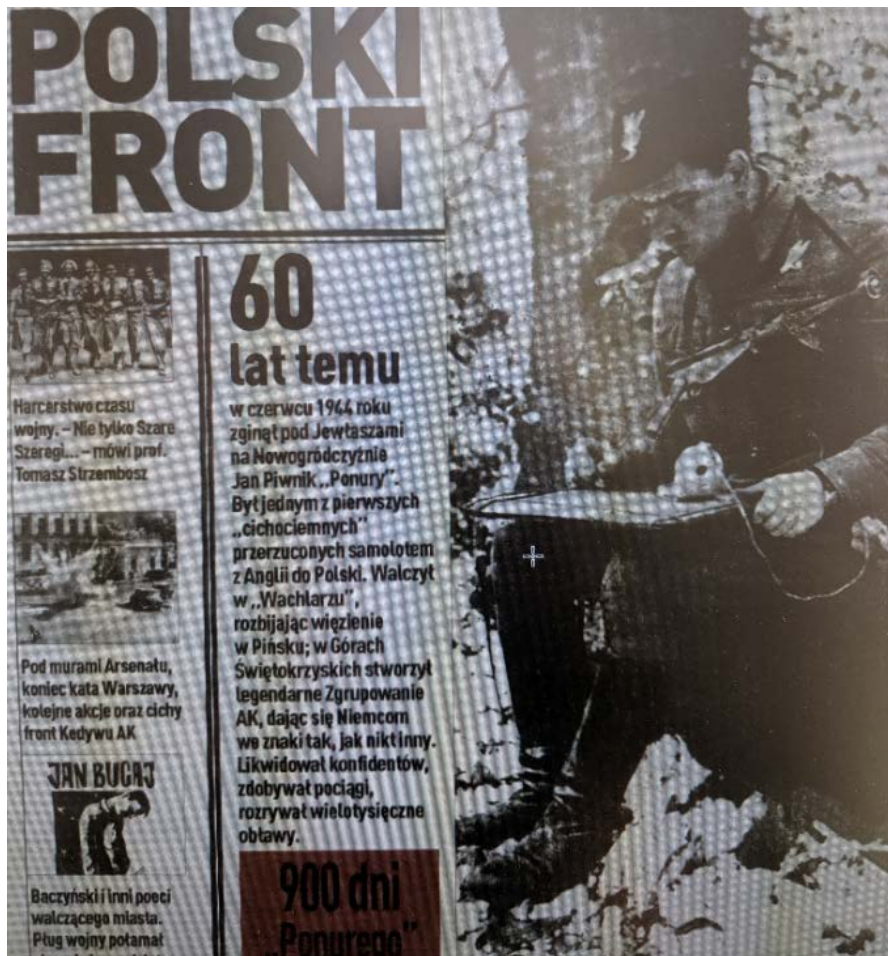


The Silent Unseen, Poland's Elite Special Force

A study of training methods and resistance activities, 1939-

1945.

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Jan Piwnik “Ponury” – one of the legendary Silent Unseen

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INTRODUCTION

“Are you looking for the grim reaper? Enter for a while”
-Writing on the front gate of Largo House, Scotland

Many people may ask, who were the Silent Unseen, what did they do and where did they come from? Unfortunately, the subject of the Silent Unseen is severely understudied in Britain and with that in mind, there is a great limitation of English secondary and primary sources on the matter. In the light of that, it is fundamental that the Silent Unseen receive the support they require to be understood in the English speaking world, and perhaps more importantly to be recognized by the successors of the generation that has aided the Silent Unseen in their problematic beginnings in England and Scotland. The focus of this written piece is to study the life of the Silent Unseen, through the analysis of key aspects of their work, namely: training and mission types. Other themes will also be explored in lesser depth, such as what made this special force so unique and effective.

Cichociemni in Polish or the Silent and Unseen in English were elite Polish special operatives of the Polish Army in exile. This exceptional unit was created in Britain during World War 2, with the main goal of supporting the Home Army in Poland and maintaining contact with the government in exile based in London, (AK – Armia Krajowa). Successful soldiers would be parachuted to Poland to take part in an array of mission types. Interestingly, these guerrilla fighters have all volunteered to become a part of the unit, with nothing but the hope to win the freedom of their beloved country. This would only be amplified by the fact that the vast majority of the volunteers were forced to retreat from zones of conflict, as the Nazi's have threatened to capture and kill partisan fighters. Over 2,400 soldiers had hoped to become one of the Silent Unseen, despite that they were subject to extremely challenging training regimes by the Polish and British SOE agents, with only about a quarter making it through. Only 316 of the 606 Silent Unseen were parachuted secretly to Nazi-occupied Poland.

The concept of Special Forces was still new by the time of World War II, which meant that there was room for quick advances in this type of warfare. Members of the unit have made considerable breakthroughs affecting the course of the war, one of such accomplishments being the AP-5 radio station which was still used for many years after the war by organisations such as MI-6 and the British SOE. Other influential undertakings were the discoveries of V-1, V-2 and V-3 sites. The Silent Unseen were troubled with difficulties associated with money and the creation of appropriate training facilities, especially at the beginning of their journey in England and Scotland. Many training facilities were financed by the soldiers themselves, loans were also taken from the British Special Operations Executive, in result enabling them to build the first parachute jump tower (See Appendix A) in Britain, located on the grounds of Largo House in Scotland.

Secondary Literature

In terms of secondary literature, the Silent Unseen have received an appreciable amount of attention from Polish war historians, however as noted before most of this work is only accessible for the Polish reader, due to the books and articles being written in Polish and not translated into other languages. The work of Kacper Śledziński, titled “Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji, (eng. The Silent Unseen, The Elite of Polish Diversion)” is perhaps the most comprehensive book on the subject matter, effectively exploring numerous themes associated with the work of the guerrilla troops. Whilst the book does address many names of the Silent Unseen and unveils what their roles were in the war effort, most of the names are well known by a proficient reader. Yet another potential weakness comes down to the fact that the author uses many abbreviations without explaining their meaning, which results in the loss of context to a reader that may not be familiar with them. Despite that, the book remains highly informative, with sensational descriptions of the lives led by the Silent Unseen.

Literature written or translated to English remains limited, although some works are accessible for an English reader, “The Eagle Unbowed, Poland and the Poles in the Second World War” by Halik Kochanski is one of such works. Whilst its target focus is not primarily set on the Silent Unseen, the elite troops receive noteworthy attention from the writer, covering a few aspects of sabotage work, training and description of air routes between England-Poland and Italy-Poland. The main limitation of this source is that the Silent Unseen are not the main focus, with mentions of events and people disarranged throughout the book. Despite the obvious restrictions, Kochanski’s work is extremely thorough and commendable for its attention to detail, ultimately when the Silent Unseen are mentioned the information is backed with a formidable bibliography, showing valuable snippets of data regarding the special force.

Another accessible source is titled, “ PHS Conference Proceedings - Polish Section SOE and “Cichociemni” 1940-1946” the conference took place in London, 2013, and have since been available to readers on The Polish Heritage Society website.

Numerous historians have supplemented the study of the Silent Unseen, with detailed information about several missions which led to the destruction of ‘V’ rocket launch

sites in Nazi-occupied Poland (for example the activities of "Wazny"¹²). Moreover, some light is shed on the external support which the Poles received from the British SOE, with the most valuable assets being aircrafts and military equipment. Despite that, the conference does not look closely at the type of training the soldiers had to endure in order to become the Silent Unseen, with only a handful of missions being inspected intimately.

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¹ Witold Biegański, Mieczysław Juchniewicz and Stanisław Okęcki, *Polacy w ruchu oporu narodów Europy: 1939-1945* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977) p. 45

² Bohdan Arct, *Polacy w walce z bronią "V."* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1972) p. 69

Chapter Layout

The first chapter ‘Becoming Silent and Unseen – Training and Origins’ will focus on the varied types of training that the candidates were exposed to. Whilst every single candidate had to complete the initial 5-stage training, methods of training and particular courses were chosen for specific candidates. In essence, the mode of training varied from candidate to candidate, making it non-uniform across the board, as the candidates were trained to their strengths. Due to the needs of the Home Army the soldiers had to be trained in various fields, which would then be used in Poland to benefit the war effort. Additional courses included; tactics of covert operations, cryptography, sharp shooting, specialist driver training, communication methods and so forth. The training was exhausting both mentally and physically, as the Silent Unseen had to maintain a false identity, known in Polish as a ‘legend’, in the final part of their training. The legend, as it was called then, was the story of their life in Poland – who were their neighbours, how old was their wife, when did they get married? The Silent Unseen were parachuted to Poland and had to maintain an identity which would not arouse any suspicion, with that in mind they had to create a false identity, with all the details that came with it, they had to remember everything. Moreover, it will include a compendium of knowledge based around the origins of the specialist paratrooper unit. The chapter will explore, in detail, the early struggles of the formation, early plans, influences, finally talking about the details of the main training courses that had to be attended in order to become the Silent Unseen.

The second chapter, ‘Secret operations in Nazi-occupied Poland’ will investigate the work of Cichociemni in Poland, once successfully parachuted the troops were responsible for tackling complex missions. To explore this theme, archival sources from the Studium Polski Podziemnej (eng. The Polish Underground Movement Study Trust), will be used to compliment the study. A variety of mission types will be analysed, ranging from sabotaging train lines to taking control of Home Army units around the country. Difficulties of the operations will be investigated, as without doubt, operating in a country occupied by the Nazi’s was a demanding task with many obstacles along the way. The chapter will also summarise the fates of the resistance troops after the war, highlighting the complications sourced in the communist rule after the war. The chapter will come to a close with a description of what happened to

the Silent Unseen after the war. Many have been oppressed by the communistic authorities and the Security Bureau for years, complicating or even ending their life.

Chapter One: Becoming Silent and Unseen – Training and Origins

Origins of the Silent and Unseen

Poland was invaded by the Nazi aggressor on the 1st September 1939, the invasion soon resulted in Nazi victory. However, the Polish people did not give up their country freely, with many Poles joining partisan units and the army. However, the Nazi's have simply overwhelmed the Poles and took firm control of the country. Some of the soldiers would continue their fight in other countries such as France, despite of their will to fight they would soon be driven out of conflict zones to Britain. The Poles were still committed to the war effort and would soon get a chance to join Poland's Elite Special Force – the Silent and Unseen. On a voluntarily basis, over 2,400³ soldiers have expressed their will to fight for Poland's freedom in Nazi-occupied Poland. Only 606⁴ have made it through the training stages.

It was already known in late 1939 that Poland would benefit from being able to communicate secretly with the main cities in Poland. Commander-in-Chief, gen. Sikorski wanted to establish secret aerial contact with Poland, most importantly with the cities of Lwów, Warszawa, Kraków and possibly Poznań⁵. Two Polish captains, Jan Górski and Maciej Kalenkiewicz were also enthusiastic about organizing a specialist paratrooper unit. Reports containing ideas, the length of training required and candidate names were sent for approval, however time after time they were met with rejection. General Kazimierz Sosnkowski was responsible for maintaining communication with Nazi-occupied Poland in 1940, a report was sent to the commander of the Polish Air force, Józef Zając regarding establishing a paratrooper unit. However, Sosnkowski too, was met with disapproval as Zając wrote in his reply "The Polish Air Force does not have adequate aircrafts, this enterprise is exquisitely difficult"⁶. Despite the difficulties, the captains have continued to work on the idea of using aircrafts for the means of transportation of resources and furthermore aiding the

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³ Jerzy Ślaski, *Polska walcząca* (Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1990) p. 253

⁴ Andrzej Brygidyn, *Żołnierskimi rzuceni losami* (Sanok: Self-Published, 1994) p. 99

⁵ Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 25

⁶ Alfred Paczkowski, *Ankieta Cichociemnego* (Warszawa :Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987) p. 252, translated from Polish-English

resistance movement in Poland⁷. The concept of parachuting was still ‘fresh’ for the Poles, and the added difficulty of parachuting troops into Nazi-occupied land only made the task of developing the concept more challenging. With that in mind the captains have devoted their time to analysing and studying intelligence documents regarding the Nazi paratrooper branch of the Luftwaffe. With the defeat of France, Górski and Kalenkiewicz had no choice but to evacuate to England, where their ideas would continue to expand.

