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**FULFILLING “THE TESTAMENT  
OF THE POLISH UNDERGROUND STATE” BY THE MEMBERS  
OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE HOME ARMY ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE  
PARTISAN GROUPS “PONURY” AND “NURT”**

As a result of the agreements concluded between the USA, Great Britain and the USSR in 1944, a new geopolitical situation of Poland had been foredoomed. The country had been placed within the Russian zone of influence. After having encountered brutal experience of the Red Army marching in and appointing new government officials totally dependent on Moscow in the Eastern borderland, the last Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces and the Chief Executive Officer of the Home Army (AK), Brigadier-General Leopold Okulicki “Niedźwiadek”, issued “Instructions for the winter season 44/45”<sup>1</sup> directed at the field divisions and soldiers still in conspiracy as early as 17 October 1944.

He pointed out in his instructions the most vital military and human resources tasks to be performed in case of the Red Army advancing to the west, namely improving the organization and discipline of the conspiracy work; limiting fighting against the Germans to diversion tasks and protection of the civilians; maintaining moveable and well-equipped self-defence troops; limiting the number of partisan groups to live through the winter; combating with small troops against the German back units to overtake weapons and to emphasize the activity of the Home Army; training the commanders of all ranks including those of radio communication units; drawing attention to propaganda and education activities; subordinating all military-type organizations to the Home Army; cooperating with the members of the administration authorities. Most of all, however, gen. Okulicki highlighted the necessity to “be prepared for more difficult times [for us], that is to last as long as necessary to survive the eventual Soviet occupation”.<sup>2</sup>

Similar in tone was the message expressed by the Council of Ministers-in-exile in Great Britain on 16 November 1944. The AK Commander-in-Chief received the appropriate act by radio on 22 November through the intermediary of the Headquarters

<sup>1</sup> Cf.: *Wojna domowa czy nowa okupacja? Polska po roku 1944*, ed. A. Ajnenkiel, Warsaw 2001.

<sup>2</sup> *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, vol. 5, *Październik 1944-lipiec 1945*, eds. T. Pełczyński, H. Czarnocka, K. Iranek-Osmecki, W. Otocky, Szczecin 1989, pp. 183-184.

Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces in London. New instructions on the activities during the Soviet occupation ordered applying tight conspiracy measures on any future activity. The aim of the long-term conspiracy was to “affirm the society with faith in rebuilding independent Poland in the long run.” One of the tasks passed on to the Polish citizens who remained in Poland by the Government-in-exile was to “preserve the uncompromised notion of Poland’s independence, common duty of sacrifice for the country’s freedom and to inspire proper attitude of the society even in case of total separation from the Government-in-exile or its incomplete instructions”.<sup>3</sup>

Two months later, the military and political situation in Poland forced gen. Okulicki to disband the Home Army. In his order issued on 19 January 1945, the AK Commander-in-Chief addressed his soldiers in such words: “I give you the last order. Your future work and activity should be done bearing in mind regaining the independence of the country and protecting civilians against the homicide. Try to be the leaders of the nation and practitioners of the Polish Underground State. This task requires each of you to be your own commander”.<sup>4</sup>

Information on disbanding the Home Army had been reaching particular soldiers for many weeks. Depending on the circumstances they were under, the soldiers interpreted the issued order differently. In numerous cases the combat with weapons combined with self-defence against the new occupant was of great import. No matter, however, the execution method of the issued order, all reactions combined to form the process origin which later was to be classified as “long-term” activity of the Polish Underground State by the historians dealing with Polish history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

Decisions on the further activities of Polish people discussed by the Government-in-exile together with the Headquarters of the Polish Armed Forces stationed in Poland received support from the Council of National Unity (RJN). The Council was the form of underground parliament in occupied Poland comprising the members of all the political parties recognizing constitutional authorities in exile in London. Due to the acquisition of the complete power in Poland by the communists, any further activities of RJN had no sense thus they self-dissolved on 1 July 1945. In its last “Manifesto to the Polish Nation and United Nations” they reminded fellow citizens of the programme of the Polish Underground State with its main aims of regaining freedom and democratic independence. All further activities aiming at regaining full independence were included in the “Testament of the Polish Underground State” promoting their realization with other means than just armed combat.<sup>6</sup>

Despite disbanding the Home Army and the RJN, the Polish Underground State still existed. One can agree with Janusz Marszałec who claims that the Polish Underground

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, pp. 139-140.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, pp. 239-240.

