some of the provisions assumed that the Polish Army would comprise two infantry divisions and a Replacement Centre. The Soviets informed the head of the Polish mission that approx. 21,000 officers and privates "resided" in Russia, distributed in the following prison camps: Gryazovets, Juza, Suzdal, and Starobilsk. This number was used to estimate the number of soldiers in the Polish Army at 25,000 soldiers. However, the Polish authorities believed that in the Russian territory there would be approx. 1.25 million of Polish citizens that had been deported from the Eastern Borderlands in 1939–1941, including many officers and soldiers and other potential recruits. On 22 August, General Anders gave Order no. 1 in which he announced the formation of the independent Polish Army in the USSR and he called upon all Polish citizens capable of military service to join it. Initially the Army comprised: 5th Infantry Division (led by Brigadier Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz, to be stationed in Tatishevo), 6th Infantry Division (led by Brigadier

Michał Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz, to be stationed in Totskoye near Buzuluk), Army Replacement Centre (led by Colonel/Brigadier Bronisław Rakowski, stationed at Koltubanka) and other units. The formation of the 6th and 7th sapper battalions and of the 8th cavalry division commenced as well. Other units formed at that time included the air assembly point in Koltubanka and committee for accepting materials delivered from Great Britain in Arkhangelsk.

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By 1 October 1941 the large-scale units were to become combat-ready. A decision was made to announce voluntary enlistment to the Polish Army via district military commissariats. Also, Polish-Soviet committees were established to recruit soldiers from among former prisoners of the camps indicated by the Soviets. A massive influx of Poles and Polish citizens began (including other nationalities, such as Ukrainians, Jews and Byelorussians), former Polish soldiers, along with the exodus of civilians to the place of army formation. Neither the Soviet nor Polish administration were ready for it. With every week, the civilians were becoming an increasingly heavier burden for the newly-fledged Anders' Army. In mid-October, the Polish Army numbered 36,000 people. During the first two months of organisation of the Polish Army, the cooperation with the Soviets was smooth, but in October 1941, the Russian side began to sabotage all the ordinances

Uhlan First Class, from the 14th Light Cavalry
Regiment, Scotland, 18 September 1942
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)





and arrangements. For example, they refused to give winter shelters to Polish authorities in Saratov, Sverdlovsk and Belebey, which would have enabled enlistment of a few more thousands people. By the Soviet Order, the Polish forces were sent to Uzbekistan, in vicinity of Tashkent and Samarkand. What is more, they would refuse Polish soldiers the right to leave their places of residence; also, they detained them in camps and prisons, thus making it impossible for them to reach assembly points. On 3 October 1941, the Soviet authorities, the State Defence Committee, issued an act which allowed the number of soldiers in the Polish Armed Forces to be 30,000. Attempts were made to find 20,000 officers who had “disappeared” somewhere in the USSR in 1940, although in fact they were mercilessly executed by the Soviets, amongst others, in Katyn, Kharkov and Mednoye.

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On 17 December 1941, under the new agreement concluded with the Soviets, General Anders ordered the transfer of the Army HQ as well as of the newly formed infantry divisions to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The cores of the new units were to be provided by: 5th Infantry Division for the 7th (led by Brigadier Z. Bohusz-Szyszko), 6th Infantry Division for the 9th (led by colonel Marian Bolesławicz). The 8th Infantry Division (led by Brigadier Bronisław Rakowski) was to be formed on the basis of the Army Organisational Centre, and

the 10th Infantry Division (led by Colonel Alfred Szmidt) comprised the units of the Armed Station in Buzuluk. Eventually, the new divisions were to be organised following the English organisation model.

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In December 1941, the Soviet authorities assigned new stations for the Polish units. Between 15 January and 25 February 1942, the Polish Army was transferred to the southern USSR republics. Its HQ was located in Yangiyo‘l. The divisions and independent units were deployed in various towns stationed from one another by, at times, hundreds of kilometres. The 8th Infantry Division was formed in November 1941 in the town of Shachta; later it was transferred to Czok-Pak in Kazakhstan. The 9th Infantry Division was being formed in Margilan (Uzbekistan) but it never reached organizational readiness, whilst the 10th Infantry Division – Lugovaya (Kazakhstan). As part of evacuation to the Central Asia, the 5th Infantry Division was transported to Jalal-Abad, the 6th Infantry Division to Shachrziabs in Uzbekistan, the 7th Infantry Division to Kermine; also the Army Organisational Centre was recreated in Gubar. On 15 February 1942, the Anders’ Army numbered: 3,068 officers, 44,013 privates, 78 civilian clerks and 1,252 female volunteers and Red Cross nurses. It total, this amounted to 48,411 people. This, however, was only the half of the headcount agreed on the basis of the subsequent Polish-Soviet

agreement, not taking into account 27,000 soldiers who were to be evacuated to Iran and England.

On 15 March the headcount of the Polish Army in the USSR reached 66,750 soldiers. In total, as part of two evacuations to Iran (2 March–3 April and 9 August–1 September 1942), more than 78,000 soldiers and 35,000 civilians were transported from the USSR, through the port of Krasnovodsk, to the base in Pahlavi [now Anzali] in Iran. Emaciation and diseases took a toll of nearly 1,000 people.

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During further reorganisations of the Polish Armed Forces that took place during its evacuation from the Soviet Russia, on 2 May 1942 in Qastina, Palestine, the units from the 9th and 10th Infantry Division merged with the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade. Thus the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division was formed, numbering 610 officers and 10,746 privates at the end of May. Along with the newly-formed 4th Rifle Division (led by Brigadier Gustaw Paszkiewicz) it became part of the 2nd Rifle Corps. Works began to form the Armoured Brigade and 5th Rifle Division. At the same time, General Anders was granted the right to audit the 2nd Corps on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief. Soon, once the remaining units of the Polish Army arrived from Russia, on 12 September 1942, General Sikorski issued an order on the new organisation of the Polish Army in the Middle East. The entire-

ty of Polish forces in that theatre of War was then renamed as the Polish Army in the East. Its commander was General Anders and his deputy – General Zając. The total headcount of the Army as on 15 September 1942 was 5,709 officers and 70,792 privates (in total: 76,501 people). At that time the Polish Army in the East was concentrated in the northern Iraq (Khanaqin – Qizil Ribat). It was assigned the task of securing oil fields as well as closing the Ruwandiz Pass in case of a potential German attack from Azerbaijan. However, the climate in Iraq – just as in Russia – turned out lethal for the soldiers. Polish troops suffered from numerous diseases and many of them died.

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Due to heavy losses, the Army was 9,000 soldiers short to achieve its assumed status of 71,491, a necessity arose to reorganise the Polish Army in the East once again and adapt its structure to the actual headcount. And so, the 6th Infantry Division was disbanded and its constituent part – the 6th Independent Rifle Brigade – was allocated to the 5th Division which had a very low headcount. Furthermore, two brigades from this division, namely the 2nd and 4th, were merged into a new 5th Brigade. Thus the new 5th Kresowa Infantry Division was formed, comprising: 5th Wilno Infantry Brigade, 6th Lviv Infantry Brigade as well as other division units and services. The 2nd Tank Brigade became

an independent unit directly subordinate to the Army commander. On 10 March, Brigadier/Maj Gen Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz became the deputy Commander of the Polish Army in the East.

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On 16 June 1943, after a meeting with General Anders and Lt Gen Henry Pownall, commander of British “Paiforce” (command in charge of “Persia and Iraq”), Commander-in-Chief decided to form the 2nd Corps of the Polish Armed Forces comprising two infantry divisions and the Armoured Brigades, as well as other corps services as a combat unit to be used on the continent; maintenance of the command of the Polish Army in the East composed of the 2nd Corps as well as of the Bases and Stages, until the Corps was sent to the front. The HQ of the Army became part of the Base, and General Anders was appointed the Corps Commander. Brigadier Zygmunt Bohusz-Szyszko became his deputy, who was to supervise the preparations of the Corps for combat. M. Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz, the previous deputy commander of the Army in the Middle East, remained at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief. The 5th Kresowa Infantry Division went under the command of Colonel/ Brigadier Nikodem Sulik. Brigadier Roman Odzierżyński became the commander of the Army Artillery Group. On 18 June 1943, quarter-master units were evacuated from Iraq, and in the end of July – the units of the 2nd Corps (Transjordan

– Southern Palestine). The soldiers of the Polish Army in the East were happy to leave Iraq and transfer to the areas around the Mediterranean Sea and the Holy Land, as the climate conditions improved.