The concept of creating a specialist parachuting unit would soon become a reality, as support of this idea continued to grow, especially in the light of the events that took place in Fort Eben-Emael, Belgium. The fort was amongst one of the most fortified places on earth, yet it was overwhelmed in a matter of hours by less than 100 Nazi paratroopers, using explosive charges, hollow charge grenades and flamethrowers⁸.

In August, 1940, Kalenkiewicz wrote a paper titled 'O zdobywcą postawę polskiej polityki', the paper itself contained ideas regarding creating an elite airborne force that would operate in Poland, offering leadership and expertise to partisan units across the country. The article was read and met with approval by General Sikorski. His daughter, Zofia Leśniowska arranged a breakfast meeting with cpt. Kalenkiewicz on the 20th of September, 1940. Kalenkiewicz wrote in his diary “...After the coffee the ladies discretely disappear. I present my report. I feel like I am winning ... the audience was won over by my paper 'O zdobywcą postawę polskiej polityki’”⁹. General Sikorski has told Kalenkiewicz about the forming of a Polish paratrooper unit, finally the concepts of the two captains could evolve into reality. In the light of his success, Kalenkiewicz was transferred to Section III of the Commander-in-Chief's Staff (Oddział III Sztabu Naczelnego Wodza)¹⁰ in October, at last being able to start the training of staff, which would later become known as the Silent Unseen. Section III responsible for this undertaking comprised of 5 members of staff, the aforementioned Kalenkiewicz and Górski as well as Lt Col Stefan Olszewski, Cpt Lucjan Fijutha and the commander of the unit – Lt Col Wilhelm Heinrich. This department focused on developing plans for recruitment of candidates and their

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⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Chris McNab, *The Fall of Eben Emael: Belgium 1940* (Oxford and New York :Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013) p. 4

⁹ Jan Erdman, *Droga do Ostrej Bramy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Kurs, 1982) p. 120

¹⁰ Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 35

training, whilst also working out the details associated with creating an aerial connection to Poland. Moreover, other issues were also tackled by this department, such as plans on how to use paratroops effectively in a future uprising and the rules of how a paratrooper unit should be formed to maintain secrecy.

The first training course took place in the No. 1 Parachute Training School RAF (No.1 PTS) located at RAF Ringway in Cheshire. This was one of two training locations suited for training for paratroopers, with the first training course starting in October, 1940. Twelve Poles were selected for the training, including Kalenkiewicz and Górski, on the 27th of October, 1940, Kalenkiewicz wrote in his diary as he was travelling from London-Manchester via train “So I am going to attend the course. I am rejoicing like an idiot, or like a cadet on vacation”¹¹. After roughly a year of pleading and planning, Kalenkiewicz and Górski could finally see their plan turning into a reality that they could be a part of. The two-week training course was passed by every candidate, with 4 practice jumps during the day time and one at night. Notably, it was not the only course that took place for Polish paratroopers that year, visibly the time for progress finally came about. Ringway continued to be used by the Poles, and freedom fighters from other countries throughout the war. The only other choice suited to the needs of paratrooper training was Largo House or as it was called by the Poles, ‘Monkey Grove’. The paratroopers were stationed in Tatton Park¹², a vast estate with a Tudor hall and picturesque gardens. This site was had far more favourable conditions, than the ones in some of the other training establishments, it was also adjacent to the Ringway.

Maintaining communication with Nazi-occupied Poland was amongst one of the most important tasks of Section VI of the Commander-in-Chief’s Staff. Section VI was a secretive department created in the summer of 1940, which has worked alongside the British SOE. It was largely responsible for recruitment of soldiers and political couriers which would be parachuted to Poland in the future. Large-scale recruitment has started, with 1 general, 112 staff officers, 894 subalterns, 592 petty officers, 771 privates, 15 women and 28 political couriers volunteering to create the newly formed

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¹¹ Jan Erdman, *Droga do Ostrej Bramy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Kurs, 1982) p. 129

¹² Bernard O’Connor, *Elzbieta Zawacka: Polish soldier and courier during World War Two* (Online Publishing, 2014) p. 51

unit¹³. Altogether, 2413 candidates have volunteered, however due to the extreme nature of the training, many have not made it through the strenuous training stage.

Training Courses – England and Scotland

All volunteers had to complete the initial a multi-stage training in order to advance and be eligible for parachute jumps to Poland. As previously mentioned, not all of the candidates were able to complete the basic training, with only 606 out of 2413 completing their training. One of the stages was titled ‘parachute jumping course’ the candidates were tested on their ability to jump from a plane independently or as a team of 6, which was the norm at the time, however sometimes exceptions were made for bigger or smaller teams of paratroopers. One of the Silent Unseen, Stanisław Jankowski remembers his experience in Ringway, where he took his parachute jumping course. Jankowski recalls that every candidate could turn around at any point in time and say ‘No, I am not prepared to do this jump’, even if they were in the aircraft at the time. He recalls his experiences in Ringway, commenting that:

“The English made it very difficult not to jump. Before the jump you had to sign a document, acknowledging that you have one of their[British] parachutes. At the signing desk, there was often a beautiful girl, you had to return to her once again, ticking the correct option on the document – whether you have jumped or not.”¹⁴.

Fear was common amongst the inexperienced candidates¹⁵, as the parachuting course in Ringway was something that most of the Poles have not been able to experience prior to their training. Despite that, Jankowski claims that the paratroopers were afraid however, once they made the jump from the hole in the plane all they could feel was joy¹⁶. The Poles were taught on how to use the parachuting equipment safely by the English staff at Ringway, yet some of the candidates claim that they have broken safety protocols to make their experience easier. One of the common methods of having an easier landing was to detach the parachute buckle right before hitting the

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¹³ Jan Szatcznajder, *Cichociemni: z Polski do Polski* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1990) p. 6

¹⁴ Stanisław Jankowski, *Z fałszywym ausweisem w prawdziwej Warszawie, Wspomnienia 1939-1946* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980) p. 208

¹⁵ *Nurt*, Volumes 233-244 (Wielkopolskie Wydawnictwo Prasowe, 1985) p.22

¹⁶ Stanisław Jankowski, *Z fałszywym ausweisem w prawdziwej Warszawie, Wspomnienia 1939-1946* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980) p. 208

ground. The experts at Ringway have told the trainees strictly, not to dispatch the buckle whilst in the air. However, as Jankowski claims the soldiers would do just that, allowing the soldier to be 'free' even before they reach the ground, allowing them freedom of movement, with the parachute falling close to the landing location of the candidate. This simplification was exploited due to the parachute being pulled by the wind once on the ground, the combat gear on the soldiers have slowed their movements and they would often be dragged on the ground, with the soldiers hitting everything in their path. In the light of this, detaching the buckle was more difficult when on the ground, whereas when the candidate was able to detach early, a few metres above the ground, they would not have to fight against wind and terrain.

The other 'trick' that went against all of the rules set out by the British staff was jumping in pairs. As previously mentioned, the Poles have usually made the jump as a unit consisting of 6 people, the candidates were told to jump one-by-one in a quick succession. The first to jump would usually sit on the edge of the hole in the plane, waiting for the English dispatcher to shout "Go!", the remainder of the unit would stand as close to the person nearest the hole and follow through with their jumps as soon as they could. This setup would allow the paratroopers to land over a distance of few hundred meters, whilst this may not appear like an obstacle, the 'real' jumps would be carried out at night, often in close proximity to Nazi outposts. As a direct result, the chance of being detected was higher and this was something that the Poles wanted to avoid as in many cases the paratroopers were accompanied by drops of equipment that would have to be transported or hidden urgently.

To lower the landing distance between the paratroopers, someone has proposed to jump in two's. This was met with harsh disapproval from the British staff, as once again, it was against safety regulations that were set in place to protect the paratroopers. Despite their inexperience and fear, Jankowski claims that the fellow soldiers all loved to jump, despite feeling afraid before jumping out of the plane. Jankowski asked the instructor in Ringway:

- "Lieutenant, how many times do you have to jump in order to become completely immune to fear?"

- "I have no idea, I have only jumped 641 times."¹⁷.

Upon completing the necessary number of jumps successfully, the paratroopers would be awarded a parachuting badge, it was designed by a famous Polish artist, Marian Walentynowicz¹⁸, best known for his cult classic comic 'Koziolek Matolek' (eng. Matolek the Billy-goat), which was incredibly popular amongst young children in Poland. The badge featured a silver eagle with large wings, the eagle faced downwards, suggesting that it was ready to go into battle. Commander-in-Chief Sikorski signed an official document on the 6th of June, 1941 stating:

"I approve the Paratrooping badge in the shape of an eagle flying into battle. In foreign land, where the thoughts of all Polish people constantly run towards the moment of return[to Poland] - its image takes a different shape in each person's imagination - it has a particular importance. The Polish Army sees its return in battle, sacrifice and glory. We want the eagles on our banners to fall victoriously on our enemies, before they are able to take rest on liberated soil."¹⁹.

Two versions of the badge have been created, the standard parachuting badge was awarded to the soldiers that have completed the aforementioned training. The other kind of badge was the battle parachuting badge, which would be awarded to paratroopers with combat experience, usually after completing their jump to Nazi-occupied Poland. The key difference between the badges was that the eagle on the battle badge had a golden beak and claws. The back of the award had a caption which read "Tobie Ojczyzno" (eng. For the homeland) and an identification number of the badge. The first 'standard' badges were officially awarded by Commander-in-Chief Sikorski to the members of 1SBS (1st Independent Parachute Brigade), which was a Polish parachute infantry brigade which has also been trained in Britain under the watchful eye of Maj. Gen. Stanisław Sosabowski. Honoured guests from the British Special Operations Executive, Brig Gubbins and Lt Klauber have also been awarded the badges on the 23rd of September, 1941²⁰. The creation of the badge was an

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¹⁷ Ibid, p. 215

¹⁸ Tadeusz Krzastek and Jerzy Tomczyk, *W 55 rocznicę powstania Armii Krajowej* (Warszawa: Egros, 1997) p. 168

¹⁹ Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Władysław Sikorski, *Dziennik Rozkazów Naczelnego Wodza i Ministra Spraw Wojskowych*, Poz. 30, *Znak Spadochronowy*, 20th of June, 1941

²⁰ Jerzy Murgrabia, *Symbole wojskowe Polskich Sił Zbrojnych na Zachodzie, 1939-1946* (Wydawnictwo Bellona: Warszawa, 1990) pp. 104-105

important step for all Polish paratrooper units, as before the establishment of this badge there was no Polish award aimed exclusively at paratroopers.

Psychological tests were conducted by the British to establish the usefulness of the candidates in a conflict scenario. These tests were carried out in Guildford (Secret Training Station 7a, England) and usually lasted two weeks. Another essential course was titled "Covert-operations course" it took place in Briggens (STS 38, England) and Audley End (STS 43, England) over the last two years of the war. The aim of this course was to improve the leadership skills of all candidates, making them ready for the sort of missions that required decisiveness, professionalism and timeliness (See Appendix B for an example of a training sheet). Each candidate would take leadership of a small group of operatives and carry out mock missions. The candidates needed to learn how to conduct sabotage and diversion on a microscopic scale, with a small number of people involved and often under the cover of the night. With that in mind the candidates were taught how to "organising and carrying out the task, starting with acquiring information and finishing on getting away without being noticed",²¹. The success of carrying out a mission also depended on creating a net of trusted contacts, which would supply the operatives with vital knowledge which would indubitably affect the final plan of the undertaking.

