

Eugeniusz Duraczyński

THE WARSAW RISING. RESEARCH AND DISPUTES CONTINUE

On October 4, 1944 “Biuletyn Informacyjny” concluded: “The fight is over. After more than two months, the period which constitutes one of the noblest and also one of the most tragic pages of our history has come to an end. It is still too early to pass an objective judgment. We must leave it to history to reckon up our losses and gains, our attainments and errors, our sacrifices and the values we have gained”¹. But disputes over the purposefulness of the sacrifice were already going on. They were started by the participants in the rising when the fight was still in full swing². Some politicians³ and commanders of the Polish Armed Forces in the West⁴ also expressed their opinions, and publicists did not lag behind⁵. The dispute has been going on since August 1944. Only the accents have changed; the views expressed in the summer of 1994 were diametrically opposed to those which had predominated until recently. In October 1944 nobody had any doubt that those who gave the order to launch the rising and those who fought for “the greatest values in the Nation’s life” paid the highest price in this fight ... It is an enormous price in terms of human suffering, in terms of the death toll, in terms of material and cultural losses. It is a particularly painful price in view of the losses suffered by this most valuable of all national assets, the flower and fruit of the nation, the ardent, zealous and enthusiastic self-sacrificing youth”⁶. A sense of a dreadful defeat, greater than had ever been suffered in

¹ *Po walce (After the Fight)*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny”, № 102, 4.10.1944.

² See the reports of the Home Army intelligence cells and the Bureau of Press Information published in: *Ludność cywilna w powstaniu warszawskim (The Civilian Population in the Warsaw Rising)*, ed. C. Małajczyk, vol. II, Warszawa 1974. and J. Hanson, *The Civilian Population and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944*, Cambridge 1982.

³ See E. Duraczyński, *Rząd polski na uchodźstwie 1939–1945. Organizacja — Personalia — Polityka (The Polish Government-in-Exile 1939–1945. Its Organization, Personal Data, Politics)*, Warszawa 1993, p. 388.

⁴ Gen. W. Anders excelled in this, as is pointed out later.

⁵ See, for instance, the London-based “Myśl Polska”, № 76, 25.8.1944.

a national uprising, beginning with the Kościuszko Insurrection, predominated at that time.

Fifty years later President Lech Wałęsa, addressing veterans of the August rising, said that they “did not lose that fight”, they had won, and the commander of the Home Army, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, had also won⁷. At the opening of the a Warsaw Rising exhibition in the Norblin factory Stanisław Broniewski (“Orsza”), head of the underground Grey Ranks (Boy Scouts’ and Girl Guides’ Movement), explaining the nature of this triumph, said: “Fifty years after the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising we can at last say that our fight was victorious. This was a victory of spirit over matter”⁸. In August 1944, General Władysław Anders, commander of the Second Polish Corps in Italy, kept repeating stubbornly that the decision “to launch the rising was a grave crime”, that “the launching of an uprising in Warsaw at this time was not only stupid but unequivocally criminal”⁹. In 1994 Lech Wałęsa asserted that the rising had been “inevitable”. “We had no way out at that time. What remains in such a situation is only faith in God and loyalty to the Fatherland, loyalty to the rules of honour and to oneself. We had to stake all on a chance”¹⁰. The president objected to the opinion that the decision taken 50 years before had been suicidal. It was risky but not suicidal, he said¹¹. The opinions of many publicists and even some historians were in the same vein. In this nearly unanimous choir a dissonant note was struck by the only surviving member of the Home Council of Ministers of that time, Adam Bień, one of the political leaders of the rising. In an extensive interview to a journalist of “Życie Warszawy” he said that in the summer of 1944 he was convinced that those who had taken the decision were competent, wise people. It turned out, however, that they lacked wisdom, for “the rising did not attain any of its aims. It did not attain its military objective, for it failed to defeat the Germans and liberate Warsaw from their power. Nor did it attain its political goal, for it did not instal an independent sovereign Polish government in the capital of the Polish state, a government which would have counterweighed the Lublin committee and Russia, and which would have implemented Poland’s political interests on free Polish soil. This is enough to state confidently that it was a mistake”.

⁶ See fn. 1.

⁷ “Gazeta Wyborcza” N° 176, (30–31.7.1994), N° 178 (2.8.1994).

⁸ Quoted after “Wiadomości Kulturalne”, N° 9, 24.7.1994.

⁹ See A. K. K u n e r t, *Rzeczpospolita Walcząca. Powstanie warszawskie 1944, kalendarium (The Fighting Republic. The Warsaw Rising 1944, Calendar)*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 172, 221. Similar opinions were expressed by W. Anders, *ibidem*, pp. 62, 106, 297.

¹⁰ “Gazeta Wyborcza” N° 176, 30–31.7.1994.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, N° 178, 2.8.1994.

The fight of the soldiers and insurrectionists, continued Bień, “was futile and so were all the sacrifices”¹².

Questions about the sense of the August hecatomb, the emotions accompanying the invitation of the presidents of Germany and Russia to the commemoration events, the political setting of the events commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Rising practically dominated public life in Poland at the end of July and the beginning of August 1994. Fortunately, this political turmoil did not overshadow such important events as the appearance of many valuable publications devoted to the Warsaw Rising. Some of them stand the chance of remaining for long, if not for ever, in the canon of compulsory reading without which our knowledge of those days would be poorer and, as regards some questions, even fragmentary.

Various publishing houses brought out many studies on that occasion¹³, but what was missing was a synthesis of the history of the Warsaw Rising for, contrary to what some people say, neither Andrzej Kunert’s valuable book¹⁴ nor Janusz K. Zawodny’s important study¹⁵, written in 1978 but only now brought out in Poland, can be regarded as a synthesis. It seems that we shall still have to wait for a new synthesis¹⁶ and in the meantime pore over the publications which appeared in the wake of the 50th anniversary of the August insurrection. As is usual, there are among them successful as well as weak works, works revealing new, source-based facts, posing essential questions and proposing new interpretations as well as abortive studies with interpretations which are so doubtful that they do not deserve polemics, works with so many factual errors that their authors can be rightly accused of incompetence. Fortunately, the anniversary events did not produce many such works. But I cannot help citing a statement by an otherwise titled author: “None of the national risings from the Confederation of Bar (*sic!*), the Kościuszko Insurrection, the November and January Uprisings, the 1905 revolution, the November effort in 1918, the defence of Warsaw in 1929 (*sic!*) and 1939 was of such a general character as the Warsaw Ri-

¹² “Życie Warszawy” (Sunday supplement “Niedziela”), N° 183, 30–31.7.1994.

¹³ In addition to the studies discussed in this article there appeared many other publications dealing with the individual detachments taking part in the uprising, important actions and the like.

¹⁴ See fn. 9

¹⁵ J. K. Zawodny, *Powstanie warszawskie w walce i dyplomacji (The Warsaw Rising, The Fight and Diplomacy)*, Warszawa 1994.

¹⁶ As regards earlier syntheses, readers continue to use the works by A. Borkiewicz, *Powstanie warszawskie 1944 (The Warsaw Rising 1944)*, Warszawa 1957 and later editions, and J. Kirchmayer, *Powstanie warszawskie (The Warsaw Rising)*, 9th ed., Warszawa 1984.

sing"¹⁷. So the author included events in Galicia and the Polish Kingdom in October–November 1918, the battle of Warsaw of 1920 and the defence of the capital in September 1939 in his list of uprisings. The Confederation of Bar was also given the rank of a national uprising.