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On 21 July 1943, a new organisation of the Polish Army in the Middle East came into life. As Brigadier Kopański was nominated as the Chief of Staff of Commander-in-Chief, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division was to go under the command of Brigadier Bronisław Duch, and Brigadier Bronisław Rakowski, the previous Chief of Staff of the Army became the commander of the 2nd Tank Brigade. In Cairo, Egypt, the Command of Stage Region was formed. As on 1 October 1943, the headcount of the Polish Army in the Middle East was: 6,019 officers, 58,526 privates and 3,084 volunteers from the Women’s Auxiliary Service, 2,727 male and 507 female junaks (youth military units) who attended schools. As for the 2nd Corps, after the first reinforcement, its headcount amounted to: 3,099 officers, 49,030 privates and 559 female volunteers. The headcount of all units in the Army, except for the 2nd Corps, amounted to: 2,920 officers, 9,496 privates and 2525 female volunteers. The basis for reinforcements was the 7th Infantry Division (reserve) as well as the Army Training Centre (720 officers and 3,582 privates).

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In late November/early December 1943, the transport of the 2nd Corps from Palestine to Egypt

commenced, and on the 7th December a decision was made to transport all Polish units to southern Italy. The units were assembled in the barrack camp in Qassasin, 30 km to east of Ismaïlia. In mid-December, the first Corps units – from the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division – left for Italy, arriving at the Port of Taranto on 21 December. The soldiers were transported aboard, amongst others, Polish ships M/S “Batory” and “Pułaski”, while Polish destroyers “Krakowiak” i “Ślązak” were escorting them. Other transports came to the ports of Bari, Brindisi and Naples. On 2 February 1944, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division began to replace the British 78th Infantry Division stationed at the Sangro River, and between 8 and 25 March, 5th Kresowa Infantry Division relieved the Moroccan Division from the French Corps on the section from Castel San Vincenzo to hill 850. On 1 April 1944, the headcount of units already brought to Italy or still being transported amounted to 52,482 officers and privates and 535 volunteers from the Women’s Auxiliary Service. Of this number, the soldiers of the 2nd Corps comprised: 2,949 officers, 45,276 privates and 443 female volunteers from the Women’s Auxiliary Service. Other soldiers were assigned to the advance Base of the Polish Army in the East.

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During the Italian Campaign of 1944/1945, the 2nd Polish Corpse played one of the key roles – initially,

under command of Maj Gen Władysław Anders, and from February 1945 – under Brig/Maj Gen Zygmunt Bohusz-Szyszko. When the Corps was still in Palestine, the Polish independent Commando company was engaged in combat in Italy. From December to late January 1944, the commandos were carrying out reconnaissance for the 78th and the 56th Infantry Divisions that were operating in the vicinity of the Sangro and Garigliano Rivers. Units from the 2nd Corpse remained at the Sangro until 17 April, when they were relieved by the 24th Guards Brigade and the New Zealand 2nd Infantry Divisions. After that, they were sent to Monte Cassino. It was part of preparations for the great offensive in spring stretching from the Tyrrhenian Sea to Monte Cassino and opening the way to Rome. On 24 March 1944, General Anders, after the meeting with Lieutenant General Oliver Leese – commander of the 8th British Army, made a decision that “the hill complex of Monte Cassino must be captured”. These hills were part of the Gustav Line. Until then, there had been three unsuccessful attempts to achieve that goal, namely on 17 January, 15 February and 15 March made by the Allied forces – mostly American, French, Indian, and New Zealand units which received intensive air and artillery support. Also the Allied Landing at Anzio on 22 January 1944 was a fiasco.

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On 12–18 May 1944, the units from the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division and the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division – despite suffering tremendous losses – managed to capture the hills (amongst others: hills 575, 593, 569, “Phantom” and San Angelo). They succeeded despite a number of counter-attacks launched by elite units from the German 1st Parachute Division and a battalion separated from the 5th Mountain Division. Having ceased Monte Cassino, the units from the 2nd Corps immediately pressed on in order to breach the “Hitler” line. On 25 May, Pizzo Corno and Monte Cairo were captured as well as the strongly fortified town of Piedimonte – a key point of the “Hitler” line which soon after was breached in many other places. The losses incurred by the 2nd Corps were enormous. From 24 April to 31 May 1944, 923 soldiers died, 2,931 were wounded and 345 missing in action; the total losses amounted to 4,199 soldiers, including 307 officers. After a short rest, in early June 1944, the 2nd Corps was moved to the Adriatic section and continued to pursue the enemy forces. On 21–30 June it was engaged in heavy combat on the Chienti River, the town of Potenza, and later it captured Loreto and Osimo (5 July) and on 6 July – San Pietro hill, which was of tremendous importance for future operations, as well as Ancona (18 July). After that, the Polish units proceeded towards the Gothic Line. On 5 August the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division reached the Ceason River, where it clashed

with enemy. Subsequently, on 9 August advances on Scapezzano as well as the Santa Lucia and Casa Santinelli hills. After heavy combat – at times at close quarters – the 1st and 2nd Brigade of Carpathian Infantry took the designated points. On 22 August, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division reached the Metauro River, and a week later its units took part in assault on the Gothic Line, which was broken on 25 July–3 September 1944.

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From 5 September to 9 October, the 2nd Corps was recovering in the Chienti River valley, as the reserve of the 8th British Army. It was then the Corps was reinforced with former German soldiers of Polish nationality. The formation of three brigades commenced in the 3rd and 5th Division; also the 2nd Armoured Brigade was being developed into a division. The Polish commando company was to become the 2nd commando battalion.

From October 1944 to December 1944, the 2nd Corps was fighting in mountainous terrain in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, in hostile climate conditions. Offensive operations were aimed to gain strong positions for the attack on Bologna, and the direct objective was taking the town of Predappio. The 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division fought for Lecco and Trebbio, forcing the German forces to retreat from Forlì, which was then taken by the British 5th Corps. The areas of Dovadola and Castrocaro were taken.

*

Despite extremely difficult terrain and climate conditions as well as insufficient supplies of food and ammo, the Polish units realised their combat tasks. Continuing their operation in the Apennines, at the end of October, the units of the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division took Colombo and Mirabello ridges, gaining positions to launch an attack on the Lombard Valley defended by the Germans. However, the enemy put up heavy resistance. A number of factors worked to Germans' benefit: high hill ranges with vertical slopes, numerous swollen rivers and mountain streams, as well as vast destruction and destroyed bridges left by the enemy withdrawing from the occupied territory, free from major human settlements. The subsequent task of the 2nd Corps was to capture the Caminata hills and circulate the Forla region from the south-west to facilitate the movement of the 5th Corps from the Medolla region to the lower reaches of the Rabbi River. In addition, it was to cut road no. 9 between Forla and Faenza. On 1 November, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division captured the Caminate hills and later Monte Trebbio and Gattone. The 5th Kresowa Infantry Division, during the attack on the Montone River, took the town of Dovadola (8 November); then it crossed the river and reached the town of Bagnolo on its western bank. As a result, the activity of the 2nd Corps was a major threat for German defence and

helped the 8th Army of the Allied forces to resume offensive and take Forla on 9 November.

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On 15–26 November 1944, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division breached enemy's positions near Montefortino when supporting the activity of the British 5th Corps along the norther side of road no. 9, which subsequently pushed the enemy across the Lamone River. However, in the face of German fierce resistance, the 5th Corps could not advance. The operations of the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division depended on the progress made on the right wing, which was composed of the 46th Infantry Division (English). Its objective was to capture Pidura hill, but the Germans launched numerous counter-attacks, deploying new units, amongst others the 90th Panzergrenadier Division. On 4 December, the 1st Canadian Corps took Ravenna and attempted to cross the Lamone River near Russi, whilst the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division broke the defence on the Lamone and Sintria Rivers, and later took Montecchio hill. On 15 December, with strong artillery support, it took San Giorgio and took Bianco by storm. On the following day, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division fought one of the fiercest and bloodiest battles in the Apennines, capturing in the evening the Collina-Cassette mountain range – despite numerous counter-attacks. On 17 December, Polish units took Limosano and Villa San

Giorgio, reaching the Senio River. Thus concluded the combat effort of the 2nd Corps in the Emilian Apennines. The Corps made a huge contribution to the success of the offensive launched by the 8th Army. This, however, came at a high price: 673 soldiers killed, 2,630 wounded and 32 missing.