Practical exercises were carried out in partnership with the British officials, with candidates being able to undertake specific tasks in a realistic environment. Local authorities and the citizens of Briggens have been informed that a training exercise may be carried out on the day, this has not only made citizens, the Police and the Home Guard suspicious of any by-passer. This has also simulated a war-like environment of Nazi-occupied Poland, where at any given time the Poles can be asked for identification and potentially lose their life or risk the success of the operation, as all operatives were vital in order to carry out the task. The operatives had the mission explained to them in the late afternoon, they had to "sabotage a factory and blow up a car near the front gate", protected by the soldiers of the British Home Guard. The 12-men unit split in 3 smaller units with a task dedicated to each one. The largest sub-unit, consisting of 5 men had the task of breaching the grounds of the factory and setting up explosives in 3 different locations, the second unit made up of 3 men had to

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²¹ Władysław Klemens Stasiak, *W locie szumią spadochrony ...": wspomnienia żołnierza spod Arnhem* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1991) p. 48, translated from Polish

disorientate the British guards, which were stood by the front gate of the ‘factory’. The remainder of unit was to stay idle until the time of the escape; their task was to cover the flanks. One of the most well-known Silent Unseen – Jan Piwnik, had the special task of applying an explosive charge to the car by the guardhouse. Every operative was set and ready 10 minutes before the start time, which was 8 o’clock. The sound of a Thompson machine gun signalled the start of the mission, the shots were fired near the front gate, drawing the attention of guards from the factory. This allowed the unit with the explosives to get inside the factory and apply the charges rapidly, before the timer on the charges reached 0:00, the pyrotechnics were well on their way to their getaway cars. The mission was a success; the decision was made by a British observer, judging the progress of the mission. Poles made their way safely to their pre-ordered taxis whilst the soldiers of the Home Guard celebrated their success, as the sound of gunshots died down. However, their celebration had to come to a halt when a series of explosions commenced²².

In effect, mock missions became popular as the numbers of this type of exercise skyrocketed in Briggens, and made it so that troops in Audley End had to be trained in the same manner. The location of the site would be changed around, with post offices, bridges and even military airports being used as ‘targets’ for the future Silent Unseen. The practical sabotage exercises have helped the operatives develop strong leadership skills, decision making and often a creative approach to the mission.

Whilst the sound of machine guns did work in the aforementioned exercise in Briggens, operatives have used their imagination and skills that were learned during their training in innovative ways. One such example is another practical exercise that was carried out near Briggens. The task of the operatives was to sabotage a factory which produced parts for aircrafts, the soldier’s forged fake worker ID’s and obtained worker uniform to gain access to the site and avoid suspicion. The job was completed in 10 minutes, without any shots fired and no questions asked²³. As usual, the security of the site was informed that exercises were to be carried out on the day, but this did not matter in the slightest²⁴. In the beginning the course lasted 3-4 weeks, however it was extended to 2 months to perfect the skills of the operatives, including the ability

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²² Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) pp. 55-56

²³ Ibid, p. 57

²⁴ Alfred Paczkowski, *Ankieta Cichociemnego* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987) p. 87

to sabotage a site and take effective leadership of a small unit. Theory was also a part of the course, including the rules of radiotelegraphy and code breaking. The charges that were used in the training operations were not armed, however the Thompson machine guns that were used had live ammunition, as there was blank ammunition for that type of gun at the time – no one was injured during the exercise. The training regime in Briggens was mentally and physically exhausting, the candidates had to wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning to exercise, practice shooting and fighting as well as practicing theory on various subjects such as communication and theory of intelligence activities²⁵.

The physical-conditioning course was extremely challenging, with many candidates dropping out in this stage. The course aimed to improve the physical condition of every candidate, in addition teaching them how to use guns and explosives effectively. The training took place in Inverlochy Castle (STS 25, during the years of training it was under the command of Major Stacey) near Fort William in years 1942-1944. Particular emphasis was placed on physical fitness, with candidates taking part in activities ranging from on-the-move shooting to jiu-jitsu and other martial arts²⁶. The completion of this training was of the utmost importance to the candidates, as the people who failed this course would have to return to their original units without a second chance²⁷. The candidates would stay just outside of the castle grounds; their accommodation for the stay would be white tents, and their shower – a small river near the castle.

The first course took place from the 16th of September, 1940 to the 9th of October, 1940. However, it is noteworthy that this training course was not dedicated solely for the Poles, as the early years of the war would be the years in which the British and Poles were only developing thought-out ways of training an elite diversion unit. This is also the reason why many of the training programmes would be modified throughout the conflict, as both of the sides were looking to enrich their programmes and make them suitable for the candidates and their missions. With this in mind, some training programmes were dedicated for a mix of nationalities, e.g. Polish, Czech and

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²⁵ Marian Dziewanowski, *Jedno życie to za mało: kartki z pamiętnika niepoprawnego optymisty* (Toruń : Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1994) p. 191

²⁶ *Wywalcz Polsce Wolność Lub Zgin, Tobie Ojczyzno!*, Conference Proceedings, Dr. Agnieszka Polonczyk, *Cichociemni – zarys historii formacji* (Kraków: Kolo Naukowe Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego, 2017) p. 12

²⁷ Jędrzej Tucholski, *Cichociemni* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1988) p. 68

French, but the official courses customized to the needs of the future Silent Unseen would not start until 1942.

Participants of the course in 1940 have been greeted by Cpt. Antoni Strawiński, who backed the idea of a paratrooper unit for a long time and was responsible for explosives training in Inverlochy Castle²⁸. Strawiński presented the participants with information surrounding the training as they have arrived. The troops would learn how to use an array of explosive materials, their properties and how to use them in order to inflict most damage possible to the enemy. Additionally, the soldiers would learn how to handle pistols and machine guns that are manufactured and used in Europe, this included: British, Russian, Italian, Polish weapons²⁹. Further emphasis was placed on improving the ability of the troops to shoot precisely and quickly without apparatus that helps to shoot accurately, e.g. a scope. Other type of combat would also be practiced, including using knives, daggers, bare-knuckle fighting and silent killing. The troops had to be prepared for inconveniences whilst at STS 25, as they were stationed in a region of Britain which was known for its high rainfall, little sunlight and hilly surroundings. The training lasted for a month, with sessions starting in the morning and finishing at night.

First morning of the course, the troops are awakened by screams calling all the candidates over for morning assembly, morning gymnastics soon follow at 7 o'clock. Led by British instructors, the exercises would last 20 minutes, with the instructor confusing the Poles with certain commands; the still-sleepy soldiers would sometimes make mistakes as to what exercise they should be doing. The reprimand was 5 quick jump squats before re-applying themselves to the instructions. After the morning gymnastics, the soldiers got a chance at target practice on a nearby field. Target dummies were placed near trees, bushes and shrubs. The Nazi-resembling targets were placed in a way which made them hard to spot. The aim of the exercise was for the contenders to use 'correct shooting form' in order to quickly eliminate the target and improve their reflex in the process. Major Stacey demonstrated the exercise as he ran across the field, reloading the machine gun at the same time. He fired series of accurate shots, shifting the weight of his body from side to side as he chose a new

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²⁸ Michael Peszke, *The Polish Underground Army, the Western Allies, and the Failure of Strategic Unity in World War II* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 2015) p. 89

²⁹ Władysław Klemens Stasiak, *W locie szumią spadochrony ...": wspomnienia żołnierza spod Arnhem* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1991) p. 35

target. The weight shift was not a coincidence, as it allowed for the shooter to stabilize themselves momentarily before taking a hopefully, accurate and quick shot. The 'correct shooting form' was demonstrated by the Major, it was time for the Poles to do their best now.

The exercise was about to be repeated, as targets were placed in different locations, unknown to anyone but the Major. Jan Piwnik 'Ponury' has served the Polish police for 6 years before the war, understandably he had considerable experience surrounding handling a gun. However, the targets appeared and disappeared making it difficult to shoot them all in time, the gunshot sounds have also covered the sound of the travelling targets as they moved from side-to-side. Piwnik was unable to keep up with the targets as he struggled to reload his weapon in a timely manner in his first attempts. Whilst the beginning was not impressive, the goal of the exercise was realised by the end of the training of the course, with the candidates improving their accuracy and the rate of fire. The Poles improved massively by the end of the course, with their results being slightly worse than the ones of the experienced Maj Stacey.

Vital to their future missions, the candidates needed to learn how to use explosives, as their future missions would focus on sabotaging Nazi-sites in Poland. The vast majority of participants did not know much about explosives, which is why this part of the training was considered more difficult, and took a longer period of time to complete. The British invention of a plastic explosive was groundbreaking in many ways. David Stafford, a historian of espionage and intelligence claims that "Its great advantage over more traditional explosives such as dynamite or gelnite was that it could be safely handled, cut and shaped to fit the target, and transported and stored in safety"³⁰. Despite the new type of explosive reigning superior to its competitors, there was still a lot of risk involved in handling the detonators. The detonators would connect the plastic explosive with the fuse, if this step of fitting the explosive was done improperly; whoever was handling the plastic could lose their hand. Perhaps the biggest advantage of the plastic explosive was that it could be pre-moulded into a desirable shape before the start of the operation, which meant that the pyrotechnics would save some time at the site of the mission. Therefore gaining information on the site of the attack would become even more important for those handling the explosive.

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³⁰ David Stafford, *Secret Agent: The True Story of the Special Operations Executive* (London: Thistle Publishing, 2017) p. 45

A timer could be fitted, allowing the operatives to flee the site before any explosion occurs, this was flexible for any operative as the timer could be set for as short as a 10 minute period up to 24 hours. This part of the training course would usually start after dinner, initially in the lecture hall. Cpt. Strawiński would lead the classes, showing the participants a selection of explosives and the correct form of using them³¹. When the candidates have gained a thorough understanding of the materials that they would be working with, mock missions have commenced once again. Just like in the covert-operations course, the trainees had to apply their knowledge and training to a real-like situation e.g. setting explosives safely on a site such as a train station or a factory.

The candidates would also be tasked with finding their way back to Inverlochy Castle. One of the participants would be picked up by a car with blacked-out windows, leaving the soldier disorientated as to what their location is. When the car would reach the desired location, Major Stacey would usually say ‘Good Luck!’, and drive off into the distance. Road signs were either taken down or painted over, which made the task more challenging. The soldiers had to use natural surroundings to pinpoint their location, using hills and notable structures to their advantage as well as the position of the stars. It was common for operative to cover 30 kilometres in a day’s time, making this task challenging both physically and mentally. With the training course nearly finished, the participants were gifted British Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knives, famously used by the British Commandos and manufactured by a well-known razor making company, Wilkinson Sword (See Appendix C).

The last course leaves little to the imagination, as it was titled ‘Kurs odprawowy(eng. Final course)’, this training aimed to transform a candidate into a conspirator. Every candidate had to come up with a ‘legend’, a comprehensive set of lies associated with their new, false identity that would be used to trick Nazi’s into believing that they are ordinary citizens. The training took place in Audley End – STS 43, England and lasted between 2 and 6 weeks. Due to Audley End being overwhelmed with candidates, the course was also operational in STS 46 from July, 1943. The course would also start up in Ostuni, Italy in 1944³².

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³¹ Alfred Paczkowski, *Ankieta Cichociemnego* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987) pp. 59-60, translated from Polish

³² Przemyskie Klimaty, *Cichociemni (Wyklęci) i ich znaczenie dla Armii Krajowej*, 25th of June, 2018, <https://przemyskieklimaty.pl/?p=1735>, (accessed 7/8/2019)

A complex but natural identity had to be established by the operatives, in order to secure their safety once they land in Nazi-occupied Poland. The information that they produced about their new identity had to be learned over and over again, with candidates having to think of answers to hundreds of questions which could be commonly asked by a Nazi. Where are you from? Where is your house? Where do you work? Those are just a few examples of the questions that could be asked, each answer had to be faithful to the identity and appearance of the agent. Ultimately, the candidates had to spend a lot of time making sure that their new identity will not arouse any suspicion, even tiny details like the clothes they wore could give away unwanted information. Candidates were lectured on the conditions of life in Poland. The candidates had to believe that they are the person that they are impersonating – they had to talk clearly, surely and maintain eye contact to make whomever they are speaking to believe what they are saying³³.