However, let us pass to serious works and start with sources. It is a great pleasure to see that sources which were previously unknown or little known have been made available to scholars. In this respect the palm must be given to Maciej Józef Kwiatkowski's publication¹⁸. Although the structure of the book seems not to have been sufficiently thought out (the publication is like two books in one) and the editorial work defies the elementary principles governing the editing of sources, it is impossible not to see that Kwiatkowski's work has supplied us with all the extant texts of the insurgents' radio broadcasts, in particular the daily comments by Edmund Osmańczyk ("Jan Gor"). This is an important material. It was listened to by few Warsaw inhabitants but it reached the West and was intended to help shape a favourable opinion of the Warsaw Rising among Western mass media and politicians. It does credit to the author's intentions, but does not change much the picture we know well: the uprising did not shake the world's opinion and the radio operators' heroic effort did not help either. Some important but very sensational detailed information is supplied by fragments of German sources quoted by Kwiatkowski, especially the intelligence reports (these have been worked out worst of all or rather not worked out at all from the editorial point of view); the notes of von dem Bach and the *Journal of the Operations of the 9th Army* have been known to historians for a long time. Only two entries have aroused my interest. The entry for July 28, 1944 contains the following report of the intelligence chief of the 9th Army to the chief of staff: "Possibilities are opening up for talks with Polish nationalists (i.e. the Home Army — E.D.). An officer of *Abwehrstelle Warschau* thinks that it is possible to establish contact with the Polish resistance movement"¹⁹. On August 2, the 9th Army intelligence service reported: "The divergence of opinion among the insurgents might still make it possible to use the nationalist resistance movement (i.e. the Home Army — E.D.) for our purposes, provided the German government promises to

¹⁷ *Testament powstańczej Warszawy. Antologia dokumentów i tekstów historycznych (The Testament of Insurrectionary Warsaw. An Anthology of Documents and Historical Texts)*, ed. M. M. Drozdowski, Warszawa (s.a.). The publication contains well known source texts, which is always useful. The texts are preceded by brief introductions with factual errors and very superficial and doubtful interpretations.

¹⁸ M. J. Kwiatkowski, "Tu mówi Warszawa"... *Dni powstania w audycjach Polskiego Radia i dokumentach niemieckich* ("This Is Warsaw Calling"... *The Days of the Uprising in Polish Broadcasts and German Documents*), Warszawa 1994.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

meet some political claims”²⁰. The recurring question of contacts between the German intelligence service and the staff of the Supreme Command of the Home Army and even General Komorowski himself has not yet been explained by Polish historians. Were there any contacts before the uprising? A German historian has published a text in “Die Zeit”²¹ which implies that such contacts did take place and that on August 1 (*sic!*) a meeting took place with a prominent representative of the Government Delegate’s Office! Jerzy Urban’s large-circulation weekly “NIE” has stated²² that a representative of *Sicherheits-polizei* met “Bór” in the middle of June 1944 and that a witness of the meeting, who was the Germans’ interpreter, was still alive. He was recruited by the Polish secret service after the war, described the course of the meeting in detail and handed the respective document to an officer of the Ministry for Internal Affairs. The weekly said that it had the interpreter’s account and published its content. However, as long as German sources have not been brought to light (the German historian is said to have come across them), it is difficult to form an opinion on this allegation; but the question is of primary, exceptional importance and should be objectively researched and competently examined.

An extremely interesting source material has been published by Jan M. Ciechanowski. This is a report by the commander of a special combat unit (Force 139) in Bari, Italy, which provided air support for Polish and Czechoslovak resistance movements in 1943–1945²³. This top-secret report was drawn up in May 1945. The British commander turned a copy of the document over to Ciechanowski in 1982 and the latter decided to publish it on the 50th anniversary of the uprising. We have thus received the text in the original and in a Polish translation with a brief, pithy introduction by Ciechanowski. The editorial elaboration of the document gives rise to reservations, but the report itself deserves close attention. Written in the British matter-of-fact style, it allows us better to understand the inner history of decisions taken by the SOE (Special Operations Executive) staffs and the command of the allied air forces with regard to aid for the uprising. When on the September 21 five South African planes dropped supplies in the Kampinos Forest, bringing to an end the aid sent to Warsaw from Italy,

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

²¹ M. Foedrowitz, “Mit Feuer und Racht”, “Die Zeit”, N° 31, 29.7.1994. Foedrowitz wrote earlier (“Wprost”, 15.12.1991) that Paul Fuchs, a representative of *Sicherheits-polizei*, had met “Bór” in the middle of June 1944.

²² *Randka z “Borem”* (A Date with “Bór”), “NIE”, N° 30, 28.7.1994.

²³ *Pomoc lotnicza Wielkiej Brytanii dla powstania warszawskiego. Raport pułkownika H. M. Thierfolla* (Great Britain’s Air Help for the Warsaw Rising. Report by Col. H. M. Thierfoll), ed. J. M. Ciechanowski, Warszawa 1994.

the author of the report said: "It was hard to explain to the defenders of Warsaw why they did not get more, and it was even harder to explain to the air crews why they had to risk their lives flying this distance when the Russians were only a mile or two away"²⁴. The Polish reader can understand this, but another remark by a British officer in SOE service will perplex him. "It is not the function of this report to pass judgement on the usefulness or otherwise of this resistance movement to Poland, for only history can show whether it did good or harm. At the moment of writing it looks as though it can have had little advantage, but at the same time it must be remembered that the Polish attitude is 'rather death than dishonour' and that they would have fought against the Germans in any case. Therefore to have helped them was good work and a necessity, whatever the outcome"²⁵. No serious person has so far questioned the usefulness of the military effort of Underground Poland; an officer of the Special Operations Executive, an organization set up in the summer of 1940 to help the resistance movement in the occupied countries of Europe, asks us to consider its usefulness. Should we not follow this track and try to define the measurable advantages, temporary as well as lasting, countable and uncountable, of the effort of the Polish underground soldiers?

The document worked out by Ciechanowski corresponds to Kajetan Bieniecki's extensive study on the assistance received by the Home Army by air in 1941–1944²⁶. The author, a Home Army soldier, has been living in the West since 1945 and had for many years collected materials concerning the subject which interested him. At the end of the 1980s his first studies, published in the Paris-based "Zeszyty Historyczne", immediately attracted the attention of historians and history lovers. Now, we have been offered an extensive 600-page work (including the index) based on reliable archival sources (British, American, South African and Polish) and on accounts gathered by the author. As regards sources, the book by Bieniecki (an engineer by profession) can impress every professional historian. It is undoubtedly the best and the most reliably documented of all the books on the August uprising published in the last few years; moreover, the author has amply used sources still untouched by researchers, or only superficially examined. Bieniecki quotes entire fragments of various documents (a multitude of original English texts together with his own translation). This is a genuinely scholarly monograph arranged in the form of a chronicle

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

²⁶ K. Bieniecki, *Lotnicze wsparcie Armii Krajowej (Air Support for the Home Army)*, Kraków 1994.