*

From 17 December, the 8th Army and the 2nd Corps were to defend the Senio River. Until spring 1945, mostly trench warfare took place. During that time, no major offensives operations were launched and the enemy did not show signs of activity. Due to hostile terrain conditions, the winter season and shortage of artillery ammo, the date of launching an offensive was postponed a number of times. This time was used for reinforcing the 2nd Corps. The recruits were mainly Polish prisoners of war freed from the camps in Western Europe and Italy who eagerly joined the Polish Armed Forces. In later September 1944, the headcount exceeded 40,000 soldiers of which 12,000 were assigned to reinforce Polish units in Great Britain, the 1st Corps in particular. On the Senio River, in accordance with the earlier plans of Polish Army development, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division received an additional brigade, namely the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Brigade (led by Colonel Gustaw Łowczowski). Also the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division designated units that were to become the core of the 16th Pomeranian Infantry

Brigade; also the 12th Podolian Lancers Regiment separated, being replaced with the 7th Lublin Lancers Regiment. Within the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division the 4th Wolyńska Infantry Brigade was formed. In addition, the creation of the 25th Lancers Regiment commenced, whose staff had been reassigned from the 15th Lancers Regiment. The new units underwent their baptism of fire at the end of March 1945.

*

On 9 April 1945, the long-awaited offensive of the 8th Army was launched from the Senio River. Also the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division was engaged in combat (Battalions: 3rd, 5th and 6th), which – with the support of tank units – attacked from the line of Senio River, in the Felisio region. In the evening, the Poles launched an attack on the river-side embankment that was taken on the following day. General Anders, acting as the Commander-in-Chief, was observing the beginning of the offensive. Soon the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division received the backup of 7th Armoured Brigade and the 43rd Indian Infantry Brigade. Using tanks, after a night combat, the Senio – Santerno inter-river area was taken. Despite a number of counter-attacks, the Poles eventually broke the enemy's defence in the area of Senio and Santerno Rivers, defeating the German 26th Armoured Division. To pursue the enemy force, the "Rud" group was assembled (led by Brigadier Klemens Rudnicki) comprising: the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Brigade and the 4th Wolyńska

Infantry Brigade that continued the assault along road no. 9 to Bologna. After heavy fighting, the Poles took, amongst other, Castel Bolognese (14 April) and Imola.

*

Also the “Rak” Group was engaged in fierce combat (commander: Brigadier Bronisław Rakowski) which was composed of the 2nd Armoured Brigade, reinforced with 15th battalion. It crossed Santerno River and after intense fighting it took Sasso Morelli, crossed the Gambellara Canal and Correcchio, and in the evening of 14 April it established a bridgehead on the Ladello Canal. The German 4th Parachute Division put up heavy resistance, successfully creating various obstacles by blocking roads and blowing up bridges to hinder the offensive of the Allied Forces. On 17 April, the Poles took Castel San Pietro and received very warm welcome from the local Italians. On the very same day, the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division joined the fighting for yet another line of defence based on the Gaiane River and canal of the same name. It was breached two days later. And so the way to Bologna was opened. After exceptionally fierce combat, on the night of 20/21 April, enemy forces began to retreat across the Idice River, which was crossed by the Allied forces soon after.

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On early morning of 21 April, the first patrols of the 9th Battalion, having destroyed the defence on the south-eastern edges of Bologna, reached the city cen-

tre at 6.00 a.m. and put a white-red flag on the town hall. In the afternoon, the 2nd Corps became the reserve of the 8th Army thus completing its combat activity. However, the losses suffered in the recent offensive were dramatic, amounting 234 killed soldiers, including 17 officers, 1,288 wounded and 7 missing soldiers. More than 2,000 enemy soldiers were taken prisoner; also, much military equipment was captured, including 60 vehicles, 10 tanks, more than 50 guns and many pieces of side arms and machine guns. The victorious war trail of 2nd Corps ended.

*

On 28 April, German representatives arrived at the Headquarters of Allied Forces to sign the act of surrender in Italy. In total, the Italian offensive cost the 2nd Corps: 2,319 killed, including 174 officers, 9,352 wounded (614 officers) and 528 missing (9 officers). Also, 3,182 soldiers died in motor vehicle crashes, and 1,560 soldiers were evacuated as hors de combat soldiers. As a result, the total losses of the Polish 2nd Corps in Italy amounted to 17,924 persons.

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The 1st Armoured Division of Gen. Stanisław Maczek was prepared to participate in the French invasion. In the autumn of 1943, the organisational structure of the unit was transformed – its armoured part was reduced while the infantry part – expanded. The Division was composed of the 10th Armoured

Deputy Commander of ORP Garland,
Lieutenant Bolesław Biskupski
Scotland, 4 August 1942
(fragment)
(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)





Cavalry Brigade under Col. Tadeusz Majewski (1st and 2nd armoured regiments, 24th Lancers Regiment, 10th Dragoons Regiment), 3rd Rifle Brigade under the command of Col. Marian Wieroński (Highland Rifle Battalion, 8th Rifle Battalion, 9th Rifle Battalion, Heavy Machine Gun Squadron), Divisional Artillery under the command of Col. Bronisław Noel (1st and 2nd Motorized Artillery Regiments, 1st Anti-Tank Regiment and 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment), Sapper Unit led by Lt. Colonel Jan Dorant, Communications Battalion led by Lt. Colonel Jan Grajkowski and auxiliary forces. The 10th Mounted Rifle Regiment, led by Major Jan Maciejowski became the armoured reconnaissance regiment of the division. In spring of 1944, the division received its first new tanks: “Shermans” V and fast “Cromwells” IV. The headcount of the unit comprised 855 officers, 15,210 private soldiers and non-commissioned officers, 381 tanks, 473 guns (excluding tank guns) and 4,050 motor vehicles.

*

The division did not take part in the initial stage of the “Overlord Operation” – landing of the Allied Forces in Normandy. It was transported to France in July/August 1944 and then it was concentrated to the north-east of Caen. There it was incorporated into the 2nd Canadian Corps of Gen. Guy Simonds in the 1st Army of Gen. Henry Crerar. The task of these forces was to break the German

positions on the Caen-Falaise line (“Operation Totalize”). The fights commenced on 8 August. The first contact of the Polish armoured unit with Germans was not successful – the attackers lost many tanks, e.g., the 2nd Armoured Regiment lost 26 of its 36 tanks. The neighbour of the 1st Armoured Division – the Canadian 4th Armoured Division – was stopped as well which suffered even greater losses. The reason for the failure was the mistakes made by the command of the 21st Army Group; lack of combat experience that contributed to poor cooperation between the armoured and infantry divisions and the divisional artillery, as well as the inadequate number of infantry and poor training it had received. In addition, a very important factor was the quality of German armoured and artillery equipment, as well as the tactical superiority of the German battle groups from the 12th SS Panzer “Hitlerjugend” division and parts of the 101st SS Heavy Tank Battalion. On the other hand, the attempt to circumvent the previously attacked German positions via Soignolles to the crossing over the Dives River was a success. On 15 August, the 10th Mounted Rifle Regiment captured the bridgehead in the Jort area. As a result, the road to Trun was open. Having broken the German defence on the hills to the north-east of that town, the Allied Forces pushed towards Chambois (“Operation “Tractable”). The unit sent on 18 August (2nd Tank Regiment

with the 8th Rifle Battalion and Anti-Tank Regiment Division) lost its way and reached the two hills 262 m away to the north-east of the target (Mont Ormel). The mistake made by the leader of the unit, Lt. Colonel Stanisław Koszutski, changed the previous plans of division's subsequent activity. During the battle of Falaise the commonly used name for hill 262 m was the "Club".

