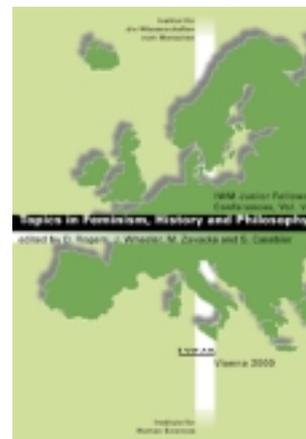


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History of the Anti-Communist Conspiracy in Poland after the Second World War (1944–1956)

by Rafal Wnuk

Research on the anti-Communist conspiracy is in its early stages in Poland for many reasons. First, for over fifty years historians had no access to any documents concerning the conspiracy. This applied both to the documents issued by the Secret Police and to those produced by the Polish underground and kept in the archives that belonged to the Secret Police. Secondly, former members of anti-Communist conspiratorial organizations did their best to hide their past. Those, who had been labeled “public enemies” as well as their families were deprived of all chances of getting a decent education or a good job. Not surprisingly, it was nearly impossible to interview them. The third reason, and perhaps the most important one, is purely ideological. According to the official historiography of the People’s Republic of Poland, the Communist government was greeted enthusiastically by the vast majority of Polish citizens, and the only groups that opposed it consisted of some bourgeois and fascist fanatics, but these were, of course, a tiny fraction of the Polish population. In this situation, one could not carry out any research on the anti-Communist conspiracy, as such a phenomenon was said to be nonexistent, and the work of in-

dependent historians (and by independent I mean those who were not members of the Polish Communist Party) was treated as rebellious and against the Polish state.

Even today, after fifty years, the Polish anti-Communist conspiracy is still a controversial subject. Organizations that have anti-Communist roots perceive anti-Communist conspiracy activists as war heroes fighting the Soviet occupation. To the members of the post-Communist SLD (*Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polski* “Social Democracy of the Polish Republic”) these men had been nothing but bandits until very recently, since the SLD has begun to describe the situation in Poland after the second World War as a state of civil war in which both parties defended their rights without any help from the outside.

Let’s have a look at some facts then. In the second half of 1944, the situation in Poland was very complicated. As a result of its offensive in July 1944, the Red Army reached the Vistula River. The political aim of the insurrection that broke out in Warsaw in August 1944 was to show that the London government of the second *Res Publica* of Poland was the only legal Polish authority. Stalin claimed his right to decide about the Polish state of affairs and held his army back, at the same time allowing Germans to suppress the uprising. He stopped the offensive in half stride and let Germans stifle the Warsaw Uprising.

In the second part of 1944, Poland found itself in a very dramatic situation. Eastern borderlands, together with the cities of Lvov and Vilnius, were incorporated into the Soviet Union. The territories between the Vistula and the Bug rivers (so-called *Polska Lubelska* “Lublin Poland”) were governed by the PKWN (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego* “Polish Committee of National Liberation”) which was a sort of temporary Communist government residing in Lublin. The lands west of the Vistula still remained under German occupation.

It was in these conditions that the anti-Communist conspiracy began to take shape. Over two million Red Army soldiers stayed in Lublin Poland at that time.¹ This means that there were more Red Army soldiers than all men aged 17–50 in this territory. The NKWD (National Commissariat of Internal Affairs) and the Polish Secret Police terrorized the citizens. Until the end of 1944, about 20,000 Polish Home Army soldiers were sent to prison camps in the USSR and tens of thousand of them were imprisoned in Poland.² The repression soon made everybody aware of the nature of the new Communist government, and the Home Army

¹ Tadeusz Krzystek, “Sytuacja militarna aliantów na frontach wojny z Niemcami hitlerowskimi na przełomie 1944 i 1945r.” (in Polish), in *Yalta: szkice i polemiki* (Warsaw, 1996), 18–29.

² Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1997), 97.

soldiers started to perceive the Red Army as the new occupant. What had been an anti-German underground before, now turned into an anti-Communist one.