(operation by operation, flight by flight), but the author does not shun his own interpretations and evaluations. He presents nearly two thousand persons (pilots, senior officers, politicians, Home Army soldiers). Particularly interesting is the chapter on the West's air support for the Warsaw insurgents (nearly 100 pages). We knew something about the Anglo-Saxon commanders' attitude to Polish demands for maximum air support for fighting Warsaw from earlier publications but nobody has given such a detailed account. We now know the line of thought of the commanders of allied air forces, we know what it was that John Slessor refused, when and why he did so. It was Slessor who, speaking of Polish pilots, said that "The Poles may have been tactless and often stupid, but they were indomitably brave"²⁷. Bieniecki's presentation of the flight of over 100 American bombers from the British Isles to Warsaw on September 18, 1944 shows how scrupulous his analyses are. After examining the documents he has established that the Americans dropped 1,170 containers on Warsaw, not 1,284 as was previously stated, and that the drops were executed by 101 bombers (not 107)²⁸. In my opinion, much more important than these corrections of figures are the author's reflections on the still controversial question of the choice of the best route for planes flying to Warsaw. Bieniecki recalls that at the end of 1943 the British gave up the northern route which ran from Great Britain over the sea, Denmark and Sweden (the routes of flights and the receiving posts are shown in the excellent sketches which form an insert to the book), and chose the southern route (first from Tunisia and later from Italy). As the author says: "For unknown reasons the British did not make use of the northern route to supply the insurgents also from Britain. This route was about 200 km longer than the southern one from Italy, but only 38 per cent of it ran over enemy territory. 84 per cent of the southern route to Warsaw ran over enemy territory and the planes had to overcome two mountain ranges"²⁹. This opinion will undoubtedly provoke polemics among specialists, but it characterizes the style of Bieniecki's writing. All in all, this is an extremely valuable book and the author has made use of sensational sources.

Many new sources are also presented in Antoni Przygoński's study³⁰. His 444-page book contains 281 documents (pp. 87-357), 161 of which have not been published before. This is the largest collection of documents concerning Stalin's attitude to the uprising but, apart from some details, it does not radically change what we knew about the movements of

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 340.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 306-307.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 343.

³⁰ A. Przygoński, *Stalin i powstanie warszawskie (Stalin and the Warsaw Rising)*, Warszawa 1994.

the Red Army near Warsaw in the summer of 1944. To begin with, the book does not include orders of the Supreme Headquarters and the headquarters of respective fronts from the end of July and August, and without them we can only resort to guess-work and hypotheses. This is not the author's fault, of course, but a result of inaccessibility to the most important documents closely guarded in Moscow archives. What Przygoński has published deserves close attention, but the first of the situational reports of the Byelorussian staff and Byelorussian front included in the book bears the date of September 16³¹, and the first of the two political reports drawn up by General Konstantin Tielegin, deputy commander of the front, was signed on September 15³². All the documents published for the first time add some details to what we know, but the road to full knowledge is still very long.

This road has not been shortened by a publication originating from "Yeltsin's gifts". Our media made a lot of noise when Moscow transferred some documents to us. Many statements on this matter were made in particular by the Chancellery of President Lech Wałęsa. Of course historians rejoice at every unknown source, but they know well that no arbitrarily selected xerographic copies — frequently incomplete and devoid of very important pages — copies which cannot be compared with external evidence (they have adnotations which are difficult or even impossible to decipher) can replace a direct contact with the original and entire sets of documents. And the documents transferred from Moscow, ironically called "Yeltsin's gifts", are of such a fortuitous (was this intentional?) purely selective character.

In connection with the 50th anniversary events the Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences published a successive issue of its series, this time devoted to the uprising³³. It contains 13 documents (in Russia and clumsy Polish translation), none of which concerns Stalin's political and military decisions; they supplement what Przygoński has presented in his book (one document, Gen. K. Tielegin's report of October 5, is included in both books, but Przygoński's translation is much better). The documents will, of course, be useful to researchers, but they do not add anything essential to our modest knowledge of the motives of Stalin's con-

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 202–204.

³³ *Z archiwów sowieckich: Stalin a powstanie warszawskie (From Soviet Archives: Stalin and the Warsaw Rising)*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1994.

duct and his directives. With all the greater interest therefore I reached for a volume of sources published in Moscow³⁴.

Under the auspices of the Moscow-based Military Historical Institute, a group of its workers prepared a nearly 500-page volume of documents on Soviet-Polish relations in 1941-1945. The documents, most of which come from the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Foreign Policy Archives of the Federation, the Russian Centre for the Storage and Study of Documents concerning Recent History and several other archives, have been arranged in four chapters dealing with General W. Anders's Polish Army, the partisan movement, the Warsaw Rising, and the activities of Soviet authorities in Polish territories. The reader will find many important and interesting documents in the book but only a small part of them is of genuine significance. The part concerning the Warsaw Rising includes full texts of Stalin's orders of July 21 and 27-29. The volume is the first to present a record of Mikołajczyk's 40-minute talk with Molotov on July 31. The authors say that they have not found Soviet records of Mikołajczyk's meetings with Stalin (August 3 and 9). But they have included the full text of Zhukov's and Rokossowski's report of August 8 with the principles of Warsaw operation which was to be started on August 25 and the conditions in which it could be carried out. But they have not revealed what Stalin thought of this operation, though we know from other sources that his attitude was negative, and a few days later he dissociated himself from the uprising and called it an "adventure". The military documents I have mentioned are new only to the Russian reader, for Polish historians published them a long time ago. The Russian publication also includes General Tielegin's daily reports (the first is of September 15) on the situation in fighting Warsaw, based on intelligence information. This is an important publication, but it does not answer the basic questions.

We have been waiting for Moscow sources most anxiously. It looks as if we shall still have to wait. As long as historians do not get access to materials of the Political Bureau of the CPSU(b) Central Committee, the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Soviet intelligence service, all documents of the Supreme Command of the Red Army and the armies

³⁴ *SSSR i Polska 1941-1945. K istorii voyennogo soyuza. Dokumenty i materialy*, in: *Russkiy Arkhiv*, vol. 14, Moskva 1994. When I had written this article I got the latest publication of the Warsaw-based Military Historical Institute, *Na oczach Kremļa. Tragedia walczącej Warszawy w świetle dokumentów rosyjskich (In Full View of the Kremlin. The Tragedy of Fighting Warsaw in the Light of Russian Documents)*, ed. J. Margules, Warszawa 1994, which contains the documents obtained in Moscow. The most important ones have been included in the Russian publication mentioned above, the others provide some material but not the kind of material we are waiting for. This is a useful publication but its title promises much more than the book actually contains.

fighting in Polish territories in the summer of 1944, our knowledge of Stalin's decisions and the motives behind them will be very superficial and our studies will contain more questions than documented replies.

No new American sources came to light in the flood of publications connected with the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Rising; some Polish historians who expressed their opinion on USA policy towards Poland on that occasion seem not to have attentively studied the long-known official volume of American documents, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. Fortunately, much material on the subject can be found in J. Zawodny's monograph³⁵, but for obvious reasons its author was unable to use new documents (he wrote the book in the Seventies); new materials, and they are of primary importance, abound in the recently opened archives of Averell Harriman, who was US ambassador in Moscow in 1944. The first studies based on these sources appeared in the United States in 1993, but as it turns out, they, too, are unknown to those who with great self-confidence express *ex cathedra* judgments on the attitude of Roosevelt and his administration to the uprising in Warsaw and to Polish questions in general in the summer of 1944.

In concluding this part of my reflections I could say that the most painful gap, i.e. the lack of the Soviet sources, has not been filled. New sources on Roosevelt's "Polish policy" have not been made available either, nor has been possible to explain on the basis of sources the question of the German secret services' contacts with the Supreme Command of the Home Army. And this is not a full list of blanks.