*

From 19 August, the units of the 1st Armoured Division formed three defence regions and one independent resistance point of the group in the "Club" area and north of Chambois. The aim of the Polish unit and of the neighbouring Canadian division was to seal the encirclement around German forces in the Falaise area. An attempt was made to come into contact with the American forces approaching from the south, which later took place in Chambois. Numerous attempts were made by the German units to break the positions of Gen. Maczek's divisions, as they wished to get out of the encirclement. And so, attacks were launched by the 12th SS Panzer "Hitlerjugend" divisions and the 1st Battalion of the 26th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment. Attempts to break the blockade were also made from the outside by the units of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps (9th SS Panzer Division "Hohenstaufen" and 2nd SS Panzer Division "Das Reich"). This led to extremely intensive fighting in perimeter defence and with no supplies. The fights

lasted two days, including close quarters combat.

In the Chambois area and on the retreat way via the "Club" from Chambois to Vimoutiers, Germans lost hundreds of people – either killed or injured – and many tanks and motor vehicles. Thousands of them were taken prisoner. However, many Germans managed to get out of the encirclement as the Polish division numbered too few soldiers. In addition, the Polish forces were exhausted – they had run out of ammunition, water and food; it was impossible to evacuate the injured and prisoners.

*

During the battle the Polish division lost (either killed or injured) 2,907 soldiers, of whom 446 were killed (including 37 officers), 1,501 injured (including 92 officers) and 150 were deemed missing (including 5 officers). In the battle of Chambois the commander of the 10th Mounted Rifle Regiment, Major Jan Maciejowski, died. The commander of the LXXXIV Army Corps, Gen. Otto Elfeldt and around twenty officers were taken prisoner; in addition the 10th Mounted Rifle Regiment took 30 officers and 800 private soldiers prisoner, and the whole division captured 87 officers and 3,576 non-commissioned officers and private soldiers. In addition, the 24th Lancers Regiment and 10th Dragoons Regiment handed over to the Americans 50 German officers and 1,400 private soldiers. Fifty-five tanks and armoured vehicles were captured

or destroyed along with 44 guns of various types, 38 armoured personnel carriers (APC), 207 motor vehicles and 152 horse-drawn carriages.

*

The battle came to an end with the approach of American troops and when the Germans abandoned their attempts to leave the encirclement. On 22 August, Gen. Maczek reached Chambois. It was then possible to deliver the first reports from the battle field and celebrate the victory. The moment was remembered by the then second-in-command of the Support Squadron of the 10th Dragoons Regiment, second lieutenant Jan Karcz: “Zgorzelski [commander of the 10th Dragoons Regiment] had a sense of style: on the ground there was a huge Nazi flag; on it there were field chairs and small tables with bottles of excellent champagne and glasses, although these were of all sorts and sizes. However, even Zgorzelski could not provide ice, so the wine was lukewarm. In early afternoon, Maczek and a few other officers arrived in a tank (I remember seeing major Dowbor, commander of the Anti-Tank Artillery regiment.). The General was in great shape, although quite shocked having seen the “Club”. He hugged and kissed all of us.” [J. Kutzner, J.S. Tym, *Polish 1st Armoured Division in Normandy*, Warsaw 2010, p. 505]. The battle of Falaise-Chambois was the first one for the division, but at the same time the biggest in the whole Western campaign in 1944–1945.

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Having restored its combat readiness, the Polish division once again took part in fighting. It joined the pursuit of the retreating German units. Having crossed the Seine, it marched towards the north-west. On 6 September, it crossed the French-Belgian border and took hold of the towns of Ypres and Thielt. Until that moment the Polish unit had covered a distance of more than 400 km without much resistance from the German side. From 9 September the enemy began to put up increasingly fierce resistance so the offensive was slower. An important factor facilitating the defence was the area, especially numerous canals. On 16 September, the Dutch border was crossed; within the following days Axel and Hulst were captured after heavy fighting, and so the mouth of the Scheldt was reached. Also at this stage of campaign problems with supplies were encountered due to the distance from the main sources of supplies in Normandy. The aim of the Allied Forces was to remove the enemy from Antwerp which would make it possible to utilise the local port. It wasn't until 29 October that the division managed to free the capital city of Brabant – Breda. After a few days the Mark Canal was captured, after fierce combat. The final stage of the campaign was capturing of the strongly defended Moerdijk bridgehead. Polish soldiers were treated as liberators in the captured Belgian and Dutch towns. Especially enthusiastic was the welcome given by the

Breda inhabitants: “A carnival indeed,” recalled Gen. Maczek. “Streets filled with cheering citizens, flowers and festoons, with shop windows decorated with signs in Polish saying ‘Thank you, Poles’”.

*

The fighting in Belgium exhausted the division, despite it being reinforced with German prisoners of war of Polish nationality. The unit proved to be extremely effective in the battlefield; it was praised for good utilisation of different types of weapons and efficient cooperation between them. Also its commander was highly regarded – for mobility of his units and their ability to surprise and outmanoeuvre the enemy. Nevertheless time was needed to absorb the reinforcements, equalize soldiers’ training level and rest. Appointed division units were supervising the Meuse; clashes of patrols and exchanges of shellfire were common. Units of light anti-aircraft artillery participated in combating German flying bombs V-1. The defence section of the division was widened and reinforced once the Germans launched the Ardennes Offensive. During its rest on the Meuse the unit was visited by Polish and Allied supervisors. The soldiers were awarded numerous Polish and foreign medals – amongst others, Gen. Maczek received the War Order of Virtuti Militari; and when he was in Paris, he received the National Order of the Legion of Honour from the hands of the head of the French General Headquarters, Gen.

Alphonse Juin. The division soldiers were awarded an honorary citizenship of Breda.

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The 1945 campaign commenced for the 1st Armoured Division on 9 April when the unit moved into the German territory. In Friesland Polish soldiers once again had to face the enemy, which had built defence in an area heavily crossed with canals and water obstacles. On 9 April, the Oberlangen camp was liberated where 1,700 women were held – soldiers of the Home Army (AK) who had been captured after the Warsaw Uprising. On 19 April the well-defended Küsten Canal was breached which made it possible to capture Aschendorf and Papenburg. At the end of April, the division crossed the Leda River and headed northward. On 4 May, the head units of the 1st Armoured Division approached the Wilhelmshaven city and port where in the course of preparations for the attack a ceasefire was announced. It was signed on 5 May at the headquarters of the 2nd Canadian Corps. On the same day, with Gen. Maczek present, the capitulation of German forces was signed in the area where the Corps operated. According to its provisions, the base of German navy, Wilhelmshaven, was to be taken over by the units of the 1st Armoured Division. On 6 May, the Poles entered the city. Several days later the unit was visited by Gen. Władysław Anders, acting as the Commander-in-Chief. On this occasion the high

street of the city was decorated with large white and red flags. During the Western campaign, the 1st Armoured Division captured 2,200 officers and more than 50,300 non-commissioned officers and private soldiers. The losses in killed and injured amounted to 304 officers and 4,855 non-commissioned officers and private soldiers.

*

The 1st Independent Parachute Brigade (commander – Gen. Stanisław Sosabowski) which initially was meant to be used in Poland took part in the Allied airborne and ground operation in Holland (“Market Garden Operation”), the aim of which was to seize the road to northern Germany. The Allied airborne forces were to seize bridges and canals over the Meuse, Waal and Lower Rhine in the area of Eindhoven, Nijmegen, and Arnhem. The crossings were to be used by the 30th Corps led by Gen. Brian Horrocks. His task comprised crossing the Dutch border, covering the 127 km-long corridor, crossing the Lower Rhine, encircling of the Ruhr and bringing an end to the War in 1944. Already at the stage of planning the operation seemed very daring if not too risky. The commander of the Polish brigade had reservations as well – particularly when he learned that the drop zone would be located over 10 km away from the key target, namely the Arnhem bridge. Another factor which made it impossible to surprise the Germans was the 3 days that had

to be spent on transferring the entire 1st Airborne Division. The Polish brigade was to be dropped to the south of the bridges, two days later than the British subunits. Therefore Gen. Sosabowski had doubts as to what the river crossing would look like: whether the British would hold the bridge and whether the Poles would not land in the area occupied by the enemy.