The situation in the territories incorporated into the USSR resembled the one in Lublin Poland. The difference was that, due to the fact that they had been incorporated into the USSR, the most important task to be carried out in this case was to prove that they were ethnically Polish. The conspiracy troops tried to prevent the foundation of a Soviet administration on these territories, and they issued and distributed underground newspapers. In October 1944, PKWN and the government of the USSR signed an agreement on the resettlement of the Poles then inhabiting the Soviet territories to the new Polish lands. As a result, within just one year nearly the entire Polish population (about two million people) was expelled from the Soviet Union, and the newborn conspiracy died a natural death in these territories.³ The expelled population had the most reasons for hating Communists and it is from this group that the most committed anti-Communists took root and fought later on in Poland.

The western territories still had the German occupation to fight. Cut off from any news from the East they awaited the Red Army with a mixture of hope and anxiety.

The Soviet offensive moved forward in January 1945, and the Germans were finally driven out of Poland. The situation for the Home Army headquarters and the Polish government in London did not become any easier. Poland was an ally of the USA, UK, and USSR. To keep an underground army in the territories occupied by the Red Army was treated as a pro-German and pro-fascist activity by Stalin. That is why, in February 1945, the Polish government in London decided to dissolve the Home Army. The order to do so was given by the Commander-in-Chief, General Leopold Okulicki. In the last lines of the order he wrote:

Poland by the Russian "recipe" is not the Poland we have been fighting the Germans over for the last six years. It is not the Poland for which the sea of Polish blood has been shed and for which millions of Poles suffered and the country been devastated. We don't want to get involved in the fight with the Soviets, but we will never accept living in a country other than the independent, sovereign Polish state. The present Soviet victory does not end the war. We must not lose our belief that this war can only end with the triumph of our cause, the triumph of good over evil, the triumph of independence over slavery.

³ Ibid., 115.

Home Army Soldiers, I give you my last order. Work and act with the independence of the Polish state and the care of the Polish citizens in mind.⁴

It is quite clear that this order to dissolve the Home Army could easily be interpreted as a call for further struggle, especially because in place of the Home Army a secret Delegation of Army Forces was founded.

The secret DSZ (*Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych* “Delegation of Army Forces”) was founded in order to help former Home Army soldiers in their new life as civilians. However, different conditions in the country made DSZ take over most of the objectives and actions of the dissolved Home Army.

In Lublin Poland, Home Army soldiers treated the order to dissolve their organization as a purely tactical move, and the Home Army simply remained underground there. What is more, while the Red Army marched westward, the Home Army immediately took action in these territories. The level of activity of partisan troops there was as “vigorous” as during the German occupation. In just three months—March, April, and May 1945—underground troops practically liquidated all the organs of the Communist government in smaller towns and villages. The real power of the Communists was confined to bigger towns and cities only.

The situation in the territories, those said to have been “freed” by the Red Army in 1945, looked different. There the Communists had not yet shown their true colors, and so the dissolution of the Home Army was carried out in the majority of lands there. However, the Communists’ persecutions of the former Home Army soldiers soon led to the rebirth of conspiratorial organizations. Many of these organizations were totally new ones and only some of them recognized DSZ as their authority. Among the numerous organizations that were independent of DSZ, a few deserve to be examined in detail. In the spring of 1945 the KWP (*Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie* “Conspiracy Polish Army”) was founded in central and western Poland, in the present provinces of Poznań, Łódź, and Katowice. Its forces amounted to about 5,000 soldiers. This organization was very active in the field of propaganda and offered back-up to the legal anti-Communist opposition. KWP recognized the government in London as its authority.⁵ In May 1945, “Warta” (*Wielkopolska Samodzielna Grupa Operacyjna* “Independent Voluntary Group of

⁴ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach* (in Polish), vol. 4, (Warsaw-Wrocław-Kraków, 1990), 239.

⁵ *Informator o organizacjach i bandach zbrojnych 1944–1956* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1964), 213–215.

Wielkopolska”) was founded. This organization had about 7,000 members and was similar in its aims and actions to KWP.⁶

One of the most interesting organizational structures was that of “Ogień” (Fire) led by Józef Kuras. During the period of German occupation, J. Kuras was the commander of a conspiratorial troop operating in Gorce (a mountain chain in Karpaty). When the Red Army marched into the region, he volunteered to cooperate and was appointed its Commander of Secret Police (UB) in Kraków. After three weeks of service, he decided that he had made a mistake and that the Red Army had not brought freedom but merely a new form of occupation. He returned to the woods and, together with his old companions, started to fight the new occupying force. His troops were growing fast, and in 1946 they amounted to 700 soldiers. They were a very efficient group and in fact practically erased the Soviet administration from the southern parts of the Krakow province. Kuras and his followers controlled towns, villages, and roads.