But we have been offered a rich documentation which comprehensively presents the air support for the uprising and, as regards the "internal" history of the fighting in August and September, we now have an important set of the insurgents' radio programmes broadcast from the fighting capital, Witold Grabski's extremely valuable album of the insurrectionary press³⁶ and Tadeusz Kondracki's historical map³⁷. Let me also mention Marek Ney-Krwawicz's useful book on the banners and pennants of the Home Army³⁸, which contains a brief chapter on the uprising.

³⁵ J. K. Zawodny, *Powstanie warszawskie*.

³⁶ W. Grabski, *Prasa powstania warszawskiego 1944 (The Press of the Warsaw 1944 Rising)*, Warszawa 1994.

³⁷ *Powstanie warszawskie 1944. Mapa Historyczna (The Warsaw Rising 1944. Historical Map)*, ed. T. Kondracki, Warszawa 1994.

³⁸ M. Ney-Krwawicz, *Sztandary i proporce Armii Krajowej (The Banners and Pennants of the Home Army)*, Warszawa 1994.

This is quite a lot but as we know, the more one gets the more one wants. I discussed some of the wishes and requests in an editorial discussion³⁹, so I will not repeat this here.

The rich, though qualitatively uneven, editorial crop also includes accounts. Let me mention a few collections. The most valuable seems to be the one edited by Janusz K. Zawodny⁴⁰. The author collected them mainly in the Sixties when he was preparing a treatise on the uprising. A few accounts were published earlier in the Paris-based "Zeszyty Historyczne"; the whole set (about 80 accounts) did not appear until 1994. The book presents accounts by many politicians and military men, to mention only W. Anders, A. Ciołkosz, S. Kopański, M. Kukiel, S. Mikołajczyk, L. Mitkiewicz, K. Popiel, A. Zaleski, K. Bagiński, B. Biega, J. Braun, S. Korboński, K. Sieniewicz as well as accounts by members of the Home Army Supreme Command and Warsaw Region Command: J. Bokszczanin, K. Iranek-Osmecki, T. Bór-Komorowski, Tadeusz Pelczyński, K. Sawicki, S. Weber and many other better and less known men. However, no account has been given by General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, who in a letter to the author of February 28, 1968 informed him he would not give him an interview, saying: "As regards the Warsaw Rising, I will consider it my moral duty to express my opinion and discuss this national tragedy because the question is often presented in a false and tendentious way"⁴¹.

Like all accounts, some are interesting others less so, some are awfully weak, both in form and content. The interviewer was interested in questions of great politics, the strategy and tactics of war operations around Warsaw and also in psychological aspects (this was the time when the psychological school achieved triumphs in American historiography and Zawodny was clearly captivated by it). He received various replies, expanded and laconic ones; some accounts are close to historical, even historiosophical, treatises, others are trivial; some are quiet and balanced others are brimming with unextinguished emotions and partisanship. Many contain important factual information, others only show the psychology of the speaker. The higher the situation of the speaker in political or military hierarchy, the more eager he was to harangue on the degree of responsibility of the commanders, especially those whom he disliked or regarded as his adversaries.

In sum, Zawodny's book occupies a high place in the series of accounts, especially if it is read parallel to the documentary part of Jan M. Ciecchanow-

³⁹ See "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1994, N° 3.

⁴⁰ J. K. Zawodny, *Uczestnicy i świadkowie powstania warszawskiego. Wywiady (The Participants and Witnesses of the Warsaw Rising. Interviews)*, Warszawa 1994.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 408.

ski's earlier book⁴². Cicchanowski presents his talks with M. Kukiel, K. Iranek–Osmecki, T. Bór–Komorowski, J. Rzepecki and J. Bokszczanin as well as Bokszczanin's very interesting letters to him (all accounts were published earlier in "Zeszyty Historyczne"). My attention was attracted by what Bokszczanin said in April 1965, so let me quote his words: "The chief concern of the Home Army Supreme Command was to precisely calculate the start of the operation so that, in accordance with the Delegate's task, Warsaw might be taken over at least 12 hours before the entry of Soviet troops. 'To start early so as not to be late', was a new slogan, opposed to the old one, 'not to be too early'. It was realized that some difficulties would be encountered and that a greater effort would be needed if the uprising broke out too early, but no great importance was attached to this, for victory was thought to be certain in any case. The opinion was that if the action started too late and the Russians were let into the city before the right time, the aim of the uprising would be thwarted and this would mean defeat. This 'not to be too late' became an obsession to which everything else was subordinated". And further on: The Home Army Supreme Command "took only success into account. Failure was not taken into consideration and there was no provision against defeat or protracted fighting. Hopes were set on a quick Soviet victory and on Western aid, despite the commander-in-chief's warnings not to expect help. The decision to fight was regarded as an historical necessity and the outcome was thought to be absolutely certain"⁴³. These are the words of a colonel, a graduate of the Military Academy, who performed many responsible functions in the Home Army Supreme Command and was deputy chief of staff for operational matters in the spring of 1944 (until June).

Antoni Przygoński's book⁴⁴ contains eight conversations with important personalities from the communist left. They are not sensational, but it is perhaps worth quoting what Władysław Gomułka said in September 1980: "I have not changed my conviction that the leaders of the London camp bear the blame for Warsaw's tragedy and I stand firm by this conviction. The hypocritical theory that the guilty ones are not those who started the fire but those who failed to extinguish it, was never to my liking"⁴⁵. The second vo-

⁴² *Natropach tragedii. Powstanie warszawskie 1944 (On the Track of a Tragedy. The Warsaw Rising 1944)*, documents selected and commented on by J. K. C i c c h a n o w s k i, Warszawa 1992, pp. 58–122 and 366–377.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 375–376, 377.

⁴⁴ A. P r z y g o Ń s k i, *Stalin i powstanie*, pp. 359–426.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 426.

lume of Władysław Gomułka's *Memoirs*⁴⁶ contains many important details, but it does not bring any reliable new items of information on the essential question, that is, Stalin's attitude to the uprising.

Interesting material can be found in accounts by persons from the background of the historical scene without whom the activity of the main heroes would have been difficult⁴⁷.

Every new account is, of course, welcome but no genuine discovery will be made in this field unless some still unpublished diaries, reminiscences and memoirs are found. Let us hope this will happen and we shall be offered new publications. I have in mind accounts by actors playing leading parts. But I hope that on the basis of the existing questionnaires, the combatants' personal files, their diaries, accounts and reminiscences as well as newly collected accounts somebody will succeed in creating a collective portrait of the Warsaw insurgent. This is the book I am waiting for.

So much about sources and accounts. Let us pass on to studies⁴⁸.

It is Andrzej K. Kunert's book that comes to the fore⁴⁹. Let me say a few words about its unquestionable value and noticeable weak points. As the title implies, this is a chronicle of the uprising, but it is a chronicle of a specific kind. It differs greatly from Władysław Bartoszewski's chronicle which is similar in construction and content and which historians and readers have rightly regarded as the basic compendium of facts concerning the days of the uprising⁵⁰. The palm has now been assigned to Kunert's book. The author has tried to give each day a similar, comparable structure. Day by day he presents various events connected with the uprising in the same order: foreign press comments, opinions of Anglo-Saxon politicians, statements by Polish public figures, materials of the government of the Polish Republic, excerpts from Polish emigration press, Moscow's reactions, operations of the Red Army in the foreground of Warsaw, radio correspondence between "Polish London" and the Polish leadership in Warsaw, Berlin's reactions and opinions of German commanders, detailed descriptions of what happened in Warsaw on a given day, various reports

⁴⁶ W. Gomułka, *Pamiętniki (Memoirs)*, ed. A. Werblan, vol. II, Warszawa 1994, pp. 436–491.