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The operation commenced on 17 September but it did not go by the plan. Although some of the planned targets were captured, the Arnhem bridges were not. The first of them – the railway bridge between Oosterbeek and Driel – was blown up by Germans; only the north end of the road in Arnhem was captured. A serious error of the Allied Forces’ intelligence was being unaware of the fact that units of the German II SS Panzer Corps were near the town, comprising the 9th Armoured Division SS “Hohenstaufen” and 10th Armoured Division SS “Frunderberg”. Despite the insufficient number of soldiers and shortage of supplies, the armoured units could easily overpower the airborne units equipped with light weapons.

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The first Polish subunits of the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade (3rd Anti-Tank Regiment Division) landed near Arnhem already on 18 September, but the greater part of the unit arrived in Holland only on 21 September due to bad weather. In the

meantime, the 2nd battalion defending the Arnhem bridge, led by Lt. Colonel John Frost, was already surrounded by Germans. Initial assumptions for them were to hold the position for 48 hours, but they managed 90 hours. Guards Armoured units only started to cross the Waal River. The Polish brigade was dropped in the Driel area; it was to cross the Rhine and help the British group which was close to elimination (soon the British in Arnhem surrounded). Captain Ludwik Zwolański performed a heroic act and swam to the southern bank of the Rhein with orders from Maj Gen Robert Urquhart. On 22 September, the first British armoured vehicles reached Driel, established contact with the Poles and recognised the situation. Together with the brigade soldiers they repelled the attack of the German SS armoured unit. Soon the positions taken by Poles were reached by the first British armoured subunits; however most of them were stopped by the German counter-attack in the Eindhoven area.

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At night, a small group of brigade soldiers managed to reach the northern bank of the Rhine and it supported the Oosterbeek defence. On 23 September, the remaining Polish paratroopers who belonged to the 1st battalion and what was left of the 3rd battalion, led by Major Marian Tonn, were dropped in the Eindhoven area and joined the brigade only 24 hours later. At night another attempt was made

to transfer Polish paratroopers from Driel to the northern bank of the Rhine. A group of soldiers equal in size to a battalion supplemented the waning numbers of British Red Devils. On 24 September, an attempt was made to get across the remaining soldiers of the brigade, by the side of whom the British support for the 1st Airborne Division was to be brought. In reality, only a small group of British soldiers managed to reach the British positions in Oosterbeek; Poles did not cross the river as there were not enough boats. The failure of the support plan and the dramatic situation of the remaining 1st Airborne Division influenced the decision of Marshal Bernard Montgomery taken on 25 September to leave the northern bank. This meant that the Operation Market-Garden and the Allied Forces' plan to finish the War early failed. After the evacuation which took place on 25/26 September night, the headcount of Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade was lower by 342 soldiers – killed, injured and captured, which amounted to 23% of officers and 22% of non-commissioned officers and private soldiers.

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Lt Gen Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, is a person of special importance. Together with his staff he was instrumental in preparing the Polish Army for the final clash against the German forces. Amongst others, he developed and submitted a proposal to the

English allies (on 2 September 1944) in which he suggested combining all the land units of the Polish forces into one Polish Army which would take part in the final stages of WWII. However, the British Foreign Office declined the proposal in fear of Joseph Stalin's objection. General Sosnkowski sought to enlist British aid for the Warsaw Uprising. As his efforts failed, in his famous order no. 19 of 1 September 1944 addressed to the soldiers of Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), he voiced his protest and accused Poland's western allies of breaking the military agreements. On 30 September 1944, as demanded by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, he was dismissed from the position of the Commander-in-Chief.

*

After the end of the War, the Polish Armed Forces in the West totalled approx. 171,200 soldiers and served in Germany and Italy as part of occupation forces. The Polish units continued their development by recruiting, amongst others, Poles – former prisoners of war of the German army (in total, from this source came the largest number of soldiers – over 89,000). In Italy, in June 1945, the 2nd Armoured Brigade was expanded and transformed into the 2nd Warsaw Armoured Division; the formation of the 14th Wielkopolska Armoured Brigade was never completed. In 1945, the number of the Polish Armed Forces in the West grew to approx. 209,000 soldiers. The equipment of the Polish units in May

1945 comprised 1,335 tanks, 2,971 armoured personnel carriers (APC), 1,087 armoured vehicles, 2,050 guns and mortars, and 32,000 motor vehicles. The Polish Air Forces numbered approx. 14,300 soldiers; there were, on average, approx. 250 planes in divisions. Polish pilots brought down 809 planes, 193 flying bombs V-1 and dropped approx. 15,000 tonnes of bombs. The Polish Navy numbered 3,840 sailors and comprised 15 ships: 1 cruiser, 6 destroyers, 3 submarines and 5 torpedo boats. The ships took part in 665 sea battles, escorted 787 convoys, and sank 7 surface vessels and 5 submarines as well as 41 ships. The Polish Armed Forces in the West suffered a total loss of 43,500 soldiers, of whom 7,608 were killed or died of wounds. In 1946, Polish units were transferred to England where they were incorporated into the Polish Resettlement Corps. Its objective was to prepare the soldiers for the return to the country, military service in the British Army or settlement and becoming a civilian in the West. At the same time, the Polish Armed forces were being demobilised; some soldiers remained in exile, however most of them returned to the country (119,066 soldiers). Almost 31,773 Poles re-emigrated to other countries than Poland.

Piotr Chmielowiec, Krzysztof A. Tochman

Sergeant wounded at Monte Cassino. No. 1 symbol of
humbleness, Scotland, 4 September 1944
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)



Drawnings
by Antoni Wasilewski



matšigraja - 25. VIII 1939 - Akademijski Slikarski Muzej

Mobilisation – 25 August 1939 – Academy of Fine Arts

It was the third day of alarm mobilisation in Krakow, which covered the commands of corps districts bordering on Germany. Antoni Wasilewski was to organise the military propaganda unit at the Corps District Command V (DOK V).

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

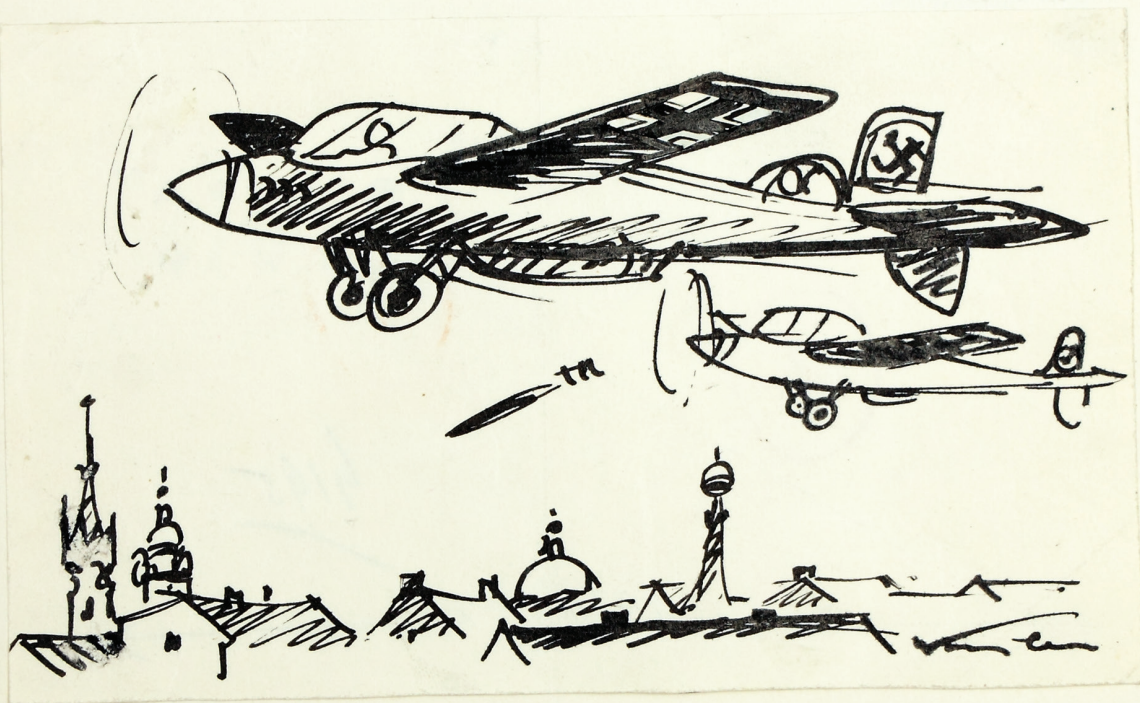
They have finally delivered our rifles to the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow

(25 August 1939)

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)



Przyjeżdżali nam wreszcie karabiny do składnicy sztuk
 Piskunych w Krakowie! 25-go sierpnia godz. 12 w połud. 1939r!...