It is hard to speak of conspiratorial activity in Ogień’s case. Kurase’s troops did not bother to stay undercover, and they had very strong back-up among the local people, who in turn had a very strong sense of tradition and family bonds. It seems that Ogień was a twentieth century Robin Hood for the highlanders. Ogień stayed in touch both with the London government and the national conspiratorial forces but in fact he never recognized any of these as his authority.⁷

The Exterritory Home Army Vilnius Circle was quite different in its character. It consisted of the Vilnius region Home Army soldiers who decided to revive their organization in the regions of Gdańsk and Silesia. The Circle functioned as the Intelligence network and sent information to London. Their human force amounted to 1,000 members. Next to these relatively big organizations, there were many minor ones (having from several to a hundred members) that operated in different parts of Poland.⁸

One of the effects of the Second World War was the shifting of Polish borders toward to the west. Two rivers, the Odra and the Nysa, formed the western borderline. Over a third of Poland’s post-war territory had belonged to Germany before the Second World War. After the war, the Germans were expelled from their former homeland and Poles were resettled on these territories. No social bonds existed

⁶ Ibid., 217–219.

⁷ Maciej Korkuc, “Zgrupowanie partyzanckie ‘Blyskawica’” (in Polish), *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u*, no. 5 (1995): 31–45.

⁸ Dariusz Fikus, *Pseudoni “Lupaszka”* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1988), 113–169.

in the new Polish lands, therefore there was no basis for organizing a conspiracy there.

As we can see, one can easily distinguish three very different regions in post-war Poland. In eastern Poland there were very strong, homogenized conspiratorial structures inherited from the German occupation. In central Poland, the anti-Communist conspiracy was being spontaneously rebuilt. This conspiracy was based mostly on the old Home Army structures, but the organizations created in this way worked independently of one another and without any links to the Home Army's central command. In the western part of Poland, the anti-Communist conspiracy was the weakest and functioned rather as an "intelligence network" than as a mass conspiracy. Between March and May 1945, conspiratorial organizations grew steadily and probably reached the level of the former anti-German conspiracy. According to Secret Police estimates from those times, there were about 300 partisan groups in the Polish territories consisting of up to 30,000 members.⁹ They continued to grow, regardless of the fact that leaders of the Polish Underground State were captured and imprisoned by the Soviets during the negotiations to which they had been invited by the representatives of the USSR authorities. They were then put on trial and found guilty of collaboration with German occupying forces.

Poland awaited the outbreak of a third world war, which to many Poles seemed inevitable and only a matter of time. This new war was to break out after the final defeat of Germany. According to common beliefs, Stalin's plan was to fight for control of all of Europe, which was unacceptable for both the UK and the USA. That is why it was believed that a new conflict was certain and very near. In this new war Polish underground forces would turn out to be an invaluable ally to the united forces of Great Britain and the USA.

However in early June of 1945 it turned out that the new conflict was less likely than it had seemed, and both the UK and USA were trying hard to free themselves from any obligations toward a troublesome ally in the form of the Polish government in London. Under the pressure exerted by the allied forces, Polish Prime Minister S. Mikolajczyk returned from London and joined the Communist government in Poland. A new government, the so-called RJN was formed. In it, eighty percent of the seats belonged to the Communists. These included the Ministry of Defense, the Home Office, the Foreign Office, and the Ministry of Trade. Twenty

⁹ *Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe*, fund 1785/90/19, Zagadnienie walki z bandytyzmem.

percent of the offices were given to S. Mikolajczyk's proponents.¹⁰ The new government was immediately recognized by the West and the USSR. It turned out that there was a common ground for the three superpowers, even if it required a small sacrifice in the form of the loss of Central Europe's independence. Poland's hopes to regain independence in the course of a new military conflict were shattered.