⁴⁷ *Żołnierze Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej wspominają (Soldiers of the Home Army Supreme Command Reminiscence)*, ed. K. Wyczańska, Warszawa 1994.

⁴⁸ Mention should also be made of *Człowiek w cieniu (Man in the Shade)*, Kraków 1994, by W. Baliński, a young historian from Cracow, this being the first attempt to write a biography of T. Pełczyński, and of *Bibliografia selektywna powstania warszawskiego 1944 (A Selective Bibliography of the Warsaw 1944 Rising)*, ed. by the W. Hencel and J. Sawicka, Warszawa 1994.

⁴⁹ A. K. Kunert, *Powstanie warszawskie*.

⁵⁰ See Bartoszewski's studies *Dni walczącej stolicy. Kronika powstania warszawskiego (The Days of the Fighting Capital. Chronicle of the Warsaw Rising)*, Londyn 1984 (published in Poland in 1989) and *1859 dni Warszawy (The 1859 Days of Warsaw)*, 2nd ed., Kraków 1984.

by Home Army cells on the mood of the population, fragments of articles from the insurgents' press, excerpts from the diaries and memoirs of insurgents and civilians, obituaries of murdered persons and those who fell in battle (these fragments are the most valuable in my opinion). A great deal of space has been devoted to Polish endeavours (by the president of the Polish Republic, the prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, minister of national defence, the commander-in-chief) to secure increased assistance for the uprising; less place has been devoted to the results of these endeavours. I think that in such a study it is not enough to state the total amount of aid dropped by the Allies (this is what Kunert does); he should have included information on all successful drops on the days when they were made (the figures are available in several source publications).

The author has rightly described the steps taken by the Polish authorities in London to secure help for the uprising, but it would have been better if he had not drawn this information only (as he did) from collective publications of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Akcja dyplomatyczna prowadzona na terenie Londynu w sprawie pomocy walczącej Warszawie — The Diplomatic Action Conducted in London with the View of Helping Fighting Warsaw*) and the cabinet of the commander-in-chief (*Sprawozdanie z interwencji w sprawie pomocy dla Armii Krajowej — Report on the Démarche concerning Help for the Home Army*, mimeographed material). This is a valuable material but it cannot replace the respective texts of diplomatic notes, statements, pronouncements, diary entries, reports etc. In both these collections, amply quoted by Kunert, the Polish side naturally comes to the fore, there is little information on the reaction of the addressees and British interlocutors. It is surprising that Kunert says nothing about such important events as General Kukiel's talks with the head of SOE and the Minister of Economic Warfare, Lord Roundell Selborne (August 1), and that he does not even mention the sittings of the British war cabinet at which Polish questions were discussed, especially the question of help for Warsaw (August 9, 11, and 21, September 4, 18 and 28). He leaves out important fragments of documents or even entire documents (in Stalin's dispatch of August 5, Gen. J. McNarney's statement of August 6; he has ignored A. Eden's reply to Churchill's letter of August 14 and Gen. Kukiel's reply to Gen. Anders's dispatch of August 23. The latter dispatch is cited on two different days). There is no information on Roosevelt's very important cable to Churchill of August 24, of Mikołajczyk's meetings with Eden (on September 13 and 23). The author has not consulted the American collection of documents, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, and the well known

selection of sources edited by A. Polonsky⁵¹, where he would have found a great deal of material for his subject. I could go on enumerating similar slips, shortcomings and defects but I am not writing a detailed review. The parts of the book dealing with the “internal” history of the uprising are better in this respect. Kunert has tried to present a multidimensional picture of the internal history, and he has succeeded. He quotes many sources and various opinions: from unshakable convictions that the fight was absolutely necessary to doubts and even a condemnation of the decision to launch the uprising. And these are the opinions of those who took part in the rising. How dramatic sound today the words put down by Leszek P r o r o k in his diary: “Rumours about capitulation are becoming increasingly persistent. Many people regard this as the only salvation for the remnants of the town and the people who have survived. Shall we dare to look people in the face? Will the command dare look us in the face? It has been the lot of us, young people, to see and experience much, very much. And now at the culminant point of the hecatomb, matters have come to such a point that everyone seems to have doubts about its purposefulness and justness. I am writing this in the name of all those who only a month ago knew nothing but enthusiasm” (entry of September 5)⁵².

In using his sources and accounts Kunert has tried to bring to light everything that testifies to the moral value of the uprising and its drama. The authors of the opinions, speeches and pronouncement of that time, so amply quoted by Kunert, laid stress on this aspect. During the fighting they endeavoured to convince everyone that the uprising had shaken world opinion. An attentive perusal of what the *Calendar* presents makes one doubt whether these hopes, or even that certainty, materialized. The uprising did become front-page news in newspapers (not always the most important and influential ones) but it did not shake the conscience of the world. This is evident from Andrzej K. Kunert’s ambitious book.

A publication with a much more modest programme has been edited by Romuald Ś r e n i a w a – S z y p i o w s k i⁵³. This is an important contribution to the history of services without which the struggle would have been much more difficult, if at all possible, i.e. communications, postal services, medical services, security, public order, the press, radio information and pastoral work. The book also contains essays on art during the uprising and the role of women. Some texts (e.g. the one on communications) show that because of the

⁵¹ A. Polonsky, *The Great Powers and the Polish Question 1941–1945. A Documentary Study in Cold War Origins*, London 1976.

⁵² Quoted after A. K. Kunert, *Powstanie*, p. 259.

⁵³ *Powstanie warszawskie 1.8–2.10.1944. Służby w walce (The Warsaw Rising 1.8–2.10.1944. Auxiliary Services in the Fight)*, ed. R. Śreniawa–Szypiowski, Warszawa 1994.

sudden decision to launch the uprising, extemporization was an absolute necessity if the insurgents were to act effectively without adequate plans and resources. Probably through a misunderstanding this useful collective work includes Tomasz Strzembosz's conjectures of the what-would-have happened-if kind⁵⁴. Writing about such conjectures Jan Nowak-Jeziorański once said: "In post-war publicistic writings endless conjectures have been expressed about what would have happened if the uprising had not broken out. Since such speculations cannot be proved, it is not worth while to concern oneself with them"⁵⁵.

One should, however, take a close look at the principal question, that is, how recent scholarly literature and historical publicistic writings try to answer the questions put a long time ago.

Let us start with the motives behind the decision of those who gave the order to launch the uprising. After reading over a dozen books and many articles I have come to the conclusion that nothing new has been added to the old lists of expectations and motives, only the accents may have been laid differently. Let us recall that emigration literature used to lay stress on symptoms of a collapse on the German front, and the constant pressure of the Red Army; these two factors were thought to ensure that although the "Tempest" in Warsaw might cost many Polish lives, the city would after a brief struggle be undoubtedly taken over by the Home Army, which would greet the Red Army in the capital as its rightful master. Other arguments were also put forward, e.g. that the order to start the uprising had to be given for otherwise it would have broken out spontaneously or would have been provoked by the communists.

Studies brought out in Poland ("official" ones, as some people call them) questioned the correctness of the decision, for from the military point of view — given the lack of full knowledge about the intentions of the Germans and the Soviet side — the situation in the region of Warsaw at the end of July did not justify the certainty that the Red Army would enter the city in a few days' time. If therefore the military circumstances were ripening but were not yet ripe, this means that political considerations prevailed in the decision. Historians from the communist left drew attention to the fact that the Polish Workers' Party and the People's Army did not have adequate strength, means and opportunities to launch an uprising and carry it out successfully.