<sup>5</sup> S. Korboński, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne. Przewodnik po Podziemiu z lat 1939-1945*, [Bydgoszcz] 1991; *Polskie Państwo Podziemne. Nadzieje i rzeczywistość* [discussion record J. Marszałca, G. Mazura, T. Strzembosza, R. Wnuka, L. Żebrowskiego], “Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość”, no. 2(2), 2002, pp. 35-50.

<sup>6</sup> *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, vol. 5, pp. 475-484.

State in its original form lasted until the last combat units and political structures faithful to London (Home Army, National Armed Forces, National Armed Unity), whose basic aim was self-defence against terrorist acts by the new Soviet occupant, became disbanded. These units were the immediate successors to the conspiracy of 1939-1945 and the first performers of the “Testament of the Polish Underground State.” The end to their activities came as late as the time between 1947 and 1955, when the last centers of the active anti-communist resistance movement were eliminated by the Security Office (UB) and the National Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD).<sup>7</sup>

During the Stalin era all the traditions of the II Republic of Poland were brutally suppressed with the aim of uprooting them totally from the conscience of the society. The communists were building new legal entity – the People’s Republic of Poland (PRL). The legal entity was formed anew, modeled on the Soviet example in contrast to the Polish earlier constitutional tradition. PRL was a completely new state, strictly separated from the notion of the Polish statehood of the Interwar period.<sup>8</sup>

In 1956, after twelve years of Stalinist regime in Poland, independence communities were in complete disarray. Despite the harsh conditions, the deep formation work in such an atomized society survived. Its lasting effects were the citizens of the terminated Polish Underground State. The experience of several dozens of thousands of soldiers, conspirators and the majority of the society who did not take part in combat enabled the return to the instructions set by the top commanders of the Polish Underground State.<sup>9</sup>

One of the first groups who undertook the task of implementing the set instructions by the top civilian and military authorities of the Government-in-exile were the veterans of the Home Army Partisan Groups “Ponury” and of the I battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions. In the years 1943-1944 they fought in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains under the command of the Silent-Unseen (*cichociemni*): first lieutenant/colonel Jan Piwnik “Ponury” and first lieutenant/major Eugeniusz Kaszyński “Nurt”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> J. Marszałec, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne. Ciągłość i trwanie*, “Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość”, no. 2(2), 2002, pp. 27-28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne – długie trwanie w PRL (1956-1989)*, “Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość”, no. 2(2), 2002, pp. 59-60.

<sup>10</sup> See: W. Borzobohaty, “Jodła”. *Okręg Radomsko-Kielecki ZWZ-AK 1939-1945*, Warsaw 1988; C. Chlebowski, *Cztery z tysiąca*, Warsaw 1983; idem, *Pozdrowcie Góry Świętokrzyskie*, Toruń 2006; idem, *Reportaż z tamtych dni*, Warsaw 1986; T. Chmielowski, *Wagary ze Stenem. Wspomnienia wojenne ucznia koneckiego gimnazjum*, Łódź 2007; B. Hillebrandt, *Partyzantka na Kielecczyźnie*, Warsaw 1970; *Dokumenty do dziejów Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK “Ponury”*, ed. M. Jedynek, Kielce 2014; idem, *Robotowcy 1943. Monografia II Zgrupowania Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK “Ponury”*, Końskie 2007; W. Königsberg, *Droga “Ponurego”*. *Rys biograficzny mjr. Jana Piwnika*, Warsaw 2011; Z. Rachtan “Halny”, “Nurt”. *Major Eugeniusz Kaszyński 1909-1976*, Warsaw 2008; P. Sierant, *2 pułk piechoty Legionów Armii Krajowej*, Warsaw 1996; M. Świdorski, *Wśród lasów, wertepów*, Bodzentyn 2010.