Kelent - 1st invasion 1939...

Air raid – 1 September 1939...

A morning raid on the Krakow airfields was carried out with the use of the Dornier 17E in I and III/KG 77, and later with Junkers Ju 87 (Stukas) in I/StG 2, which were covered by the two-engine Bf 110 in I/ZG 76. The drawing was to show the diving bombers, but details are far from the actual shapes of the German planes.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

Łańcut, Potocki Palace 5 September 1939

The author was among the staff of the Corps District Command V (DOK V) evacuated on 3 September from Krakow, which crossed the Romanian border on 18 September.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)



Зарица - дворец Рубинчик 5. IX. 1939.

Рубинчик - дворец 1939.

Headquarters of the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade,
Forfar, 9 May 1941
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







Nasza broń!

18 września - Groń 1939.

Po przejściu granicy z Słowacją.

Our weapons! 18 September – 6 a.m. 1939. Having crossed the border in Śniatyn.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

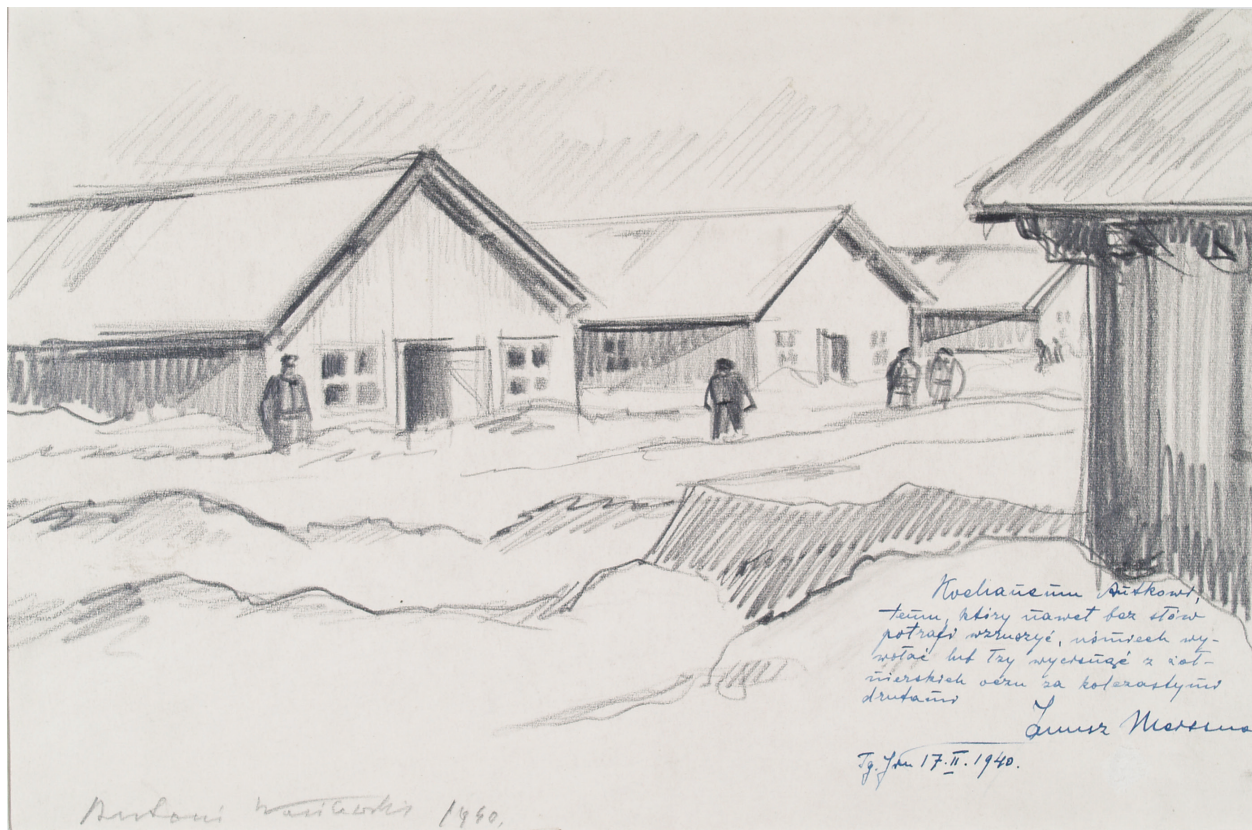
A Romanian guard at the internment camp for Polish Army soldiers in Târgu Jiu

(19 February 1940)

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)



Ex mirimire
Jim King. Spir.
1941-940. S. R. Matanga



Kvelašvili Dickow,
 teim, kšir nāvet bā stāw
 pōtrāš nēturē, nēturē nē-
 mōtāš lēt tē nēturē a iat-
 mēkšēk oērū a kōlāpšlēt
 dūkām

Jūnēr Mōrēnā

Jūn 17. II. 1940.

Arloni vāstēk 1940.

The internment camp in Târgu Jiu.

In the corner a note from Janusz Meissner, a pilot and writer.

The internment camp in Târgu Jiu (17 February 1940). One of the camps which held the largest number of Polish Army soldiers. The majority of them managed to reach France where military organisations of the Polish Army were re-established.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

Our sole food-provider during the journey through Poland and Romania

(19 February 1940) Field kitchen Model 36-R on rubber wheels.
The same type of field kitchens was used by the 10th Cavalry Brigade (motorized).
(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)



Antoni Wierzbicki 1940.

1. podniny po Polsce
 2. Rumuni jedyni, którzy zginęli
 3. w Łagrze. Oni jej niepo, było
 4. w Łagrze 19.2.1940 r.
 5. zginęli
 6. Prolikowski Haim. pl.

Sea coast in Scotland, 2 August 1941
(fragment)
(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







i co dalej?...

nad morem - v perehivrenim
me pomne!...

And what's next... At the seaside, waiting for help!...

The drawing made in June 1940 at the Atlantic shore of France.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

*On board of s/s Clan Ferguson.
22 June 1940 – Le Verdun – France (Le Verdon-sur-Mer)*

English ships evacuated the units of the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