⁵⁴ A text by the same author and on a similar level was published in "Tygodnik Solidarność" № 31, 29.7.1994.

⁵⁵ J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Gra o Polskę (A Game for Poland)*, "Tygodnik Powszechny", № 31, 31.7.1994.

What is the situation like today? To begin with, Polish historiography is no longer divided into historiography practised in Poland and emigré historiography; some historians live abroad but most of them publish their books in Poland. But an increasing number of historians of both groups lay stress on the political motives of the decision, and this was reflected even in Lech Wałęsa's speech quoted above. The president referred to the radio speech made by Jan Stanisław Jankowski on September 1: "We wanted to show the world that in striving for genuine independence, we do not want to obtain freedom as a gift lest together with the gift, conditions contrary to the Nation's interests, tradition and dignity be imposed on us"⁵⁶. It is not difficult to see against whom these words were directed politically. Are then Aleksander Skarżyński⁵⁷ and Jan Ciecchanowski⁵⁸ right in implying in their works that as a result of a wrong evaluation of the military situation the decision taken was motivated mainly by political considerations? Without prejudice we must agree with Adam Michnik who has recalled an idea formulated earlier by others, that the Warsaw Rising "was the last desperate attempt to reverse the political logic born at Tehran and leading to Yalta"⁵⁹. This was indeed a desperate decision taken by people who, to use Lech Wałęsa's words, staked all on a chance. They were convinced that this had to be done, that there was no other way out. It is the historian's duty to consider all circumstance and realisable variants, including factors of a psychological nature, and above all to face the cardinal question, namely, whether the uprising was really inevitable and necessary from the political and historic points of view. During the events commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Rising, politicians (many of whom were from the Solidarity camp) answered this question in the affirmative; a similar stand was taken by most publicists of the same option, and even a large group of professional historians. But they did not produce convincing irrefutable arguments. Aleksander Malachowski could therefore write that those who had taken the decision to fight "were unable to think in historical terms. Their chief concern should have been to save us; instead, they threw our lives into a political battle. They believed naively that if legitimate Polish authorities were established even for a moment in Poland's territories, Stalin and the other mighty rulers of the world would respect our sacrifice"⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ Quoted after M. J. Kwiatkowski, "Tu mówi", p. 362.

⁵⁷ A. Skarżyński, *Polityczne przyczyny powstania warszawskiego (The Political Reasons of the Warsaw Rising)*, Warszawa 1964.

⁵⁸ J. M. Ciecchanowski, *Powstanie warszawskie. Zarys podłoża politycznego i dyplomatycznego (The Warsaw Rising. An Outline of the Political and Diplomatic Ground)*, Warszawa 1984.

⁵⁹ A. Michnik, *Honor, pacierz i namysł (Honour, Prayer and Reflection)*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", № 170, 30–31.7.1994.

As regards other motives for the decision, the arguments that the uprising might have broken out spontaneously or might have been provoked by the communists have not been dropped. Both arguments are mere speculations, but since they continue to be repeated in various publications let us examine them.

Could the uprising have broken out spontaneously without the supreme command's order? Since the order was given, it is difficult to express an opinion on something which did not take place. However, I would like to draw attention to two opinions for they come from authoritative persons. In May 1965 Jan M. Ciechanowski, in the presence of Janusz K. Zawodny, asked Gen. T. Komorowski what would have happened if the commander-in-chief, Gen. K. Sosnkowski, had prohibited a fight in Warsaw. The reply he got was: "We would not have started it. The order would have been obeyed"⁶¹. The former commander of the Home Army did not even mention the possibility of a spontaneous action; he was absolutely sure that the uprising would not have been started by the rank and file without an order. Captain Franciszek Miszczak, who in 1944 was chief of the Eastern Front Section ("The Laundry") of the Second Department (intelligence) of the Home Army Supreme Command, expressed a very interesting view on this subject in a conversation with J. K. Zawodny, also in May 1965. Asked if the Varsovians would have started the uprising by themselves, he said: "After the first alert (the one ordered by "Monter" on July 27 and called off the following day) soldiers left their posts without protest. The smallest note in "Biuletyn Informacyjny" was held in great esteem. I am convinced that the uprising would not have broken out spontaneously if it had been banned"⁶². All those who, like Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, continue to assert that the order to fight had to be given for otherwise the uprising would have broken out spontaneously⁶³ should consider the words quoted above and take another cool-headed look at this question. Their certainty may then be shaken.

And what about the threat allegedly posed by the communists?⁶⁴ On July 4, Prime Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk informed the Government's Delegate, Jankowski, that "the Soviets have decided to call on the Country to rise up in arms" and that a similar appeal might be made by General Zygmunt Berling, commander of the Polish army subordinated to Moscow. The prime minister concluded his dispatch with the following question:

⁶⁰ A. Małachowski, *O sprawiedliwość dla półwiecza (For the Sake of Justice for Half Century)*, "Wiadomości Kulturalne", № 11, 7.8.1994.

⁶¹ J. M. Ciechanowski, *Na tropach tragicii*, p. 69.

⁶² J. K. Zawodny, *Uczestnicy i świadkowie*, p. 155.

⁶³ J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Gra o Polskę*.

⁶⁴ An argument raised chiefly by the above-mentioned author.

“Have you considered the question of an uprising in case of a German rout or the possibility of a partial uprising aimed at making it possible for the Government’s Delegate and the Commander of the Home Army to take over power before the entry of the Soviets?”⁶⁵ Jankowski, having no doubt about who the Poles would listen to, and knowing that they would on no account give a hearing to an appeal by Berling or any other communist unit, cabled to London on July 12: “We shall thwart Berling’s possible call for an uprising. It is we who shall determine the outbreak”⁶⁶. This, too, was a speculation, but it was incomparably closer to the reality of those days than the now repeated argument that the uprising might have broken out at the order or inspiration of communists. It follows from all available sources that the question of an uprising had been discussed but only in coordination with the attacking Red Army. Gen. T. Komorowski spoke in a similar vein in 1965: “Only a Soviet attack on Warsaw was the proper moment to give an order to launch action inside the city. Only coordination between the forces outside and an attack inside could have secured victory”⁶⁷. If this had been the case, the communists might have decided to occupy (by very small forces at their disposal) a few buildings in order to instal, for instance, The Polish Committee of National Liberation there. No further documented information about the communists’ intentions and prospects can be put forward and the latest publications have not added anything new to this matter either, except for their authors’ assurances. If reliable new sources are brought to light the subject will return.

Let us pass on to the most stimulating question, Stalin’s attitude to the uprising. Many diverse texts on this subject were published in 1994 and slightly before, but in truth, I have not found any new documented piece of information; all texts keep recalling a fact known and present for a long time in “official” publications that Moscow’s attitude to the consequences of the decision taken in Warsaw at about 18.00 hours on July 31 was first and foremost of a political character. By the mere title of his new book Tadeusz S a w i c k i ⁶⁸ implies that Warsaw fell as a result of collusion between Hitler and Stalin. Unfortunately, he does not back this assertion by any sources. What is important, in my opinion, is his reasoning that the Soviet Supreme Command’s original plan providing for both flanks of the First Byelorussian

⁶⁵ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach (The Home Army in Documents)*, vol. III, London 1976, p. 497.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 527.

⁶⁷ J. K. Zawodny, *Uczestnicy i świadkowie*, p. 133.