The leaders of conspiratorial organizations had to grin and bear it and look for new ways of fighting the Soviet regime effectively. In September 1945, DSZ underwent certain transformations and a new organization, the Association of Freedom and Independence (*Wolnosc i Niezawislosc* or WiN), emerged. Its founders decided that there was no longer a place for a truly military organization and that the Home Army had to be replaced by a political organization. WiN worked independently of the decisions of the Polish government in London as this government was no longer recognized internationally. As there was no chance to revise the post-war shape of Polish borders, WiN's main objective was to make sure that the promises made by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin in Yalta, were kept.¹¹ In Yalta, the Big Three agreed that the political system of Poland was to be decided on by the Polish Parliament chosen in the free general elections. WiN's main aim was to make sure that the general elections were truly free, so that anti-Communist candidates had a chance to win seats in the Parliament. As the only opposition party at that time was the PSL (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* "Polish Peasants' Party") created by S. Mikolajczyk, WiN gave its entire support to this party; so did all minor anti-Communist organizations that existed then.

In order to adapt to the situation, WiN's leaders attempted to transform the military organization into a civilian one, and brought moderate success. In many regions, especially mountainous ones or in the east of Poland where there were many forests, the conspiracy still had a military character. At the beginning of 1946, there were still 3,000–5,000 underground soldiers, despite their leaders' strong attempts to liquidate partisan troops.

Apart from the conspiratorial organizations that emerged after the dissolution of the Home Army, there were two other national conspiratorial forces. These were the NSZ (*Narodowe Sily Zbrojne* "National Armed Forces") and the NZW (*Narodowy Zwiazek Wojskowy* and "National Army Association"). NZW was the armed

¹⁰ Krystyna Kersten, *Narodzinz systemu wladzy Polska 1943–1948* (in Polish) (Lublin, 1989), 123–129.

¹¹ Tomasz Honkisz, "Zrzeszenie Wolnosc i Niezawislosc" (in Polish), in *Armia Krajowa: Dramatyczny epilog* (Warsaw: 1994), 93–94.

hand of the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe* or SN), an underground political party. In July 1945, National Party leaders attempted to legalize their organization. President Bierut was sent a memorandum in which the party leaders expressed their views on the necessity of founding a party that would consolidate the right wing opposition traditions. In response, Communist authorities arrested the memorandum signatories.¹² National Party activists remained underground and radicalized their actions. The National Party as well as NZW did not recognize the post-Yalta Polish borders, and both accused S. Mikolajczyk of national treason. They recognized the London government and kept in touch with it through a network of couriers. SN's strongest structures operated in the southern and northeastern regions of Poland. The other national organization, NSZ, recognized neither the London government nor the Communist one. NSZ members were governed by their representatives in Western Europe; in fact these representatives constituted the only legal Polish authority that NSZ members would recognize. They were the most radical, anti-democratic right wing association. Like NSW, members of NSZ believed that the only way to the full sovereignty of Poland was through a military conflict. Both organizations, however, supported the idea of a strong, centralized country and so their actions were anti-Communist. Yet they also concentrated on eliminating ethnic minorities. Historians estimate that the troops of NSZ and NZW killed about 1,000 Ukrainians in 1945 and 1946 alone. Despite their strength, the influence of these national conspiracies was a couple of degrees smaller than that of the post-Home Army.

The activity of anti-Communist organizations made it possible for them to wield considerable power in many regions of Poland. In the spring and summer of 1946, in southern and eastern Poland many militia stations were broken up, and during the attacks on prisons members of conspiracy groups were freed. Conspiracy members were especially eager to do away with Communist Party and Secret Police members. Such actions were possible because the new Polish Army brought to life by Communists avoided any conflicts with the conspiratorial forces. In fact, in 1945 probably none of the actions taken by the Polish Army against the conspiratorial troops ended with the Communists' success. Most members of the Polish Militia were also reluctant to fight the "bandits." It was only the Secret Police, which recruited its men from among Communists trained in the USSR and commanded by NKWD officers, who showed genuine eagerness and zeal in eliminating the Polish conspiracy. However, as Secret Police total forces amounted to no more

¹² Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945–1980* (in Polish) (London, 1994), 38–43.

than a total of 12,000 men, they were unable to control the situation. The burden of fighting the underground and building the new state lay on the shoulders of NKWD. At the time, out of total of thirty-five NKWD regiments, ten stayed in Germany, five in Austria, five in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania, and fifteen in Poland, which officially was the Soviet Union's ally. If we do a rough head count, it turns out that forty-three percent of the total NKWD forces operating outside the USSR stayed in Poland!