The extent to which the legend stretched was truly remarkable, when the candidate chose their job in Poland, they often had to learn basic skills that came with it as well as job-specific vocabulary. They were given job placements in British car factories, farms, bakeries and so on. Banned literature in the form of books and newspapers was made available for the candidates, with works being smuggled to Britain. Some of the information was written by the underground movements and some by ordinary citizens that wanted to voice their concerns about the country on paper. All of the above was banned in Nazi-occupied Poland, as all types of literature had to pass through official channels in order to be approved and censored where appropriate. Civilian emissaries would also deliver first-hand information on the state of the country to the candidates which aimed to give them a real overview of how Poland has changed under the grasp of the Nazi's³⁴. Moreover, the participants had to be taught about the structure of the Home Army (pol. Armia Krajowa or AK), Nazi police and methods of interrogation practiced by the Gestapo. Instructors of the course would often wake certain candidates up in the middle of the night, and asked them questions related to their newborn identity. Others would be interrogated by instructors wearing German military uniforms. It was also essential for the candidates to get a set of clothes that they could wear in Poland³⁵. Stanisław Jankowski

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³³ Krzysztof A. Tochman, *Michał Fijałka: w obronie Wołynia* (Zwierzyniec and Rzeszów: Obywatelskie Stowarzyszenie "Ostoja", 2004) p. 38

³⁴ Adolf Pilch, *Partyzanci trzech puszczy* (Warszawa: Editions Spotkania, 1992) p. 41

³⁵ Jerzy Ślaski, *Polska walcząca* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1990) p. 249

“Agaton” recalls how difficult it was to obtain clothes that would be fitting for a busy Warsaw street at the time. He recalls his experience from a London shop:

"I had a sharp-worded exchange with the representative of "Fortnum and Mason". I bought shoes from them. The best ones, the price did not matter. The salesman has always respected my choice, especially because the high price did not put me off them. The misunderstanding originated from me asking him to remove all brand marks from them [the shoes]. In 100 years of this brands existence, I think I was the first customer to propose such weird and almost arrogant requests. He was disgusted.”³⁶.

It was rational for the candidates to rip out all brand-related details on their clothes, after all nothing could cause more suspicion than a writing “Made in England”, moreover all labels were removed that had English text on them. All the clothes would be checked before they got on the plane. However, Jankowski remembers that 5 years after the war he discovered a small label with the writing “Pure Wool” on one of his sweaters. The soldiers had to pay for their own clothes, and have highlighted that acquiring goods fit for a Warsaw in London was a troublesome task, as the type of clothes between the two places have been significantly different.

With decisions made about their identity, the soldiers have received fake documentation³⁷ which details such as; name, job title, education, place of birth, name of mother and father and so on. Despite that, the soldiers claimed that the ID’s were not exactly fitting and not up to date, as the appearance of the documents was exactly the same as of documents given out before the outbreak of the war. The candidates were also made aware of how to handle the goods inside the containers which would be dropped out of the aircraft. Making sure that the containers are moved or hidden in a timely fashion was highly desired, as they often had valuable items inside, such as money, radios and other equipment which could be used by the Home Army. Yet another sacrifice, which the Silent Unseen had to make, was to cut contact with their families, it was vital that they keep true to their false identity³⁸.

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³⁶ Stanisław Jankowski, *Z fałszywym ausweisem w prawdziwej Warszawie, Wspomnienia 1939-1946* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980) pp. 223-224, translated from Polish

³⁷ Jędrzej Tucholski, *Powracali nocą* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1988) p. 30

³⁸ PolskieRadio, *Cichociemni i ich tajemnice. "Zabijali po cichu"*, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/7/179/Artykul/1575483,Cichociemni-i-ich-tajemnice-Zabijali-po-cichu> (accessed 15/08/2019)

As the final course was coming to an end the participants were given equipment needed for their jump. Jędrzej Tucholski one of the first experts on Cichociemni claims that the full set of personal equipment included:

“The combat gear of the Silent Unseen consisted of: parachute - type Irvin QD, a parachute jump suit, elastic helm with goggles, leather gloves, elastic bandages, 100 pieces of ammunition, folding knife, pocket knife, electronic torch with a spare battery, compass, double-folding shovel to bury the parachute, a portion of food, metal bottle with alcohol and a capsule containing poison – KCN (potassium cyanide).”³⁹.

Moreover, the Silent Unseen would receive a list of the items contained in the containers as well as belts with hidden compartments which would be used to store US dollars for the use of the Home Army. The operative would also get 6 months pay in money, which is an interesting fact in the light of the British research which has shown that an operative is most likely to die within the first 6 months of service abroad. Before the Silent Unseen could jump, they all had to swear an oath of the Home Army⁴⁰. This was done in a church whenever possible (however many have taken the oath in other conditions), in the presence of a commanding, or superior officer, a priest and the Silent Unseen⁴¹. The pledge read:

“In the face of God Almighty and Holiest Mary, Virgin and the Queen of the Polish Crown, I lay hand on this holy Cross, a sign of suffering and salvation, I swear, that I will faithfully and adamantly guard the honour of Poland, and for its liberation I will fight with all my strength, until the sacrifice of my life. All the orders from the organisation will be adhered to, and the secret will be kept unwaveringly, no matter what happens to me.”⁴².

After taking the oath, the Silent Unseen chose 2 codenames of their own preference, the ones nominated for a parachute jump to Poland would be sent to a waiting station.

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³⁹Jędrzej Tucholski, *Spadochronowa opowieść* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Komunikacji i Łączności, 1991) p. 85

⁴⁰ Joint-Study compiled by Koło Spadochroniarzy Armii Krajowej, *Drogi Cichociemnych* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2008) p. 12

⁴¹ Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 84

⁴² Ibid, translated from Polish

There they would wait for information regarding the jump, usually spending this time to complete their set of civilian clothes. Usually the operation would include a small team of 2 to 6 operatives that would more often than not disperse throughout the country after their landing. Due to the paratroopers not having a place to store their things adequately, they had to put all of their aforementioned civilian clothes underneath the jump suit including a suitcase with personal items. It is noteworthy, that the Silent Unseen have also completed speciality courses, to further enhance their skill sets. Finally, after months of exhausting and challenging training, the troops were ready to jump. Upon their landing in Poland, they would make their way to 'aunties' – women working for the resistance organisation, which would take care of them and let them settle in occupied Poland⁴³. The acclimatization, as it was called then, was short period of time, lasting up to a few weeks, in which the Silent Unseen were getting used to the country, the aunt would offer advice by filling the paratrooper in with information about what has changed in the country, how to behave when stopped by a policeman on the street and providing them with food⁴⁴.

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⁴³ Stefan Bałuk, *Polacy na frontach II Wojny Światowej, 1939-1945* (Warszawa: ARS Print Production, 1995) p. 143

⁴⁴ Anna Müller, *If the Walls Could Speak: Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) p. 45

Chapter Two: Secret operations in Nazi-occupied Poland

The first jump – Operation ‘Adolphus’

Poland’s Home Army was the largest resistance movement during the time of World War II with over 380,000 members at their peak⁴⁵, however it lacked strong leadership in the form of commanding officers. The Silent Unseen would compliment the resistance movement by taking control of Home Army units as well as fighting the Nazi’s in an array of ways. The first jump took place during the night time on the 15th of February 1941. Captain Keast was the pilot of the Whitley Z-6473 that was designated for the flight, at 18:20 the plane was already in the air (See Appendix D to see a motion about the flight crew). The jumps would take place at night, to avoid Nazi anti-aircraft guns, however this was never really optimal as many reports highlight that the crew has experienced gunfire during the flight. However, this was a fitting precaution that saved lives and equipment. The flight was charted, the chosen route was the shortest, the plane would fly over the Dutch coast, south of Berlin, then over Wrocław and Częstochowa finally letting the operatives jump out near Włoszczowa. The jump was supposed to happen near a so-called ‘delivery-point’, located 8 kilometres south of Włoszczowa. A delivery-point was a place where the delivery of the troops and containers would be made, usually members of the Home Army would be waiting there to assist with moving of the equipment and getting away from the scene. The people have waited on the ground for the paratroopers, unfortunately this was hopeless as the plane did not arrive between the agreed time of midnight and 3 AM. No one could hear the plane, for which they were supposed to light up 3 bright white lights, in a shape of a triangle. The first jump into Nazi-occupied Poland was not looking promising, with the fates of the Silent Unseen and the equipment held in the containers hanging in the balance.

Due to a navigational error the airdrop took place at 00:30, an incredible 138 kilometres south of the set location. As a safety measure the crew was not able to use navigational equipment and instead had to rely on navigating on the basis of comparing landscapes to a map⁴⁶. The Silent Unseen made their jump, they landed

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⁴⁵ Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, *Armia podziemna* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2009) p. 165

⁴⁶ Jędrzej Tucholski, *Cichociemni* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1984) pp. 89-107

near a small village called Dębowiec⁴⁷, 6 kilometres away from a train station ‘Skoczów’, which stood on Nazi-occupied soil. The plane came back to England after an extremely long flight, which ultimately lasted 11 hours and 45 minutes. There was 50 litres of fuel in the tank, which would translate to roughly 10 to 15 minutes of flight time. Upon their return, the British air crew reported that the paratroopers and containers were airdropped in the ‘wild’ in the region between Słomniki and Proszowice, 24 kilometres away from Kraków. The first flight has already raised some question in terms of the adequacy of the Whitley aircraft, with the small amount of fuel remaining the crew could have died if they were affected by adverse weather conditions. The navigational error also made the first jump of the Silent Unseen more complex, with no Home Army contacts waiting for them on the ground and a certain sense of uncertainty in the air – what should they do with the containers? The containers have held items that were important to the Home Army; radios, weapons, explosive materials and propaganda in British and Polish.

The first two Silent Unseen to make the historic jump included Cavalry Captain Józef Zabielski „Żbik”, Brigadier Stanisław Krzymowski „Kostka” and political courier Czesław Raczkowski „Orkan”. The jump was not successful for Zabielski, as he obtained some injuries including damage to the ankle and foot. Every man made their own way to Warsaw. Raczkowski was stopped by the Nazi’s on the border, however his false identity convinced the Germans that he was just a smuggler, he was punished to three months in prison and a fine. He was able to make contact with the soldiers of the Polish Farmers' Battalions, they have paid his fine and helped him continue his journey to Warsaw. Zabielski was said to be tracked by the Nazi’s, yet he completed his task, reaching Warsaw. Unfortunately, the containers were discovered by Nazi’s as the Poles had no way of effectively moving 600kg of equipment⁴⁸, this was a double-edged-sword as it also gave information away to the Germans, secret operatives are now working within the General Governorate. The British Air Ministry suspended further flights to Poland after the initial operation for nearly 10 months, the reason for this is still not completely clear, but it can be speculated that this decision was made due to the Whitley barely making it back in time to the British airbase, and the mixed success of the first operation.

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⁴⁷ Krzysztof A. Tochman, *Słownik biograficzny Cichociemnych*, t. 1 (Zwierzyniec and Rzeszów: Ostoja, 2000) p. 168

⁴⁸ Wojciech Drewniak, *Historia bez cenzury 3* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2018) p. 74

Whilst the Air Ministry commented that the Whitleys are not suited to the task⁴⁹. The ministry refused to let the Poles use the much more fitting four-engine Halifax until later on in the year (See Appendix E). This was achieved by talks between Commander-in-Chief and Secretary of Air, Archibald Sinclair. The two men have met on the 9th of October, 1941 to have dinner and talk, the result was fantastic for the Poles as Sinclair has agreed to assign three Halifax airplanes to the Polish section of the SOE⁵⁰. The situation was also becoming more complicated as the nights became shorter whilst the time of the flight remained the same. Limited choice of air routes⁵¹ also made the journey difficult, as much of the preferable routes were under the control of the Germans.