⁶⁸ T. Sawicki, *Wyrok na miasto. Berlin i Moskwa wobec powstania warszawskiego (The Verdict on the City. The Attitude of Berlin and Moscow to the Warsaw Rising)*, Warszawa 1993. The same author has presented a completely different opinion in his monograph *Front wschodni a powstanie warszawskie (The Eastern Front and the Warsaw Rising)*, Warszawa 1989.

Front to attack in the direction of Siedlce, encircle and rout the 2nd German Army and thus open the way to Warsaw, was suddenly changed by Stalin on July 21. The main attack of the Front's left wing was not directed at Siedlce but at Lublin (destined to become the seat of the Polish Committee of National Liberation). In Sawicki's opinion, this decision and its implementation "delayed the moment of the First Byelorussian Front reaching Warsaw"⁶⁹, which naturally had an impact on events in the foreground of Warsaw at the end of July and the beginning of August and called into question the practicability of the Home Army Supreme Command's calculations. As has been known for a long time, these calculations were based on the expectation that Soviet troops would quickly take Warsaw, which was to be liberated some twelve hours earlier by the Home Army. Thus, the success of the "Tempest" in the capital depended on the speed of the manoeuvre and attack by the Red Army. This principal idea was presented the most succinctly in the dispatch signed by Jankowski and Komorowski on the night of August 1 and sent off the next day: "Since the fight for control of Warsaw has started, please secure Soviet aid in the form of an immediate attack from the outside"⁷⁰. Colonel Janusz Bokszezanin agreed with Jan M. Ciechanowski's opinion that "the principal military idea of the uprising plan was to make use of the Red Army successes in order to carry out the Poles' own operation and achieve success"⁷¹. The rising was to force Stalin to take a decision and undertake the action desired by Poles. It did not force him to do so. Stalin had his own calculations and he was known for simply improbable (in outsiders' view) decisions, such as the one taken in August 1939⁷². But we still lack sources which would irrefutably show what these calculations were and what were their consequences. Now and again we hear of an order allegedly given by Stalin to halt the Warsaw operation, but these are suppositions based on doubtful data⁷³ or even on German falsifications⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ T. Sawicki, *Wyrök*, pp. 16–17.

⁷⁰ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, vol. IV, Londyn 1977, p. 32.

⁷¹ J. M. Ciechanowski, *Na tropach tragedii*, p. 110.

⁷² See E. Duraczyński, *Polska w polityce Moskwy latem 1939 (Poland in Moscow's Policy in Summer of 1939)*, in: *17 września 1939*, ed. H. Batowski, Kraków 1994.

⁷³ A. Gieysztor, *Jak z tragedii greckiej (Like a Greek Tragedy)*, "Polityka", № 29, 16.7.1994, says that Stalin may have given "a directive to pass on to defence on this front already on August 2". It is a pity that Gieysztor does not give the source of this important information. He may have been thinking of the order of the commander of the 2nd Armoured Army, Gen. Alexei Radziyevsky, who at 4.10 a.m. (Moscow time) on August 1st ordered that the forces under his command should at 12.00 (Moscow time) on the same day pass on to defence on the Kobylka — Ossów — Sulejówek — Stara Miłosna — Zbytki line (see *Russkiy Arkhiv*, op. cit., pp. 209–210). In this context Radziyevsky's report of July 30 to Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski, commander of the First Byelorussian Front, is worthy of notice. Radziyevsky informed the marshal of his decision to reach the outskirts of Praga as quickly as possible by sending the 3rd and 16th armoured corps there, combine the wings of the two corps and cut off Warsaw from the east, north—and south—east.

In 1964 Gen. Kukiel told Jan M. Ciechanowski that for him “the appearance of Russians in the neighbourhood of Praga was not a sufficient proof that the Red Army would be able to cross the Vistula and take Warsaw. The Soviets came up to Warsaw, got a punch in the head and withdrew as they did in 1920”⁷⁵. The same question was presented in a gentler form by the minister of national defence in his dispatch to Gen. Anders of August 24, 1944. The minister wrote that in starting the fight Komorowski must have thought that this would be nothing more than the “Tempest”, that is, “the cutting off the rearguards” and that thanks to this he would “outpace the Soviets’ entry by several hours”. Hitler’s decision to “send a strategic reserve to Warsaw completely changed the situation”⁷⁶.

In the light of what we know from sources about the intentions and capability of the Red Army, it can be concluded that after the defeat in the tank battle near Warsaw the Red Army was most probably unable to occupy the city in the first decade of August. Was it able to do this later? This “later” is the subject of a dispute which still goes on and it will not be solved until we get access to the most important Soviet sources. We shall then be able to verify the value of popular judgments that Stalin, “with cynical premeditation”, allowed Hitler to destroy Warsaw, and we shall be able to define the scale of his guilt and responsibility for the tragedy of the city and its inhabitants. But politicians are not waiting for the verdict of history and are already passing judgments. Andrzej Zakrzewski, a senior official in the President’s Chancellery, wrote at the end of May 1994 that Lech Wałęsa’s aim in “inviting representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Russian Federation (to the anniversary of the uprising — ED) is not to pronounce absolution and forgiveness on the graves of Warsaw

He also complained that enemy aircraft was constantly attacking his forces. He asked the marshal earnestly (*abieditel’no*) to secure him significant support by the Russian air force which, in his opinion, “was completely passive” (*soviershenno biezdieystvuyet*) and to speed up supplies of fuel and lubricants. The report ended: *Nachinayu vydykhatsya*, which can be translated as “I am getting out of breath. My capabilities are giving out”. (*Ibidem*, p. 204). Such important matters cannot be resolved on the basis of one’s own conviction or suspected messages.

⁷⁴ For instance the information recently recalled by several Polish military historians. E. Kospań-Pawłowski, *Wojsko polskie na froncie wschodnim 1943–1945 (The Polish Army on the Eastern Front 1943–1945)*, Pruszków 1993, p. 159. S. Jarczyński, *Zygmunt Berling. Między sławą a potępieniem (Zygmunt Berling. Between Fame and Condemnation)*, Warszawa 1993, p. 284, followed in Kospań-Pawłowski’s footsteps and asserted that Stalin order the attack on Warsaw to be stopped on August 5; information on this fact was allegedly published in “Bolshevik”, theoretical organ of the CPSU(b) Central Committee in the autumn of 1944. However, a Cracow historian has ascertained that there was no such information in “Bolshevik” and that the whole thing was an invention of the Germans, who published a forged document to this effect. See A. L. Sowa, *Kraków pod okupacją hitlerowską — stan badań (Cracow under Nazi Occupation — State of Research)*, in: *Kraków w czasie II wojny światowej*, Kraków 1992, p. 24.

⁷⁵ J. M. Ciechanowski, *Na tropach tragedii*, p. 59.