The results were soon visible. Some minor post-Home Army and a couple of national conspiratorial organizations were liquidated in 1945–46. A large number of people were arrested and this also weakened the conspiracy. In 1945 to '46, 80,000 conspiracy members were put on trial and 4,500 sentenced to death. Three thousand death sentences were carried out. Still the anti-Communist conspiracy was alive, and 3,000–5,000 underground army soldiers remained in their shelters in many forests. As the time passed, the Secret Police grew more and more experienced. Trained and often led by NKWD officers, they became a dangerous opponent. They broadened their network of informers and sometimes even organized fake partisan troops to pass themselves off as partisans. All these methods, in addition to brutal interrogation techniques, soon began to bring the awaited results. In November 1945, the first big post-Home Army organization, namely "Warta," was broken up.

The turning point was the referendum of 30 June 1946.

The Communist authorities did their best to postpone general elections in order to gain more time to prepare for them. They organized a nationwide referendum in which three questions were asked:

1. Are you for a one-chamber Parliament?
2. Are you for agricultural reform and the nationalization of industry?
3. Are you for the boundary on the Oder and Nysa rivers?

The Communists agitated to vote for all three, the official opposition (PSL) was against the first question and the anti-Communist conspiracy, depending on the region of Poland, was against the first and the second, or all of them. According to the documents discovered by Professor A. Paczkowski about fifty-eight percent of the voters followed the anti-conspiracy instructions, about fifteen percent backed the official opposition, and nearly twenty-eight supported the Communists. According to Professor Paczkowski, the true results of the referendum were even less

favorable for the Communists, as they were several times “corrected” by the referendum committees.¹³

The official results showed overwhelming success for the Communists. According to them, sixty-seven percent of the voters backed the Communists, and democratic countries who were obliged to ensure that the referendum was valid voiced no objections to this overt forgery. It became quite clear that the general elections may be as equally easily forged. The most prominent factor that had kept the resistance very much alive—that is, HOPE—was considerably weakened.

In the six months following the referendum, the persecutions of conspiracy members intensified. According to the official data on fighting the underground, 250,000 militia members, Secret Police, and national army soldiers were sent to fight the conspiratorial organizations.¹⁴ In the autumn and winter of 1946, KWP was broken up. The National Armed Forces suffered such heavy losses that in December 1946 its leaders decided to dissolve it. Due to many arrests at the turn of 1946–47, WiN and NSZ lost their commanders. On 22 February 1947, Ogien was surrounded in his bunker (having been betrayed by one of his soldiers) and, seeing no chances to get away, he committed a suicide. “Headless bodies” of conspiratorial organizations tried to operate but their actions were losing impact. The resistance started to break up. However, it must have still been rather vigorous because, when Stalin wanted to withdraw his NKWD forces from Poland in November 1946, Polish Communist president B. Bierut begged him not to do it, as he feared that Polish Communist authorities would be crushed the very minute NKWD left Poland. Stalin decided to offer Bierut his further “assistance.”¹⁵

The forged parliamentary election took place in January 1947. It was another great success for the Communists, who won over eighty percent of the votes. There was no sense of remaining in the conspiratorial structures any longer, because there was no chance for the outbreak of a third world war or a democratic election. In February 1947, the Communist Parliament announced amnesty for the members of the resistance. Thirty thousand people left the conspiratorial organizations. The nationwide mass conspiracy was brought to an end. The only organization that

¹³ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Referendum z 30 czerwca 1946r: Przebieg i wyniki* (in Polish) (Warsaw: 1993), 7–15.

¹⁴ Henryk Dominiczak, *W walce o Polskę Ludową* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1980), 7–15.

¹⁵ Sergiej Kriwczenko, “Dokumenty ‘Teczki specjalnej’ Stalina dotyczące działalności organów NKWD w Polsce 1944–1956” (in Polish), in *NKWD o Polsce i Polakach, rekonesans archiwalny* (Warsaw, 1996), 30.

managed to rebuild some of its structures after amnesty was announced was WiN. The next mass attack came in autumn 1947; in October and November of which, the remaining commanders were arrested and sentenced to death.¹⁶ The death sentences were carried out immediately. It was at this point that the nationwide centralized conspiratorial network ceased to exist.