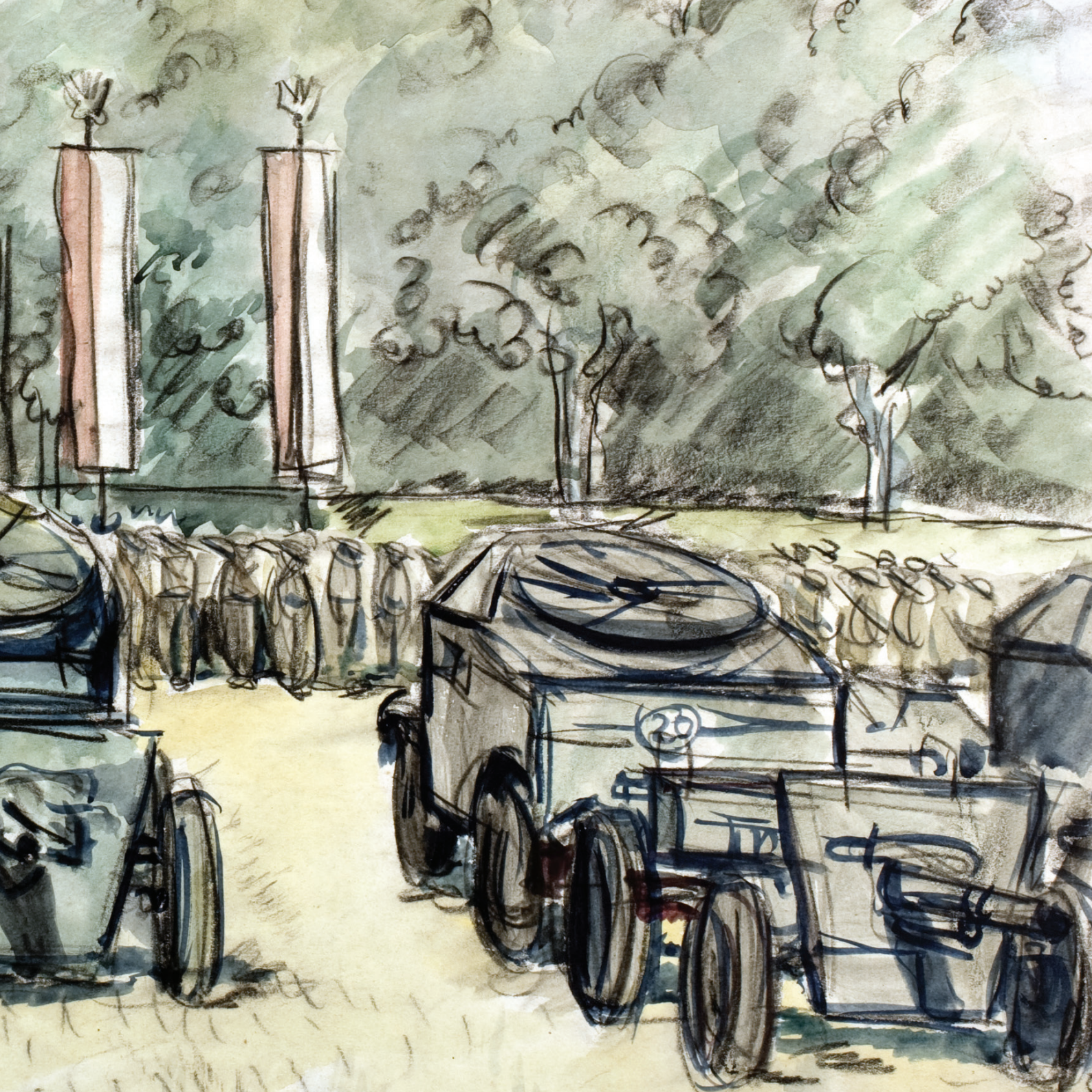


Nia stethu
"Clan Ferguson"
22. VI. 1940 - Le Verdun - France.

Equipment of the 16th Motorized Artillery Division,
Scotland, 21 September 1941
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







Go upadku Francji -
już w Sekrecji!

Ustan
24 p. ułanów z kucmka
w Jaskółce - S. Łojka
30. VII 1940
Ryszard Wąsowski
Ryszard Wąsowski!

After the fall of France, already in Scotland! The first uniform!

(30 August 1940) Soldier of the 24th Lancers Regiment which stationed at that time in Johnstone, Scotland, to protect airfields and the area of the Clyde River mouth.

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)

A rehearsal of the orchestra of the 24th Lancers Regiment

(5 July 1941) The orchestra members used to belong to the pre-war trumpeters unit
of the 24th Lancers Regimente.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)





Морской порт в бухте Лопатки
в Петропавловске-Камчатском
6.10.1941
В.И. Виноградов

Field mass service in Arbroath, Scotland, 6 July 1941

The 24th Lancers Regiment was transferred to that town on 18 October 1940 to protect the eastern coast of Scotland.

During the event presented in the drawing, the soldiers of the 24th Lancers Regiment were awarded the War Orders of Virtuti Militari and the Crosses of Valour for their bravery during the French campaign. They received them from the hands of Lt Gen Kazimierz Sosnowski.

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)

*A printing house of Dziennik Żołnierza [Soldier's Daily]
at the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade, Forfar – Scotland*

(8 July 1941) The newspaper was a daily of the 1st Polish Corps and it was issued in 1940–1943 in Glasgow. Once it was merged with the *Dziennik Polski* [Polish Daily], it was published as *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza* [Polish Daily and Soldier's Daily] from 1 January 1944, becoming the most popular newspaper of the Polish immigrant community in Great Britain.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)



Kapral Diebner - przy maszynie...

Transition Camp No. 12, 1947
(fragment)
(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







Still nature with a helmet and gas mask, Scotland, July 1941

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

Corporal of the “Black Brigade”, Forfar, Scotland, 20 July 1941

The name referred to the 10th Cavalry Brigade (motorized) and was used in the September campaign in Poland. It derived from the black leather jackets and German helmets Model 1916. Upon their arrival to Great Britain the soldiers of the “former” regiments of the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade were allowed to wear a black epaulette on the left arm.

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)



Капитан «Белый» Бригада
10. Бр. 1. Р. Р.
Федерация 20.10.1941
Антони Ван Левин

Капитан 2-й бригады, участник войны, командир
полка 1-й бригады



Хелм і спадокрон (улітні)
та полкі апаратак Speedochronuung w. Saksyph.

Радзі і спадокрон
і І. Руж. і спадокрон. блужа
і апаратак 12. II 1962

A paratrooper of the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade (13 February 1942)

The drawing was made during trainings which is exemplified by the typical training cap [toczek] on the paratrooper's head.

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)

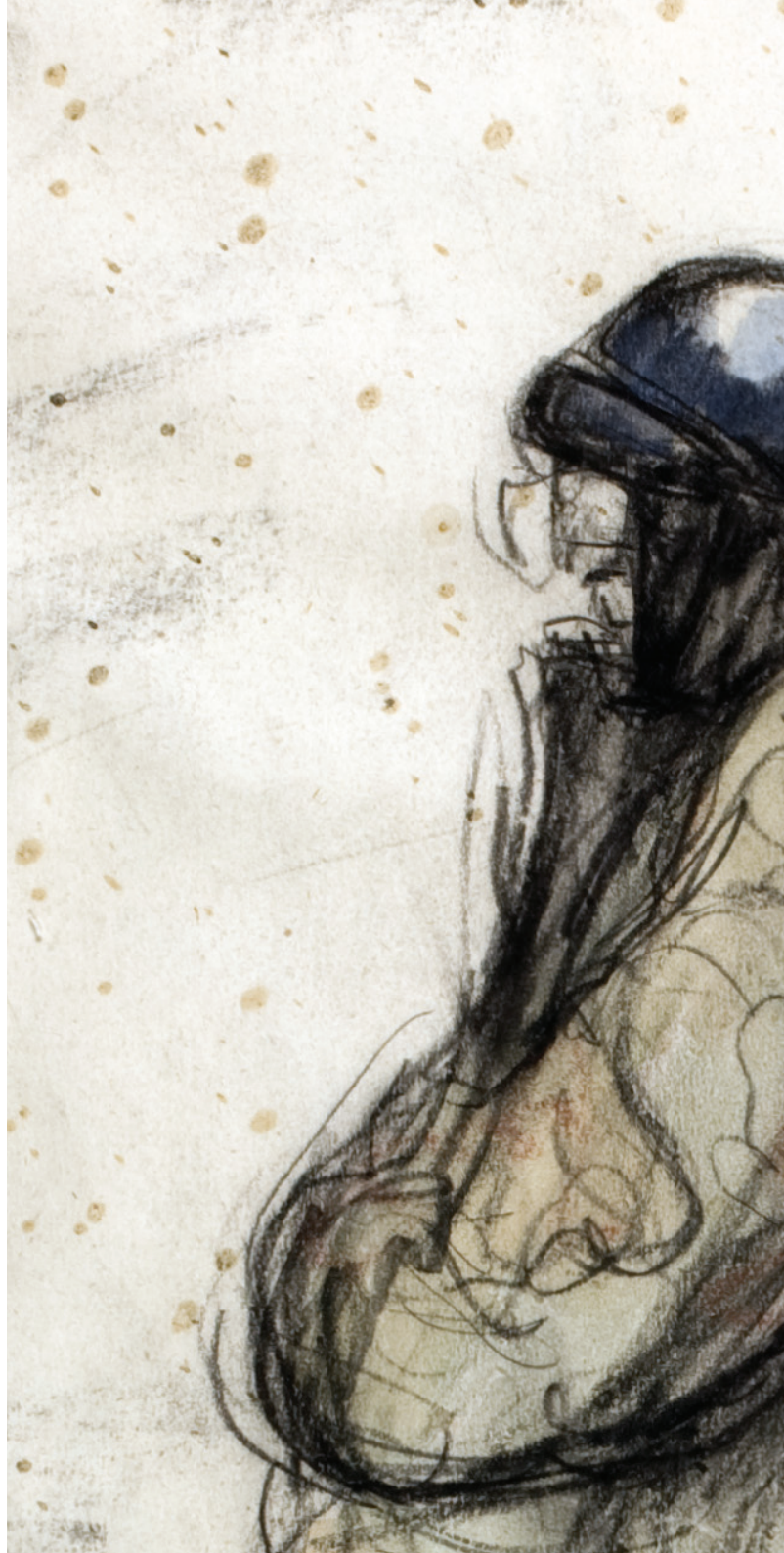
Communication unit of the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade, Scotland 16 February 1942

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)



General Sikorski at military training,
Scotland, 8 August 1941
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







Вид с площадки
в Т. Бугаеве (Спасском)
окрест. 13. II. 1952

Андрей К. Ковалев.