⁷⁶ See E. Duraczyński, *Rząd polski*, pp. 388–389.

insurgents. There are no statutory limitations for the crime of genocide. We forgive neither the Nazi butchers nor the crime of the Soviet witnesses who by a deliberate sin of desistance became perfidious accessories to the crime"⁷⁷. A little later, perhaps under the influence of Moscow's reaction, Zakrzewski softened the judgment and in an interview for "Wprost" said only that the Warsaw Rising was the Poles' fight against Nazi Germany, a fight during which "the Soviet Union adopted an attitude of hostile indifference". He added a new aspect, stating that the uprising was a struggle of "democrats against fascists, the communists remaining passive"⁷⁸. It would be interesting to know the opinion of the surviving soldiers of the People's Army who fought in the Wola district, the Old Town and wherever their units were deployed. For their fight they were awarded the Cross of the Brave and even the *Virtuti Militari* order. Were they passive? Politics has its own rules, and scientific history also its own. And yet, Aleksander Gieysztor — like Andrzej Zakrzewski — is absolutely certain that "in final analysis the suppression of the uprising was the work of the both banks of the Vistula"⁷⁹. To burden Berlin and Moscow with equal responsibility for Warsaw's tragedy seems to be rather a political manipulation (not even a wise one, in my view) and I think that without proper research into sources this cannot be proved. Admittedly, Stalin did not conceal his avowed hostility to the uprising, but before defining the degree of his responsibility for the fate of Warsaw I would like to have a look at sources, the Moscow ones of course⁸⁰.

Finally a question to which politicians, with obvious help from some historians, gave a special rank during the Warsaw Rising commemorative events. I have in mind the hopes placed on the uprising when it was taking place and today's interpretation of its legacy. On September 20, 1944 "Rzeczpospolita Polska" (press organ of the Government Delegate's Office) wrote: "The Warsaw Rising is an historical event of such great calibre that only history can pass the proper verdict. What can be stated today is that the uprising's most important achievements are on the political plane; in this respect it achieved victory ... If in the political entanglement the Polish question succeeds in gaining the right to be treated as a separate factor, fully independent of foreign interests, the uprising will deserve the credit for this"⁸¹. I have the impression that similar ideas are invoked by all those who

⁷⁷ "Polityka", № 22, 28.5.1994.

⁷⁸ "Wprost", № 31, 31.7.1994.

⁷⁹ A. Gieysztor, *Jak z tragedii*.

⁸⁰ Compared with these grave charges, the opinion of the well known British historian, Paul Kennedy (*Mocarstwa świata. Narodziny, rozkwit, upadek*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 365–366, Polish translation of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*), who speaks only Stalin's "disapproval" of the uprising, sounds almost like absolution.

regard the horribly lost uprising as a victory and by those who try to define its place among the causative factors of Poland's history in 1945–1989. It is being asserted that: 1. because of the Warsaw Rising Stalin launched his march on Berlin much later than he could have done had he seized Warsaw in the summer of 1944⁸²; 2. the Warsaw Rising influenced the fate of the whole of East–Central Europe⁸³; 3. it made it impossible for Stalin to incorporate Poland into the USSR as the 17th republic⁸⁴; 4. thanks to the uprising the nation preserved the feeling of “being linked together and united”⁸⁵; 5. it created “the framework of the Third Republic which was called into being 45 years later”⁸⁶; 6. the “posthumous victory” of the uprising took place in 1989; this victory would have been impossible without that earlier effort⁸⁷. Among the many ideas defining the legacy of the uprising I have come across the following one: “were it not for the memory of the price paid by the Poles for the Warsaw August, an uprising would have broken out in October 1956, and certainly in 1980 (or 1991)”⁸⁸. I do not share the opinion that memory of the Warsaw Rising played a restraining role. I believe that if a successive uprising had been in the air in Poland in 1980–1981, the Poles would have been restrained by their fresh memory of Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia rather than by the experience of the Warsaw Rising (moreover, nothing was more desired in Warsaw in August 1944 than the Red Army's intervention). But it is impossible to polemise scientifically with such scenarios and opinions (see points 1–2 and 4–6), just as it is impossible to polemise with the conviction that had it not been for the uprising Poland would have become the 17th republic of the USSR. As a matter of fact, Stalin had a completely different idea about the construction of Moscow's power in the “zone of his interests”, a zone gained by the Red Army sword in hand and accorded to him by the West; but this would be a discussion on another topic.

Much was written in 1994 about the profound historical sense of Warsaw's sacrifice. However, this view was not shared by all. Aleksander Małachowski asked: “Was it permissible ... to pay such an awful price of two hundred thousand lives and the price of an enormous European city being razed to the ground? Czech Prague did not engage in such reckless

⁸¹ *Po 50–ciu dniach (After 50 Days)*, “Rzeczpospolita Polska”, № 63, 20.9.1944.

⁸² J. Nowak–Jeziorski, *Gra o Polskę*.

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem* and A. Gieysztor, *Jak z tragedii*.

⁸⁵ J. Nowak–Jeziorski, *Gra o Polskę*.

⁸⁶ J. Tazbir, *Bitwa o Trzecią Rzeczpospolitą (The Battle for the Third Republic)*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, № 177, 1.8.1994.

⁸⁷ J. Nowak–Jeziorski, *Gra o Polskę* and a few professional historians.

⁸⁸ See fn. 86.

actions. It stands undestroyed as it has been standing for hundreds of years, proud and beautiful, and the Czechs enjoy the same freedom which we enjoy and have outdistanced us in many fields ... The example of Czech Prague belies this nonsense that Warsaw's tragedy had advantageous consequences for Poland"⁸⁹. Discussing the same subject another author said that "because of its nature" belief in the sense of the sacrifice "cannot be analysed. One believes or one does not"⁹⁰. Like the author quoted by me, I do not share this belief. But I know that Jerzy Turowicz was right when he wrote that "Historians, political scientists and publicists are holding, and will for a long time be holding, disputes over the Warsaw Rising, whether the decision to launch the uprising and the time of launching it were an error or not, whether it was worth paying the price of death of thousands of people and see Warsaw destroyed, if defeat was inevitable"⁹¹. At the end of July 1994 the Social Research Centre in Sopot asked more than a thousand representative adults what the Warsaw Rising meant to them; 35 per cent of the respondents said it meant a heroic fight, 21 per cent that it was an historic event, 17 per cent that it was an unnecessary fight and sacrifice, 8 per cent that it was a national drama, 8 per cent that it was an attempt to resist Soviet power, and 11 per cent had no opinion⁹². This is also a contribution to the discussion on the sense of that sacrifice, an expression of attitude to the consequences of the decision taken on July 31, 1944.

The decision was fully sovereign; it was not imposed by anyone, it was taken in defence of the highest values. But this is not all; it was taken contrary to the views of the Anglo-Saxons with whom so many hopes were linked and who from at least 1942 to July 1944 had been stating unequivocally that a general armed uprising planned by the Poles would not be included in their operational plans and could not count on their military support⁹³. I am not mentioning Moscow, for there was no intention of negotiating with it on a general uprising or battle for Warsaw. This fully sovereign decision brought an appalling defeat which some people call victory.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

⁸⁹ A. Małachowski, *Nicołświętne prawdy (Non-Festive Truths)*, "Wiadomości Kulturalne", N° 12, 14.8.1994. See the same author's feuilleton in N° 13 of 21.8.1994.

⁹⁰ A. Janowski, *Powstanie — podarunek dla Stalina (The Uprising — A Gift for Stalin)*, "Polityka", N° 34, 20.8.1994.

⁹¹ J. Turowicz, *Powstanie warszawskie (The Warsaw Rising)*, "Tygodnik Powszechny", N° 31, 3.7.1994.

⁹² "Rzeczpospolita", N° 176, 30–31.7.1994. See also M. TurSKI, *Zmiany w pamięci zbiorowej (Changes in Collective Memory)*, "Polityka", N° 26, 25.6.1994, N° 27, 2.7.1994, and B. Szacka, *Bohater przekorny (A Wilful Hero)*, *ibidem*, N° 31, 30.7.1994.

⁹³ See E. Duraczyński, *Rząd polski, passim*.