The ‘trial period’ – February 1941 to April 1942

Whilst the first crew made it back to the airbase safely, the next operation that took place on the night of the 7th/8th of November, 1941 would once again highlight the problematic nature of the pre-planned routes. This time the Poles flew in a Halifax L-9612⁵² bomber plane fitted for their purposes, it was loaded with containers and a group of 3 Silent Unseen. However, the chosen route was longer as the plane had to fly over Sweden, making the flight 120-160 miles longer⁵³. The operatives were parachuted to the delivery point near a small village in central Poland named Czatolin. This time, the landing went smoothly for both the soldiers and the equipment. Allies from the Polish Armed Organisation (pol. Polska Organizacja Zbrojna ‘‘Znak’’) were present on site⁵⁴. A group of 40 resistance fighters helped the operatives transport the valuable goods, without raising an alarm. In essence, this operation was a text book example of how the operatives should land in Poland, but as this was the ‘trial period’, many more mistakes would be made along the way before the Poles would establish a more fail-safe manner of landing on Nazi-occupied soil. Unfortunately for the crew of the Halifax, poor weather conditions on their return journey meant that

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⁴⁹ Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 63

⁵⁰ Elita Dywersji, *Bazy i Samoloty*, <http://elitadywersji.org/zrzuty-bazy-samoloty/> (accessed 9/8/2019)

⁵¹ Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed, Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) p. 286

⁵² Mieczysław Hasiński-Adam, *Encyklopedia: S-Z, The Polish Air Force N.C.O's Training School* (Poznań: SPLdM, 1995) p. 148

⁵³ Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed, Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) p. 286

⁵⁴ Tadeusz Żaczek, *Cichociemni na Ziemi Łowickiej*, zespollowicz.pl/download/cichociemni_na_ziemi_lowickiej.pdf (accessed 9/8/2019)

they had to land in Sweden⁵⁵, the plane was partially covered in ice as a consequence of a malfunction of the hydraulic system which made the Poles unable to hide the undercarriage of the plane which was deliberately lowered earlier on in the flight to reduce the speed of the plane before the paratroopers made their jump. With all of the above taken into consideration, the plane was consuming much more fuel than usually and on top of that it was constantly being challenged by strong wind and overall, adverse weather conditions.

The decision was made to land in Sweden, where the plane was burned⁵⁶. The 8-man crew was interned by Swedish authorities, however they managed to escape and made their way back to Britain. Nonetheless, the operation could be seen as significant to further success of the Silent Unseen. This is due to the contents of the containers, which included ‘‘Instruction No. 8’’⁵⁷, a document which was drafted to improve the process of the airdrop, from managing the containers with equipment to guarding the delivery point. It was obvious that jumps like the one from the 15th of February were not effective as landing in the ‘wild’ meant that managing the goods was great of a task for a small unit of the Silent Unseen, simply the resources would be lost and benefit the wrong side of the conflict. In result, the Siren (pol. Syrena) was created as a sub-unit of section V of the ZWZ-AK (Union of Armed Struggle-Home Army). It played a pivotal role in securing landing sites, updating rules and regulations regarding the landing site, and training staff to work effectively in three main areas; receiving the paratroopers, evacuating the site and lastly offering support in the form of gunfire if necessary to cover the paratroopers and the soldiers sent to help them⁵⁸.

The last flight of the year took place on the night of the 27/28th of December, with 4 Silent Unseen and 2 political couriers making the jump. The operation was nicknamed ‘‘Jacket’’, and would be the first mission in which lives were lost as a consequence of navigational error⁵⁹. At midnight the noise of the plane was heard on the delivery site, with the staff on site waiting for the correct moment to turn on the lights which would

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⁵⁵ Kazimierz Rutkowski, *Cichociemni*, <https://www.kazior5.pl/cichociemni.pdf> (accessed 9/8/2019) p. 15

⁵⁶ Forced Landing Collection, 1941-11-08, collection of Bo Widfeldt and Andreas Samuelsson, <http://www.forcedlandingcollection.se/RAFe/RAF010-L9612.html> (accessed 9/8/2019)

⁵⁷ Halszka Szoldrska, *Lotnictwo Armii Krajowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1998) p. 74

⁵⁸ Halszka Szoldrska, *Lotnictwo Armii Krajowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1998) p. 75

⁵⁹ Krzysztof A. Tochman, *Słownik biograficzny Cichociemnych*, t.3 (Rzeszów: OS Ostoja, 2002) p. 81

signal the plane the site of the drop. Unfortunately, the Handley Page Halifax flew off into the distance, with jumps being made into the "wild", 20 kilometres away from the designated airdrop destination. Once again, the Silent Unseen have landed on earth annexed to the Reich, which would soon become a source of worries. Due to the suboptimal landing conditions Alfred Paczkowski, „Wania” twisted his ankle, whereas Marian Jurecki, „Orawa” hit a tree trunk, reportedly nearly losing conscience. Landing in the wild was unpredictable, as the paratroopers made their jump on a site which was unaccustomed for their landing, with natural features around them actually posing a serious risk to their health.

The troops did not know that they would have to get over the border to get to the General Governorate, which was well guarded by border police. Despite the inconveniences, the paratroopers have followed the textbook by burying their parachutes and containers, however two of them were still hanging off the trees. In the early hours of the morning the men have all found each other and four of them started making their way to Warsaw. To the misfortune of the troops, the first village which they encountered turned out to be occupied by German border control troops.

It was an uncommon sight to see 4 men walk into a small village collectively (the remaining two remained at the state to bury the parachutes and equipment) in the early hours of the morning. Without a way to avoid it, the men were questioned with the operatives displaying good thinking and saying that they are polish labourers, making their way back to their families. However, this would be of no use as the Germans pointed their weapons at them and walked them to a nearby border control outpost in a tiny village of Wszeliwy. The Poles complied. Once in the outpost one of the political couriers, Tadeusz Chciuk "Celt" pulled out a Colt pistol and started firing on the Germans, the remaining two Silent Unseen and the other political courier mirrored "Celt" as they reached for their guns and started shooting. The Germans have been shot dead at the site, however as a consequence of the shoot-out, more Germans have been alarmed, ultimately willing to quickly capture the paratroopers. The Poles would continue and make their way to Warsaw, ultimately they were successful in reaching the capital city. However, two of the Silent Unseen were still within a close proximity of the airdrop at the time of the shooting - Marian Jurecki "Orawa" and Andrzej Świątkowski "Amurat" have been tasked with resolving two

gigantic issues, namely, two of the parachutes were still hanging from the trees, along with a bag including belongings of the paratroopers.

Orawa and Amurat made their way to one of the nearby villages, in hope that someone will let them use their saw or an axe. They were hoping to use the tools to cut down the trees, as Germans would clearly be alarmed upon the discovery of British parachutes. The operatives have discovered an inn, and walked towards it. Just before reaching it, a person appeared from behind the building. The person could be described as hostile after just simple look⁶⁰. All logic was lost in that moment, the Poles have lost their cool in that instance, shots were fired – the German was dead. Consequently more Germans ran out of the inn, a short exchange of fire has commenced. Regrettably, Orawa and Amurat were the first two Silent Unseen that have died in Nazi-occupied Poland. According to the relations of the local populace, both of the bodies have been treated with a lack of respect by the Germans. They were stripped of their clothes and buried under a pear tree in Brzozów Stary.

General Rowecki, leader of the Home Army has criticized Orawa's decision a year later claiming that:

“A commander of the paratroopers should know better, especially when he is carrying post, he should not be the one to stay on the airdrop site for the longest amount of time. Orawa had information detailing addresses of spies, which fell into enemy hands, due to this many people have been arrested.”⁶¹.

Moreover, Orawa was criticized for the same reason in secret ZWZ documents⁶². The loss of life in agents would weaken the underground movements, as at the time of the operation there were only a handful of operatives in Poland. They were all well trained and ready to take control of AK units, and would use their skills to engage in activities relevant to their specialist training or orders. In the light of this, losing 2 paratroopers within the first year, and only the third operation in, was not ideal by any means.

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⁶⁰ Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 98

⁶¹ IPN, *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, t. 2 (London: Studium Polski Podziemnej, 1973) p. 180

⁶² Report about flights to Poland 1942-1943, A_118, Polish Underground Movement Study Trust

During the trial period, from February, 1941 to April 1942, 12 planes have taken off from Britain, 9 of them completed their mission, with the rest having to turn back due to extreme weather conditions. One plane has been lost along with the crew, 48 paratroopers made their jump to Poland, 2 tonnes of equipment has been airdropped. Money has been parachuted to Poland in order to be used to support the war effort, namely 1,541,450 US dollars, 119,400 US dollars in gold, 1775 British pounds and 885,000 German marks. A portion of the money was lost in action⁶³.

However, the success of the paratroopers can not only be judged by looking at the amount of equipment and money they brought over with them. The men have landed in Poland to operate within the Home Army and fulfil tasks set by HQ. Their clear advantage was their professionalism and will to fight to liberate Poland. The trial period finished in April 1942. The next operational season titled "Intonacja" (eng. Intonation) would begin in August, 1942, and operate until April, 1943. Another season of flights began in August, 1943 and lasted until July, 1944. This series of operations was called "Riposta" (eng. Riposte). The last set of flights started in August, 1944 and finished in December of the same year, this operation was called "Odwet" (eng. Reprisal).

Fighting for freedom – Silent Unseen and the underground movements

Once the Silent Unseen have reached their destination in Poland, they have been tasked with a multitude of task, depending on their specialization and orders. Some have actively fought the Nazi occupant, some have worked as spies, it has all depended on what was needed from them. Infantry Colonel Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, commander of the Home Army General Staff's Section II (Intelligence and Counterintelligence unit) reported that the biggest portion of the Silent Unseen worked in covert operations and partisan warfare with 169 men, 50 were radio operators, 37 intelligence workers, 28 emissaries of the Polish government, 24 staff officers, 22 airmen and airdrop coordinators, 11 instructors of armoured forces and instructors in anti-tank warfare at secret military schools and 3 were trained in forging documents⁶⁴. The Silent Unseen took part in many uprisings differing in scale,

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⁶³ Information about the 'trial period' provided by Ryszard M. Zając, grandson of Lt. Zając "Kolanko", <http://elitadywersji.org/zrzuty-1941-1942/>, translated from Polish (accessed 11/08/2019)

⁶⁴ Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *The Unseen and Silent: Adventures from the Underground Movement, Narrated by Paratroops of the Polish Home Army* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954) p. 350

including the Warsaw Uprising, sabotaging train lines and disrupting communications.

Captain Stefan Ignaszak ‘‘Nordyk’’, one of the Silent Unseen played a crucial role in the detection of V-1 and V-2 launch sites. These rockets were used by the Luftwaffe to inflict damage to England, most known for the damage they dealt to London. Nordyk landed in Poland on the 13/14th of March, 1943 after having completed his covert-operations SOE course. Nordyk was fluent in the use of the German language, and used it to his advantage. He was able to obtain information about the production sites of 2 rocket types; V-1 and V-2, as well as the location of the manufacturing factory and the Nazi research centre. The information would be sent to Warsaw and then to London. However, the British were not prepared to act immediately and as a direct result Ignaszak had to provide them with more information to convince them to order an air attack.

He did so with success, as on the night of the 17/18th of August, 1943, operation ‘‘Hydra’’ commenced. The British Air Force has dispatched nearly 600 aircrafts (324 Lancasters, 218 Halifaxes and 44 Stirlings⁶⁵), completely overwhelming the German opponent. It has been reported that 1800 tonnes of bombs has been dropped on Peenemünde, where the facilities were located⁶⁶. If not for Nordyk’s contribution, the Nazi’s would have gained several months of time at Peenemünde, developing, testing and dispatching rockets to coastal-sites occupied by the Germans to inflict heavier damage on Europe. An unexpected side effect of the bombing, was that one of the V-2 rockets has not exploded and fell near the shore of river Bug whilst remaining in a surprisingly good condition. It was well hidden by the members of the Home Army and the local population, some parts were taken to be examined in Warsaw. Operation Wildhorn III (pol. Most III) took place on 25/26th of July, 1944, with operatives coming into Poland and parts of the rocket being loaded onto the Dakota airplane. There were a few problems taking off, as the plane wheels were stuck in the muddy ground, however with the help of partisans the plane was soon able to continue its adventure to Brindisi, Southern Italy. It is also important to note that in the later parts of the war flight with the Silent Unseen took off from Italian airports, as the air route was far safer and shorter. A few days later the components arrived in London, where

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⁶⁵ Craig Cabell, *Operation Big Ben: The Anti-V2 Spitfire Missions* (Stroud: Fonthill Media, 2017) p. 45

⁶⁶ Martin Middlebrook, *The Peenemunde Raid* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2006) p. 132

they were examined by the Polish Sixth Bureau. The parts and the information were translated and then passed to the British⁶⁷. On the basis of certain fragments of the V-2 rocket, stamps and trademarks on the components led to the identification of 16 factories, located all over the Reich⁶⁸.