According to the official data, between 1944–1947 over 15,000 conspiracy soldiers were killed by the Communists—primarily by NKWD and members of the Communist Party and Secret Police. During the same period, the amount of casualties on the side of the Communists was comparable to that of their victims.¹⁷

The year 1947 brought about the end of the most important chapter in the history of the anti-Communist armed resistance. This does not mean that the resistance itself came to an end. The most active underground leaders, as well as their soldiers, suspected that leaving the underground meant quick arrests, trials, and death sentences. The alternative was to stay in hiding in the forests and wait for a “turn of the tide” or hope for the mercy of the new people’s government. Many soldiers who were quite convinced that the Communist authorities would have no mercy on them chose further struggle. They created small groups composed of several soldiers each, and hid in the woods, counting on only the most trusted people for provisions. These groups tried to avoid conflicts with the new Polish army or the Secret Police at all costs. Sometimes they murdered those Secret Police members or informers who might have been a danger to them. As we can see, this was an attempt to survive rather than to fight the Communists.

Soon it became evident that those who thought that the ulterior motive of granting amnesty was to decipher the structures of the underground were quite right. In 1948–1950, many conspiratorial activists who had left the underground were arrested. Seeing this, their companions began to hide again. Sometimes they joined the still-existing forest troops in southeastern Poland. In Poland, at that time, there were probably about thirty such troops, which were fast, well-hidden and, thus, difficult to trace. Members of these troops knew that if they were caught alive, they would be tortured and finally sentenced to death; therefore, if the troop was surrounded, they committed a suicide. The last of such troops operated until 1954.

The partisans were not the only group that showed the will of resistance. In 1948–1955 about three hundred small organizations, Home Army, or Scouting

¹⁶ Zygmunt Wozniczka, *Zrzeszenie “Wolnosc i Niezawislosc”* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1992), 120–122.

¹⁷ Jerzy Slaski, *Zolnierze wykleci* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1996), 250–251.

movement groups, were brought to life.¹⁸ Only a few of them were founded by former conspiracy group members. Instead, the majority consisted of high school teenagers. Their activity was limited to publishing and distributing propaganda leaflets, or sometimes collecting fire arms. Most of these organizations lasted a only couple a months before they were broken up.

There were some exceptions, however. In 1949, an organization named Kraj (The State) emerged. It was led by a former Home Army and WiN officer, and had branches in a couple of Polish cities. Apart from its propaganda activities, Kraj members were trained in armed struggle—they were taught how to use certain types of weapons and how to derail trains. In 1951, Kraj's members shot Polish Radio's speaker, Jan Martyka. He was the author of series of programs that portrayed all anti-German conspiratorial forces of World War II, as well as the Scouting organizations and the Catholic Church, as fascist and anti-democratic organizations. Martyka's death shocked Communist authorities. It was not a militia or a lower Secret Police member who was killed, but a man linked to the highest Communist officials, a member of the Communist elite. After Martyka's assassination, Kraj decided to suspend its activity. It took the Secret Police three years to find the men guilty of the deed.

In speaking about the 1948–1956 Polish conspiracy, one cannot overlook the so-called V Command of WiN. In 1945–1947 WiN had as many as four leaders. As mentioned above, in 1947 the last of WiN's leaders were arrested. It was not much longer before the Secret Police started to prepare a mass operation against conspiracy members. In 1947, the Secret Police managed to recruit one of WiN's officers who cooperated with WiN's leaders. The Secret Police used him to found a false conspiratorial organization. In this way, V Command of WiN was created. This was he Secret Police organization that lured many anti-Communist activists. The organization tried to get in touch with the partisan troops that still remained in the forests in order to take them over. It built regional networks to recruit people who were willing to continue their struggle for independence. It also made contact with London anti-Communist circles, and its leaders signed an agreement to cooperate with American intelligence forces (CIA). On the basis of this agreement, the Americans were to finance the Polish underground in exchange for reports on the underground's actions. The Secret Police agents, as well conspirators totally unaware of the provocation, were situated in the West. The conspirators passed on reports that had been previously prepared by the Secret Police specialists. Ameri-

¹⁸ *Informator o organizacjach i bandach zbrojnych 1944–1956* (in Polish) (Warsaw, 1964).

cans trained the conspirators in West Germany, equipped them with all their “gadgets,” stuffed their pockets with dollars to finance their activity, and sent them back to Poland. In this way, the Secret Police were able to gain invaluable information on all high-tech equipment used by the Americans and Western training techniques as well as taking a considerable amount of money.