*Parachuting tower at the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade
Largo House near Leven, Scotland, 13 March 1942*

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)

*Briefing of higher-rank commanders upon the arrival of Gen. Sikorski from the USA
in Bridge of Earn, Scotland, 8 April 1942*

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)





Получил письмо-благодарность!
Николай Иванович
09. IV 1992

Polish Radio London! 17 April 1942

The first radio programme of the Polish Radio in London was broadcast – according to various sources – on 1 January 1942 or 4 February 1942. In addition to the most important information for Poles, citations from the Polish press, speeches and announcements of Polish politicians or government, also encrypted information for the Polish underground were transmitted, e.g. places and times of air drops.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

Scotland, 2 June 1942. Metal barracks, the so-called “barrels of laughter” where Polish soldiers lived during their stay on the British Isles.

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)



Platoon Room
2. 4. 1912
Paul W. Anderson

General Sikorski's limousine,
8 April 1942
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







2 ruuttoa 10. P.S.K
"Pajinai"

Ruut. Vainio
6. vi 1912

Boerka - Järvi - Kärvi - Sisko - Kärvi - Forfar

*The 2nd squadron of the Polish 10th Mounted Rifles Regiment “Parisians”,
vicinity of Forfar, Scotland (6 June 1942)*

The nickname of the squadron members originated from the fact that as the infantry unit they had been incorporated into the 10th Mounted Rifles Regiment in Juis near Paris on 2 June 1940: “Although our squadron came for the infantry, our tradition, honour and ambitions are very high.” (from the memories of the senior sergeant Jan Dorosz)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)

A Polish barrage balloon, Glasgow, 17 July 1942

It was a property of the Polish Balloon Flight, which in 1940–1942 held the posts protecting the town and port. The staff of the flight was composed mainly of pre-war Polish balloon battalions.

The balloons at their disposal were the British barrage balloons of the LZ Mk. VII type.

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)



Polki balon
na wójski i Głogowski
19 lipca 1942
Karl Wankowski



*A13 Mk III Covenanter tanks from the 1st Armoured Division in training in Scotland,
7 August 1942*

They were used only for trainings in the British Army and in the Polish Armed Forces.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

Gen. Sikorski is cleaning the shelves (regiments)…, Scotland 1942

The caption is a wordplay – it is clear that the author “corrected” the letter “u” into “ó” changing the word pułki meaning “military regiments” into półki meaning “bookshelves”.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)



Gen. Sikorski robi porządek w półkach...

At the coffin of General Sikorski,
13 July 1943
(fragment)
(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)







Funeral mass service of Gen. Władysław Sikorski at Westminster Cathedral, 15 July 1943

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne)

London by night, 21 January 1944

On the night of 21–22 January, 1944 Luftwaffe conducted air raids on London, in which 447 bombers took part. Of 500 tonnes of bombs dropped, only 30 tonnes were dropped on the city.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)





Demobilisation storehouse (17 September 1948)

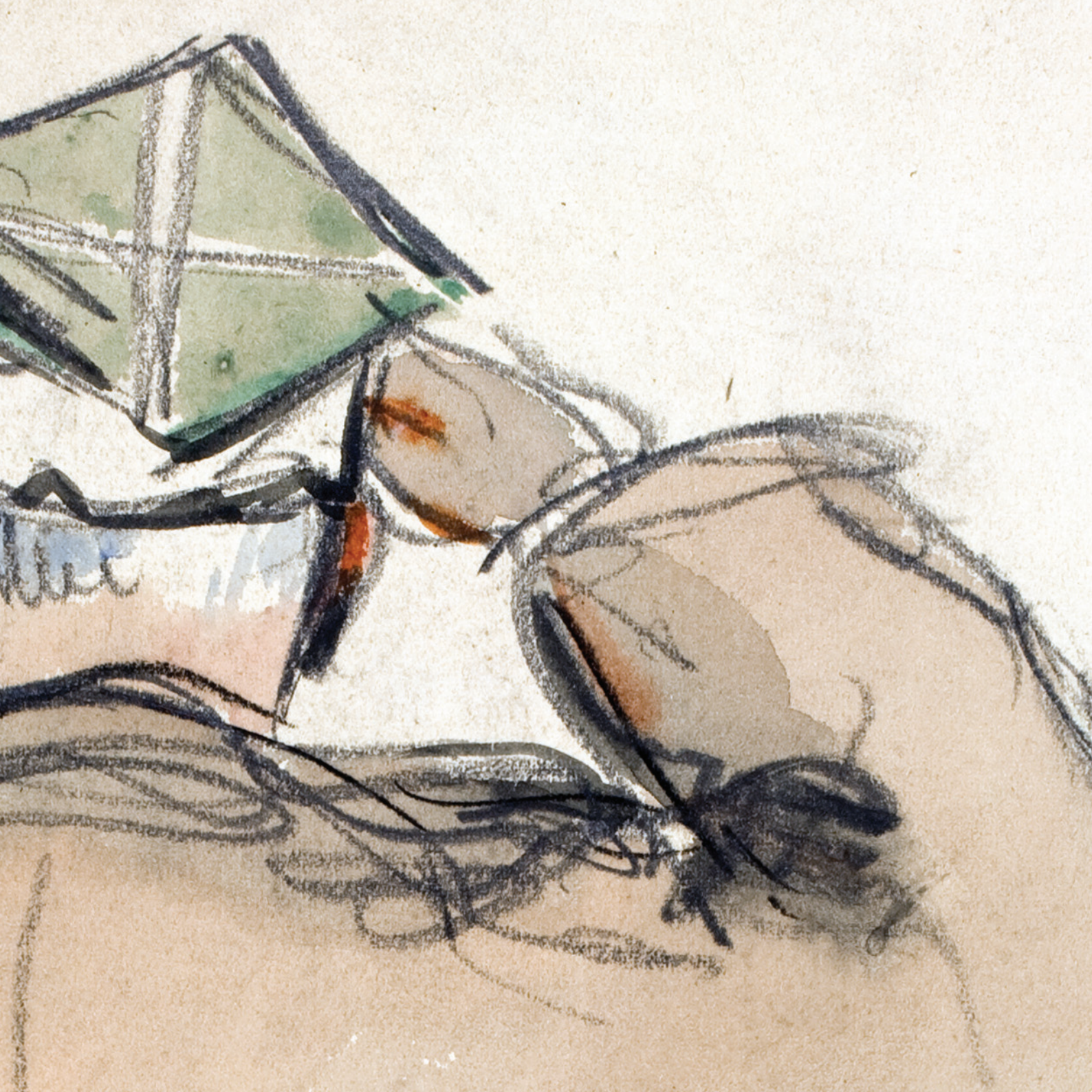
Similar places for collecting uniforms and equipment of hundreds of thousands of discharged soldiers were an inherent element of post-war reality in Western Europe and USA.

(From the collection of the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw)

General Sikorski after his return from the USA,
8 April 1942
(fragment)

(From the collection of the Gen. Władysław Sikorski
Primary School in Hyżne)





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Pałac Sztuki
Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych w Krakowie



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