The Silent Unseen engaged in covert operations and partisan warfare were tasked with disrupting the Nazi's war effort in a multitude of ways. Some acts of sabotage targeted factories and trains, whereas others were much smaller in scope. In January and February, 1942, partisan units were successful in derailing over 45 trains, derailing 62 locomotives and setting 41 trains on fire. Amongst other acts of sabotage, precision tools were destroyed, food and drink poisoned and weapon factories were infiltrated to produce a faulty end product⁶⁹. Emphasis was however placed on sabotaging trains and train lines to "make German war operations on the Eastern Front more difficult, by slowing down the delivery of supplies"⁷⁰. The Polish underground reported that their operations would continue to expand due to casualties in people and the necessity of slowing down the Nazi's. Factories that specialized in producing parts for tanks, motorbikes, weapons and anything else that might have benefited the Nazi's would be one of the main targets of the partisan units. To slow down the production the Poles would destroy machinery, tools and disrupt the delivery of materials to the factory, often destroying the materials in the process. Another key part of the plan to make the production of various products more sluggish, was to deliberately produce faulty goods such as: ammunition, machinery and precision tools (See Appendix F for summary of sabotage activities 1941-1944). General Rowecki "Kalina", reported that on the night of 31st of December, 1942 a series of sabotage acts took place in Lublin voivodeship, with one bridge being blown up, derailing of two trains and the destruction of nearby telecommunication structures⁷¹.

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⁶⁷ John Grosvenor Beevor, *SOE: Recollections and Reflections, 1940-1945* (London: Bodley Head, 1981) p. 212

⁶⁸ PolskieRadio, *Akcja "Most III" – jak wywiad Armii Krajowej pomógł uratować Londyn*, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/39/246/Artykul/895963.Akcja-Most-III-%e2%80%93-jak-wywiad-Armii-Krajowej-pomogl-uratowac-Londyn> (accessed 10/08/2019)

⁶⁹ Secret Letter regarding sabotage activities, A_118, Polish Underground Movement Study Trust

⁷⁰ Radiogram No. 21, A_382, Polish Underground Movement Study Trust

⁷¹ Ibid.

Despite efforts to maintain safety and avoid gunfights, statistics show that in February, 1942, over 480 Germans have been killed as a result of being detected⁷². More rarely, Gestapo agents have been targeted to be killed by members of the Polish underground, in February, 1942, the Polish underground killed 16 of them. One of the most important assassinations was the one that took place on the 1st of February, 1944. A special unit of the Home Army - Kedyw (eng. Directorate of Diversion), was tasked with the killing of Franz Kutschera (See Appendix G), a high-standing dignitary that has been nicknamed the 'executioner of Warsaw'.

Kutschera has ordered over 1,400 deaths of Poles living in Warsaw. The operation was made up of 12 people, including three women, the youngest being 14 years old⁷³. The women have acted as signallers, using pre-agreed actions to signal the stage of the action to the men. When it was known that Kutschera has left his town house, the action officially began. Three of the men were wearing Gestapo uniforms and sat in a police car waiting for Kutschera to leave in his limousine. The limousine was blocked by another car driven by members of the organisation, Kutschera was shot dead, his pistol and suitcase were taken as proof of the actions success. Numerous men were injured as a result of the Germans opening fire on them. However, the Nazi's were determined to repress the Poles, two days after the assassination over 300 Poles were killed⁷⁴ in Warsaw as a consequence. The killings were supposed to make the Poles feel powerless, and hostile towards the members of the Home Army, as their actions brought death and persecution to ordinary people. This was practiced across the country, with mass arrests, interrogation and public executions being chosen as answer to acts against the Germans. Consequently, there was a mixed response to partisan units across the country, some preferred to join whilst others continued to live on the terms set by the Nazi's. Many of the Silent Unseen were members of armed organisations, 27 of them were assigned to 'Fan' (pol. Wachlarz) tied to the Union of Armed Struggle (pol. ZWZ) and then the Home Army when the ZWZ was renamed to Home Army in 1942. One of the aforementioned Silent Unseen, Alfred Paczkowski was the commander of Section III⁷⁵, operating in: Dawidgródek, Pińsk, Mozyrz,

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⁷²Report about sabotage activities in February, 1943, A_382, Polish Underground Movement Study Trust

⁷³ Aleksander Kunicki, *Cichy front* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1969) p. 117

⁷⁴ Regina Domańska, *Pawiak. Więzienie Gestapo. Kronika 1939–1944*. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, 1978) p. 414

⁷⁵ Fundacja im. Cichociemnych Spadochroniarzy Armii Krajowej, *Service in the Country*, <http://fundacjacichociemnych.pl/service-in-the-country/> (accessed 12/08/2019)

Homel, Kalenkowicze and Brześć. The resistance organization was focused on disrupting supply lines, obtaining intelligence and sabotaging Nazi production sites.

However, difficulties associated with the Red Army becoming increasingly successful in military terms, "Wachlarz" and "Związek Odwet" (eng. Revenge Union) were incorporated to the aforementioned "Kedyw". Many more Silent Unseen would be assigned to "Kedyw",⁷⁶⁷⁷ to train staff, participate in partisan activities, and manufacture means of sabotage amongst a wide array of activities. Units of "Kedyw" would also fight in the Warsaw Uprising, with over 90 Silent Unseen as members of the "Radoslaw" group which was made up of several sub-units. Original numbers provided by the IPN (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, eng. National Institute of Remembrance) summarised 91 accounts of the Silent Unseen as partakers of the Warsaw Uprising, however latest personal research of Ryszard M. Zając reveals information about 95. Some of the Silent Unseen were not actively engaged in the fighting, due to previous injuries, but have helped in other ways such as providing medication and intelligence⁷⁸. It is known that 18-20 of the Silent Unseen were gravely wounded, which led to their death, the others were lost forever in the fighting⁷⁹.

One of the most remembered actions of the Silent Unseen has been carried out by Captain Jan Piwnik, one of the legendary Silent Unseen. His codename was "Ponury" which translated into "Grim", he was also assigned to the organisation, taking on the role of a commander of "Fan", section II. The aforementioned commander of Section III of "Fan", was also a Silent Unseen, Alfred Paczkowski "Wania", has been captured by Belorussian police which collaborated with the Nazis, on the 18th of November, 1942. In result, "Wania" has been handed over to the German military police in Dawidgródek. He has been imprisoned in Pińsk, where he would be tortured and beaten by the Gestapo for 2 months. The town had "roughly

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⁷⁶ Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *Armia Krajowa: szkic historyczny* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ARS PRINT PRODUCTION, 1999) p. 88

⁷⁷ *Acta Poloniae Historica*, Issues 58-59 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988) p. 178

⁷⁸ Elita Dywersji, *Cichociemni – w Powstaniu Warszawskim*, <http://elitadywersji.org/cichociemni-w-powstaniu-warszawskim/> (accessed 13/08/2019)

⁷⁹ Jan Szatsznajder, *Cichociemni: z Polski do Polski* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1985) p. 10

100 military policemen, 300 local policemen, and an estimate of 1 batallion of the German army, and the same amount of Cossacks’⁸⁰.

Upon receiving information that Paczkowski has been captured in December, 1942, the AK HQ ordered a raid to get the Silent Unseen out of there, using whatever means necessary⁸¹. Piwnik was able to assemble a small squad of 12 soldiers with the aim of taking over the prison and releasing over 40 prisoners, including ‘‘Wania’’. The Poles staged the attack on the prison to make it look like they were Russians, in order to stop the Nazi’s from retaliation attacks on the Polish populace. In order to achieve this they were forbidden from using Polish, instead they were to speak in German and Russian⁸². Most of the Silent Unseen were able to speak either German or Russian which gave them a natural advantage as secret operatives.

On the 18th of January, 1943 the details were agreed on, and the operation was ready to commence. Four men drove up to the main gate disguised as members of Sicherheitspolizei (eng. Security Police) and demanded in German, that the front gate should be opened for them. The gate was opened, the car quickly drove into the middle of the courtyard, with 2 men, ‘‘Esesman’’ and ‘‘Motor’’ headed straight for the German who let them in. The German was shot in the back as he would not follow the instructions of the men and walk towards the inner gate calmly. Two more soldiers came on the site, taking watch in the guardhouse to cover the action that was about to take place inside the prison. The gate was closed to make the place look as normal as possible. Another sub-unit was tasked with destroying means of communication inside the prison⁸³, they were swift in climbing over the back gate and making sure that no phone calls can be made from the prison. Another squad was responsible for acquiring the keys to unlock the cells, this went smoothly as the targets were acquired, a few Germans were shot, including the commander of the prison. The prisoners were freed, ‘‘Wania’’ and all of the soldiers got into two cars and escaped unscathed. This mission could be praised for all of its parts, from planning to execution. Communication lines were cut, and it was reported that they

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⁸⁰ Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 207, translated from Polish

⁸¹ Hubert Królikowski, *Wojskowa Formacja Specjalna GROM im. Cichociemnych - Spadochroniarzy Armii Krajowej: 1990-2000* (Gdańsk: Gdański Dom Wydawniczy, 2001) p. 160

⁸² Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 207

⁸³ Wacław Kopisto, *Droga cichociemnego do łagrów Kołomy* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, 1990) p. 81

were still for four days after the raid⁸⁴. A first-aid site was also set up in the event of taking in wounded soldiers, the operation was thought out thoroughly. The 12-men strong unit was divided into smaller units with all having their own task, which they completed with due diligence.

The operation progressed fluidly, with inconveniences being handled as quietly as it was possible, the end goal was achieved and not a single soldier was injured. Moreover, it was a great piece of propaganda for the leader of the AK, Gen. Rowecki, as it showcased the efficiency and professionalism of his forces⁸⁵. General Rowecki has promoted one of the soldiers to rank of second lieutenant, other awards such as the Cross of Valour were given to the participants. Moreover, the HQ of the AK rated the operation in Pińsk so highly that it would become a model for further training exercises of the organisation.⁸⁶ However, despite the best effort of the squad to impersonate Germans and Russians, a few days after the raid the Germans have executed over 30 citizens of Pińsk⁸⁷, it is unknown whether it was because the Germans knew the attackers were Polish, or if it was simply a revenge attack on the local population for the deaths of Germans at the nearby prison.

A concise summary of the fates of the Silent Unseen after the war

After the war, the Silent Unseen were treated like spies trained in Britain or common thieves⁸⁸ by the government in power. Their lives would worsen significantly after the ‘Stalinization’ of PRL (eng. Polish People’s Republic) in 1948. This period of Polish history was an especially dark one, with increased censorship in literature and heightened activity of the UB (eng. Security Bureau) which was responsible for staging court cases and the executions of members of the AK, including the Silent Unseen. Some actions against the Silent Unseen were however taken earlier, when the war came to an end in 1944. Comparably, the communists were adopting some of the

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⁸⁴ Wojciech Königsberg, “*Droga Ponurego*”, *Rys Biograficzny Majora Jana Piwnika* (Warszawa: RYTM, 2011) p. 123

⁸⁵ Michael Foot, *SOE: The Special Operations Executive, 1940-1946* (London: Greenwood Press, 1984) p. 193

⁸⁶ *Acta Baltico-Slavica*, Volumes 6-7 (Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Slawistyki, Białostockie towarzystwo naukowe, 1969) p. 338

⁸⁷ Wojciech Königsberg, “*Droga Ponurego*”, *Rys Biograficzny Majora Jana Piwnika* (Warszawa: RYTM, 2011) p. 124

⁸⁸ Hubert Królikowski, *Wojskowa Formacja Specjalna GROM im. Cichociemnych - Spadochroniarzy Armii Krajowej: 1990-2000* (Gdańsk: Gdański Dom Wydawniczy, 2001) p. 13

Nazi's techniques to control social life, including restrictions and arrests on ex-members of resistance movements⁸⁹.

The Silent Unseen would be interrogated and beaten⁹⁰ repeatedly about their activities and lifeline, each interrogation would be compared to the others as the communists wanted to find discrepancies that could be used against them. Some would be released from various prisons, however they would often be summoned for interrogation and their social life was far from ideal – the Security Bureau made sure of that.

Authorities would be forced to sack them and remove their memberships from local clubs which they have attended in their spare time. The Silent Unseen and members of war-time resistance movements were under constant surveillance from the Security Bureau.

