

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/9283,ARTICLE-by-Karol-Nawrocki-PhD-The-Home-Army-Generation.html>

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## ARTICLE by Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D: The Home Army Generation

The Home Army molded a whole generation of Poles. Even those who were not officially sworn in.

MATERIAŁ INFORMACYJNY IPN

# Pokolenie AK

**Armia Krajowa uformowała całe pokolenie Polaków. Także tych, którzy nie byli w niej formalnie zaprzysiężeni.**

Była sobota, 14 lutego 1942 r., gdy szyfrant nadał z Londynu do okupowanej Warszawy rozkaz numer 627. Jako nadawca figurował Naczelny Wódz Władysław Sikorski. Adresatem był „Kalina”, czyli gen. Stefan Rowecki. Ten doświadczony oficer i znakomity organizator już trzeci rok z powodzeniem kierował podziemnym wysiłkiem Polaków jako Komendant Główny Związku Walki Zbrojnej. Teraz dowiadywał się, że



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cał Polakom, że nie chcą się bić, utworzenie Armii Krajowej dobitnie przypominało państwu koalicji antyhitlerowskiej, że w okupowanym kraju trwa nieustanna, bezkompromisowa walka przeciwko Niemcom.

choćby od komunistycznej partyzantki jugosłowiańskiej). Mieli status żołnierzy w czynnej służbie wojskowej. Składali przysięgę bezwzględnego posłuszeństwa „Prezydentowi Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i rozkazom Naczelnego Wodza”. Armia Krajowa była ogólnonarodowa, apolityczna, oparta na zasadach prawa i legalizmu. To w dużej mierze na tym polegał jej unikatowy charakter.

Z taką armią – wojskowym filarem Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego – identyfikowała się ogromna większość społeczeństwa. W AK znaleźli miejsce przedstawiciele wszystkich warstw

It was Saturday 14 February 1942 when a cryptographer sent Order 627 from London to occupied Warsaw. The Commander-in-Chief Władysław Sikorski was listed as the sender. The addressee was

"Kalina", Gen. Stefan Rowecki's pseudonym. This experienced officer and outstanding organiser had been successfully leading the underground efforts of the Poles for the third year as the Commander-in-Chief of the Union of Armed Struggle [Związek Walki Zbrojnej - ZWZ], which, under Order 627, was now to become the Home Army.

Sikorski's wire, while less than a hundred words long, was historical. As it turned out, changing the name of the Union of Armed Struggle to the Home Army was more than just an effective 'rebrand'. It was, in fact, a deliberate political move, calculated to have an external and internal effect.

When the Soviet dictator Józef Stalin perfidiously accused the Poles of not wanting to fight, the creation of the Home Army clearly reminded the anti-Nazi coalition states that Poland was engaged in a constant, uncompromising fight against the Germans.

The name change from the Union of Armed Struggle to the Home Army was an important step in the process of consolidating the underground's armed fight for independence. Its aim was to emphasise, more strongly than until that point, that the underground army operating in the occupied state was a rightful part of the Armed Forces of Poland, and even their "main part", as Sikorski declared. A Home Army soldier was more than just a member of the resistance movement, and definitely more than a part of the armed forces of any of Poland's political groups at the time (as opposed to, for example, the communist Yugoslav partisans). They were soldiers on active military duty. They swore an oath of absolute obedience to "the

President of the Republic of Poland and the orders of the Commander-in-Chief". The Home Army was nationwide, apolitical, and founded on the principles of law and legalism, which largely determined its unique nature.

The vast majority of the society identified with this army – the military pillar of the Polish Underground State. Representatives of all social strata and people with various political views found a place in the Home Army: followers of Piłsudski, the Polish Socialist Party, the peasant movement, Christian Democrats, and a large number of nationalists. They all had different visions of post-war Poland, but all of them shared the notions of independence and freedom.

Although the underground conditions are inherently conducive to decentralization, gradually it was possible to unite a significant part of the armed independence underground forces under the banner of the Home Army. In the summer of 1944, according to General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, successor to Rowecki, who was arrested by the Germans, the Home Army numbered approximately 380 thousand sworn-in soldiers. In total, during the Second World War, about 450 thousand people passed through the ranks of the ZWZ and the Home Army. "These numbers did not include the hundreds of thousands of our active supporters who cooperated with the Home Army, hid soldiers during operations, fed and dressed them, gave shelter to partisans, provided us with news and helped us with every need," emphasized Bór-Komorowski years later. And there was a lot of truth to his statement that "all Poles were an auxiliary organisation [of the

Home Army]".

The phenomenon of the Home Army is not only legalism and numbers but also the variety of forms of fighting. From the beginning, the fundamental task of the Home Army was to prepare an uprising against Germany. However, before that, the Polish underground carried out large-scale diversion and sabotage operations, and later also partisan activities. They freed prisoners from the hands of the Gestapo, for example, as a result of the famous operation at the Warsaw Arsenal on 26 March 1943, or during the operation in Pińsk two months earlier. They also executed traitors and collaborators (e.g. actor Igo Sym) and eliminated high-ranking officials of the German terror apparatus (such as Franz Kutschera). Home Army intelligence was also spectacularly successful. For example, it was responsible for delaying work on the German V1 and V2 missiles. Intense publishing and propaganda activities as well as an impressive communications network were also part of the Home Army's operations. Underground reports about the horrors of the occupation - including the extermination of the Jews - reached not only the Polish government in London but also the authorities of the allied powers.

Many Home Army members and their supporters paid the ultimate price for their service to the Homeland. Tens of thousands of soldiers were killed or murdered during the war, and thousands more victims of repression were killed following their "liberation" in torture houses run by the Communist secret police, or following their deportation deep into the USSR, because in Sovietized Poland, the Home Army's soldiers

faced contempt and further persecution instead of honors.

Yet the spirit of the Home Army has survived since the days of WWII. It was referred to by the post-war anti-communist underground, and many years later it was an inspiration for numerous dissidents in the People's Republic of Poland. Today, in a free Poland, it is our duty to tell the story of the brave people of the Home Army and to ensure that they assume their rightful place in history. At the Institute of National Remembrance, we treat this task as an honorable mission.

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