In December 1952, the Secret Police, decided to close the whole operation for unknown reasons. The Secret Police agents who had taken part in the operation voluntarily “came out into the open” and issued a statement in which they explained their decision. In the statement, published in the nationwide press, these agents wrote that they understood the criminal nature of their activity. Communist Poland, they wrote, had made unquestionable achievements, and the state acts in the most vital interest of the country and its people. They understood their mistake and, hoping for the mercy of the people’s government, they handed themselves in to the Communist authorities. The next piece of news was that those who admitted their guilt were hoping not to be punished. The genuine members of the conspiracy who took part in the operation were sentenced to many years of imprisonment. Ten of them were sentenced to death, and the sentences were carried out. This Secret Police operation ended with the Polish government victorious and American intelligence leaders taking ridicule.¹⁹

The stories of active resistance, which has its roots in the anti-German conspiracy, end in 1956. The events of that year—Chruszczow’s paper, “de-Stalinisation”, manifestations in Poznan, Gomulka’s release from prison and his coming to power—all of these contributed to the announcement of amnesty. Nearly all members of the Home Army and WiN were freed.

What was the fate of these former conspirators? Most of them never had any public life, which is not surprising if we remember that many of them were uneducated farmers. When they had been released from prison, they returned to their small farms and villages. But what about the officers and organization leaders, often highly educated?

Conspiracy leaders usually kept in touch with one another after they had been released from prison and formed small “airtight” circles, ever suspicious of anybody from the “Outside.” In the late sixties, former WiN leaders living in Warsaw decided to found a student conspiratorial organization. Some of them managed to gather groups of students from Warsaw, Łódz, and Lublin, and in this way brought

¹⁹ Stanislaw Kluz, *W potrzasku dziejowym: WiN na szlaku AK* (in Polish) (London, 1978), 23–85.

to life “Move” (Ruch). This conspiratorial organization issued the first underground newsletter after 1956. In 1970, Move’s members tried to blow up the monument of Lenin in Poronin. In the same year Move’s leaders were arrested, and the organization ceased to exist.²⁰

In June 1976, workers’ strikes, which broke out in several Polish cities, were brutally stifled by the police. In order to protect the workers against police forces, two organizations were created. These were the left wing Committee for the Workers’ Defense (*Komitet Obrony Robotników* or KOR) and The Defense of Human and Citizen Rights Movement (*Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela* or ROPCiO). In the latter, former Home Army and WiN soldiers played an important role.²¹

Later, in the Solidarity and the martial law periods, former anti-Communist conspiracy members of 1944–47 did act independently. It was only in 1989 that new independent combat organizations could be found. Some of them were non-political according to their statutes and by-laws, but they still got involved in political life. There were both center- and extreme-right-wing organizations among them.

The strong conviction that the former UB members should be held responsible for their crimes is what brought all these organization together. For this reason in a number of general elections, the combatants voted for post-Solidarity parties.

Now we witness a curious phenomenon. On one hand the “golden legend” of the anti-Communist conspiracy is constantly being written, on the other hand it is constantly being pushed aside. Right-wing organizations stress the elements of Polish history in which the nation’s resistance against Communism prevails. Post-Communist parties try to minimize the significance of the anti-Communist resistance and stress the lack of an alternative in those times. According to the right wing, the struggle against Communism is the sole proof of patriotism. According to the left wing, it just shows the lack of political realism.

As we can see, the problem the of anti-Communist conspiracy is not only a historical issue, it still plays an important part in Poland’s contemporary political debates.

²⁰ “Ruch wobec stabilizacji” (in Polish), *Karta* 20 (1997): 73–106.

²¹ Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL* (in Polish) (London, 1994), 231–347.