On the 19th of January, 1945, the Home Army was officially disbanded by General Leopold Okulicki. In a secret announcement, he advised for the commanders to remain 'underground' whilst letting the ordinary soldiers go with a 2-months pay. The authorities were constantly calling upon the members of any resistance movements to reveal themselves. Those who did, were usually sent to prison⁹¹ and were constant surveillance of the UB. Tadeusz Sokół 'Bug 2' decided to reveal his identity and was sentenced to 4 years in prison by the UB, he was one of many falsely imprisoned. Members of the Home Army were also sent to forced labour camps⁹² on Soviet soil. Ultimately, 9 Silent Unseen were executed by the communists on the basis of staged court cases against them, 4 are thought to have been executed in the Mokotow prison⁹³. Kazimierz Wierzyński, a Polish poet wrote a poem titled 'Na rozwiązanie Armii Krajowej' (eng. About the liquidation of the Home Army). The poem reflected on the struggles that the soldiers of the Home Army faced, including the problems associated with the communists. The opening line of the poem says:

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⁸⁹ Grzegorz Sołtysiak, *Polski stalinizm - kalka sowieckiego terroru*, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/39/1359/Artykul/385624,Polski-stalinizm-kalka-sowieckiego-terroru> (accessed 14/08/2019)

⁹⁰ Stanisław Bronisław Skowroński, *Orzeł ujarzmiony: wspomnienia cichociemnego z II Wojny Światowej* (Zwierzyniec and Rzeszów: Obywatelskie Stowarzyszenie "Ostoja", 1998) p. 386

⁹¹ Stanisław Krzymowski, Letter to London detailing his service in the AK, detailing the persecution and prison sentences from the Security Bureau

⁹² Kacper Śledziński, *Cichociemni, Elita Polskiej Dywersji* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012) p. 413

⁹³ PolskieRadio, *Tragiczny los cichociemnych. "Zamiast świętować, byli torturowani"*, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/7/5347/Artykul/1662349,Tragiczny-los-cichociemnych-Zamiast-swieutowac-byli-torturowani> (accessed 15/08/2019)

‘‘For the division of Wołyń, not flowers and wreaths –
Gallows in Lublin. Native Majdanki.’’⁹⁴.

The text focuses on the fates of the 27th Home Army Infantry Division, which was surrounded by the Soviets and disarmed on the 26th of July, 1944 in Skrobów. The division had no choice but to give up their weapons to the Soviets. The soldiers were taken to Lublin castle, where they were shot, hence the line about gallows in Lublin as it would be the place of their death. The other place ‘‘Majdanki’’ referred to the Majdanek concentration camp which was used for forced labour, the deadly labour and exhaustion killed over 78,000⁹⁵ people throughout the war. The poem continues on to point out the difficulties which the Poles would have to continue to encounter, from the beatings, prison terms and executions. Despite their great achievements and commitment to the liberation of Poland, the term ‘‘Silent Unseen – Cichociemni’’ would be banned in Poland for many years, and alike members of any other resistance movement their images were twisted and dishonoured by the communists.

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⁹⁴ Kazimierz Wierzyński, ‘‘Na rozwiązanie Armii Krajowej’’, 8th of February 1945, http://www.sw.w.szu.pl/index.php?id=slowo_132 (accessed 14/08/2019)

⁹⁵ David Lowther, *Liberating Belsen: Remembering the Soldiers of the Durham Light Infantry* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2015) p. 62

Conclusion

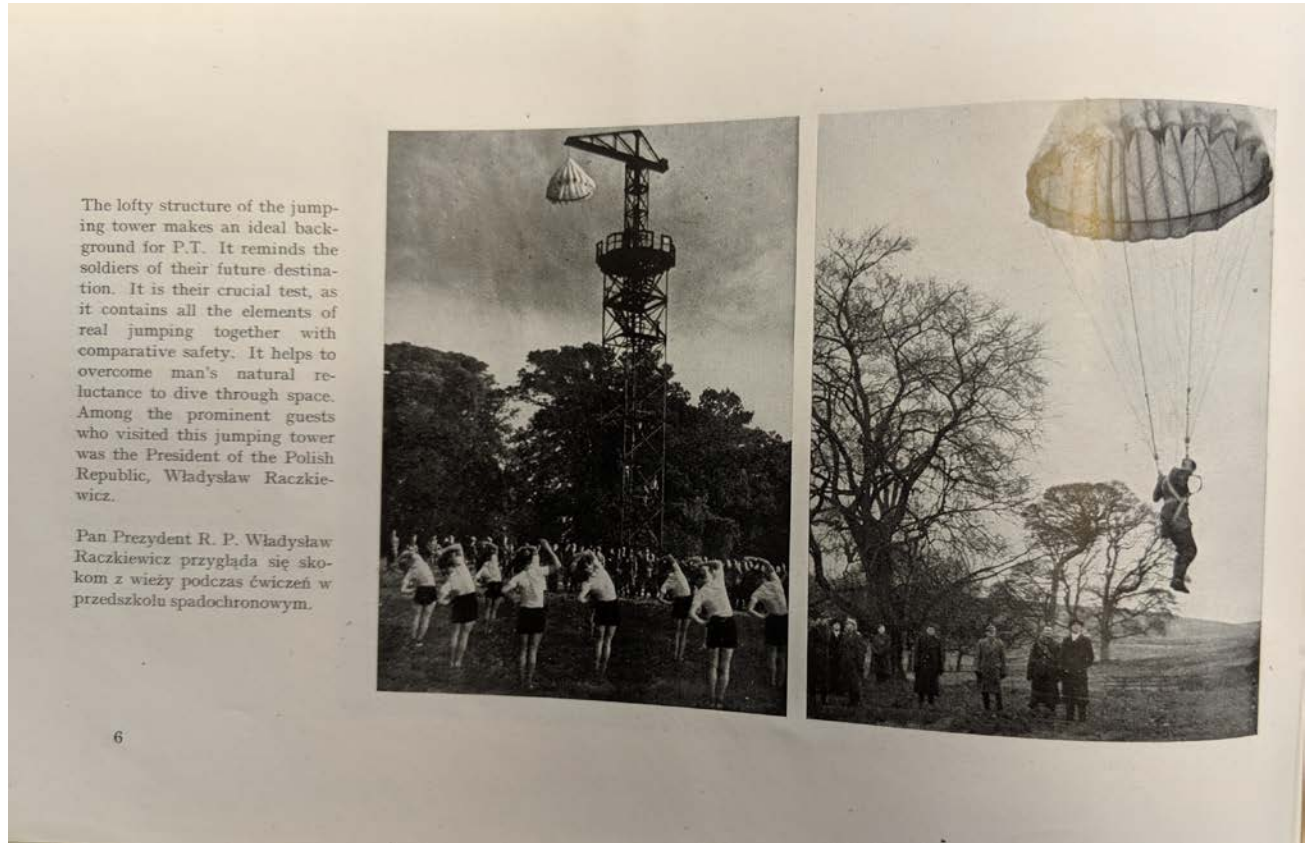
Concluding, based on the research and the analysis of the Silent Unseen it can be seen clearly, that they were a highly effective special unit which fought for the independence of Poland. Their training was the nuclei for training programmes for other special units in Europe, such as the SAS. The courses were extremely challenging, and however it has also built character and prepared the paratroopers to work in one of the most hazardous environments on the planet, at the time. The training courses were designed to teach the soldier how to operate a small diversion unit effectively and fight the Nazi-occupant through an array of partisan warfare methods. Moreover, the Silent Unseen were not only freedom fighters, but instructors, radio operators, code breakers and a great deal more. They were trained to their strengths during their stay in Britain, and because of this they were able to offer Poland specialist support in whatever areas they were specialists. Above all, they were patriots with idealistic values, fighting for their country against all odds. Their professionalism can be seen through the examination of the mock missions which took place in England and Scotland. Commanders were smart in their selection of teams, the creation of sub-units with individual responsibilities and finally with the correct execution of the plan, down to minutes and seconds. As a consequence, the leadership structure of the ZWZ and Home Army would benefit from potent commanders, improving the local resistance structures in Poland. Their excellent training would also be used to train staff in secret training establishments, reinforcing the resources already available in Poland, but lacking in guidance before the arrival of the Silent Unseen. Moreover, their personal engagement could be seen in other ways, for example; they have financed training facilities at Monkey Grove and elsewhere, showing that they care about their physical form, improving it to finish the courses successfully.

Upon their arrival in Poland, the Silent Unseen had to act secretly and sometimes quickly, navigational errors resulted in landing in the wild, often in territories with Nazi outposts nearby. Long journeys had to be undertaken to the AK HQ in Warsaw, sometimes the paratroopers had to fight their way to achieve their goal. Importantly, structures centred around the paratroopers were constantly evolving and improving to limit casualties in people and resources. The Silent Unseen themselves, have been assigned to many units of the AK operating across the country, with many Silent

Unseen receiving commander status. Their input to the war effort was grand, with constant operations running to fight Germans, slow down and destroy means of communication and supply to the German armies. Unfortunately, several operations were met with revenge attacks from the Nazi's on the Polish population, a tactic introduced to make the civilians rise up against the AK. They have worked diligently under constant threat of detection throughout the war, facing beatings, imprisonment and execution as the most elite special operatives of Poland. Despite the sacrifices they made to liberate Poland, they would continue to be oppressed by another opponent – the communists. The Silent Unseen and other freedom fighters were prosecuted and haunted by the Security Bureau, with a notable rise of hate in the Stalinization period of 1948. Their lives would be made miserable in an array of ways, from work in forced labour camps, prison terms and interrogations to lack of work due to them being 'spies' trained by the British – as the communists believed. One thing can be certain about the Silent Unseen, they have fortified the structure of the Home Army by providing strong leadership that allowed for a diverse range of sabotage and resistance activities in a place on earth where everyone could be their enemy. They have fulfilled their Home Army oath by staying resilient and ready to act, even when the mission could be considered suicidal.

Appendix

Appendix. A: Morning exercises (left). The right part of the picture shows a paratrooper just about to land⁹⁶. Parachuting tower was built by Polish engineers on the grounds of Largo House in Scotland.



□
⁹⁶Polish Paratroopers, Spadochroniarze Polscy, Tangmere Military Aviation Museum, reference: 2011.196.008.008

Appendix. B: An example of a training history sheet from Audley End⁹⁷ (STS 43).

10

TRAINING HISTORY SHEET

Serial No. N. 19...

NAME IN FULL WISZNIEWSKI, PHOTOGRAPH
 AGE Otton NATIONALITY Polish

DESCRIPTION Medium build, dark hair, grey eyes

KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES German and Russian, satisfactory

CIVIL EMPLOYMENT

MILITARY EMPLOYMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS Cpl., Parachute Troops.

TRAINING REPORT

S.T.S. No ...43.....

HEALTH Good

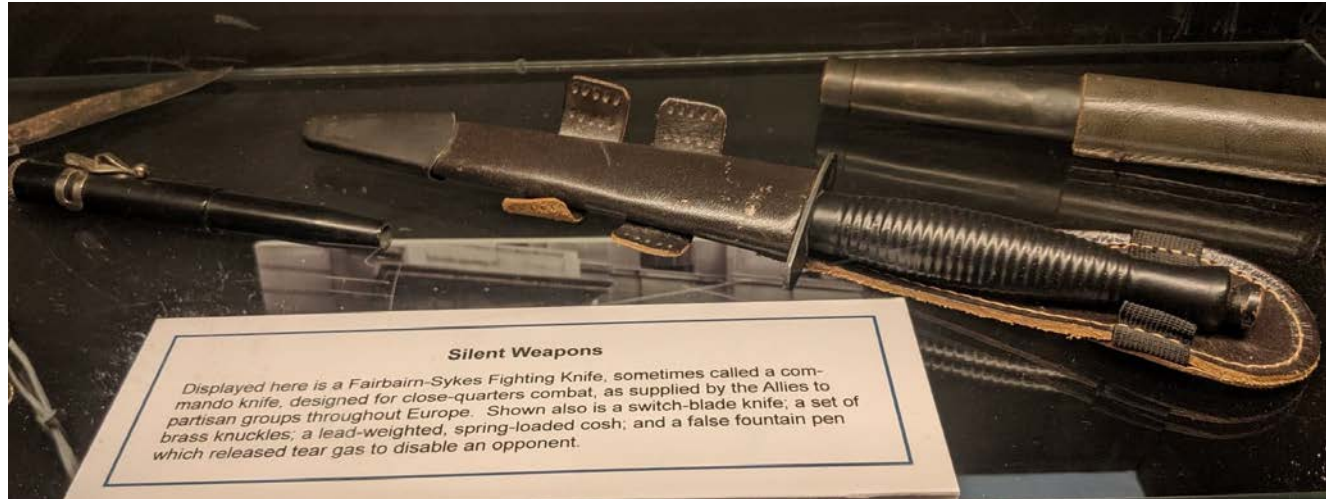
CHARACTER Steady, reticent, self-controlled.

PARTICULAR STANDARD OR ABILITY IN REGARD TO:-

- I. Physical Training Good
- II. Fieldcraft
- III. Close Combat
- IV. Weapon Training Good
- V. Explosives and Demolitions Satisfactory
- VI. Communications "
- VII. Reports
- VIII. Map Reading & Sketching
- IX. Intelligence
- X. S.S. Work
- XI. Irregular Warfare Good
- XII. Sabotage
- XIII. Combined Operations
- XIV. Political & General
- XV. Advanced Technical Training

□
⁹⁷ Training History Sheet – Otton Wiszniewski, The Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945)
 Study Trust (PUMST), 0313

Appendix. C: A Fairbairn-Sykes Fighting Knife⁹⁸. Knives like these were gifted to the Silent Unseen after successful completion of their training in Inverlochy.



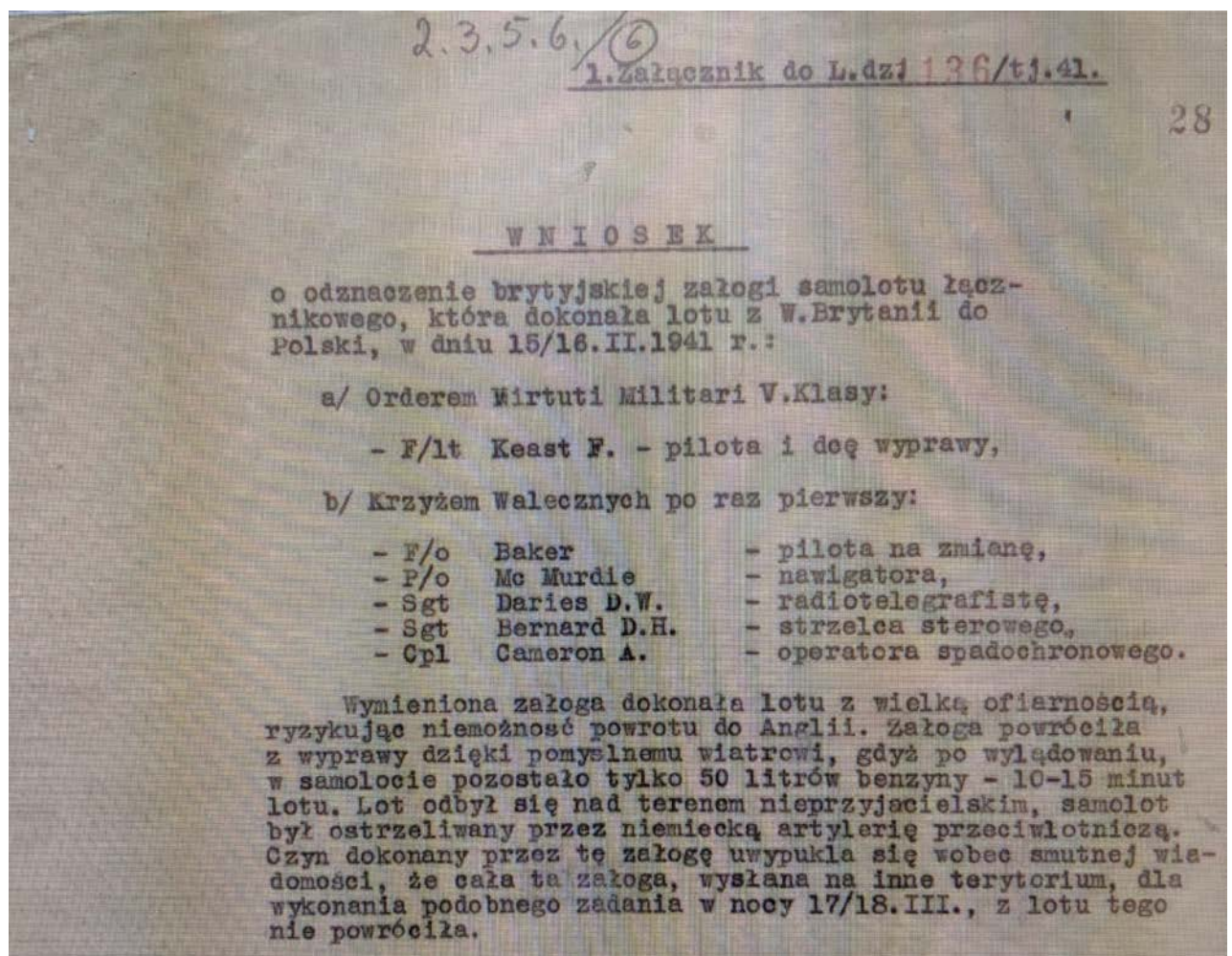
□
⁹⁸ Exhibit of the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum

Appendix. D: A motion sent to honour Captain Keast and the flight crew⁹⁹.
Virtuti Militari of the 5th Class (Silver Cross) – F/lt Keast F. – pilot and the commanding officer of the flight

Cross of Valour

- F/o Baker – 2nd pilot
- P/o Mc Murdie – navigator
- Sgt Daries D.W. – radiotelegraph operator
- Sgt Bernard D.H. – gunner
- Cpl Cameron A. - dispatcher

The motion also details that the aircraft had 50 litres of fuel on arrival, leaving the crew with 10-15 minutes of flight.



⁹⁹ Motion to award the flight crew of the first Whitley that flew to Poland and back, The Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945) Study Trust (PUMST), A_118

Appendix. F: Summary of sabotage and diversion activities in Poland from 1/1/1941 to 30/6/1944¹⁰¹.

Zestawienie wyników akcji sabotażowo-dywerysyjnej w Polsce od 1 I 1941 r. do 30 VI 1944 r. (24)	
Rodzaj aktu sabotażu lub dywersji	Ilość
1. Uszkodzono parowozów	5 930
2. Przetrzymano w remoncie parowozów	803
3. Wykolejono transportów	732
4. Podpalono transportów	443
5. Uszkodzono wagonów kolejowych	19 058
6. Przerwano sieci elektrycznych na węzle Warszawa	638
7. Uszkodzono lub zniszczono samochodów wojskowych	4 326
8. Wyszadzono mostów kolejowych	38
9. Uszkodzono samolotów	28
10. Zniszczono cystern benzyny	1 167
oprócz tego zniszczono ton benzyny	4 674
11. Zagwożdżono szybów naftowych	3
12. Spalono węzły drzewnej (wagonów)	150
13. Spalono wojskowych magazynów	122
14. Spalono wojskowych składów żywnościowych	8
15. Unieruchomiono czasowo produkcję w fabrykach	7
16. Wykonano wadliwie części silników lotniczych	4 710
17. " " lufy dział	203
18. " " pocisków artyleryjskich	92 000
19. " " radiostacji lotniczych	107
20. " " dla przem. elektr.: kondensatorów	570 000
21. " " obrabiarek	1 700
22. Uszkodzono ważnych maszyn w fabrykach	2 872
23. Wykonano różnych aktów sabotażu	25 145
24. Wykonano zamachów na Niemców	5 733

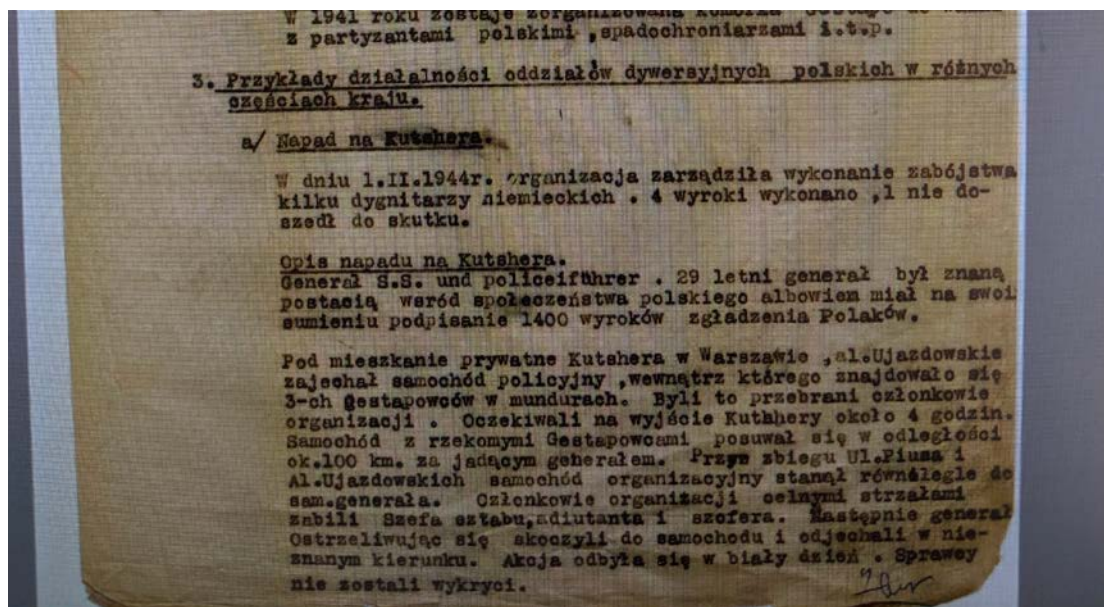
Translation

1. Damaged locomotives – 5930
2. Locomotives held up for repair for longer than necessary – 803
3. De-railed transports – 732
4. Transports burned – 443
5. Train wagons damaged -19058
6. Communication lines cut (Warsaw Junction) – 638
7. Damaged or destroyed military vehicles – 4326
8. Bridges destroyed – 38
9. Aircrafts damaged – 28
10. Cisterns of fuels destroyed – 1167
- Tonnes of petrol destroyed – 4674
11. Oil wells jammed – 3
12. Excelsior burned (in wagons) – 150
13. Military depots burned – 122
14. Military food depots burned – 8
15. Halted production in factories – 7
16. End products sabotaged, parts of aircraft engines – 4710
17. Heavy gun barrels - 203
18. Artillery ammunition – 92000
19. Radiostations – 107
20. Electric condensator/capacitators – 570000
21. Heavy machinery – 1700
22. Damaged important machinery in factories – 2872
23. Various acts of sabotage – 25145
24. Raids aimed at Germans - 5733

□

¹⁰¹Summary of sabotage activities 1941-1944, Polish Underground Movement Study Trust, A_382

Appendix. G: Details of the raid on Kutschera¹⁰².



Translation

3. Examples of the activities undertaken by Polish diversion units in various parts of the country.

A) Raid on Kutschera

On the first of January, 1944, the organisation has ordered the execution of a few German dignitaries. Four executions have been seen through, one was not successful.

Details of the raid on Kutschera

General of the S.S. and policeiführer. The 29-year old general was a known character amongst the Polish society. He has signed over 1,400 execution orders, aimed at the Poles.

Kutschera lived in a private apartment in Warsaw, 3 members of the Gestapo have driven a police car and waited. However, these men were disguised members of the organisation, they waited patiently on Ujazdowskie Avenue. They waited for 4 hours. The car with the men followed the General in another vehicle. When Ujazdowskie Avenue met with Pius Street, the car stopped right next to the vehicle of the General. Members of the organisation have fired accurate shots, killing the General, chauffeur, the General's aid and the chief of staff. Still firing, they got back into the car and drove off in an unknown direction. The action took place in broad daylight. The perpetrators were not found.

¹⁰² Details of diversion activities in Poland, The Polish Underground Movement (1939-1945) Study Trust (PUMST), A_118

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