In the mid-1950s around the officers from the above-mentioned units, the most important three centers were established. After the war, they settled down mainly in Warszawa, Lower Silesia and Kielce region. Thus it was quite natural that their subordinates who needed support and guidance in the new political situation centered around them. The newly emerged groups based on the equality notion, no matter the military rank or position during the war. Nonetheless, charisma as well as war experience of the commanders made them natural leaders of the new, just developing community.

On the wave of the socio-political “thaw” which was brought about by the events of the October 1956, the veterans dared to start official activities. With the institutional support of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD) board of Starachowice division, they founded a chapel with the fresco of Our Lady of Sorrows at Wykus in Siekierno forests. The ceremony of its unveiling and consecrating was held on 15 September 1957 and the date was recorded in history as the one when the Community of the Home Army Świętokrzyskie Partisan Groups “Ponury” and “Nurt” was established.<sup>11</sup>

The ceremony gathered about 2000 participants including soldiers and officers of the Home Army among which those who suffered repression from the Security Office or those with prison sentences for their war activities or after-war underground anti-communist involvement in different organizations, like Freedom and Independence, Armed Forces Delegation for Poland, Independence.<sup>12</sup> It was the first meeting that hosted such numerous members of the Home Army after the war in Poland.

The choice of this particular meadow in the middle of the forest for building the chapel was far from coincidental. In the backwoods of the Świętokrzyskie wilderness, the participants of the January Rising camped in the years 1863-1864. Eighty years later, in 1943, the very same site was the witness of the camping and fighting of the AK partisan groups “Nurt”. Due to its independence traditions, the range has become the place of annual meetings.<sup>13</sup> Until the end of the 1960s, the meetings were held in autumn to be the form of an anniversary of the round-up of the partisan groups “Ponury” (October 28, 1943), and since 1969, the meetings have been scheduled for mid-June to commemorate the death of Jan Piwnik (June 16, 1944).

Not only did the meadow at Wykus consolidate the participants of the past combat but also former soldiers, their families and friends. All these first friends’ gatherings which later changed its character into patriotic-religious ceremonies attracted thousands of people of similar opinions and ideals. Within the following years Wykus with

<sup>11</sup> M. Jedynak, *Kapliczka na Wykusie. Wokół powstania Środowiska Świętokrzyskich Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK “Ponury” – “Nurt”*, Kielce 2009.

<sup>12</sup> M. Jedynak, *Działalność polityczna i propagandowa ośrodka opatowskiego Zrzeszenia „Wolność i Niezawisłość”*, [in:] *Sejmik, działania militarne i edukacja w Opatowie*, ed. R. Kubicki, Kielce 2014, pp. 185-202; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1945-1948*, Cracow 2002.

<sup>13</sup> M. Jedynak, *Tradycja powstania styczniowego w działalności Środowiska “Ponury” – “Nurt”*, “Wykus”, no. 18, 2013, p. 3.

its independence, insurgent and partisan traditions has acquired a symbolic meaning for both war and after-war generations.

For the veterans, the September convention served as an impulse for undertaking common activities. Most AK veterans did not accept the communist political system in Poland. Although initially they tried to cooperate within the structures of ZBoWiD, they decided to act independently. They simply could not approve of the nature and aims of ZBoWiD. This veteran organization remained their sole official representative while being one of numerous Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) satellites at the same time.<sup>14</sup> That is why, the soldiers of "Ponury" and "Nurt" decided to start informal and independent activity bearing in mind all the possible consequences. The issue of ZBoWiD membership was the individual decision of each member of the Community as it often concerned social and living conditions of the veterans.<sup>15</sup>

The collective decision of the ex-partisans met strong objection on the part of political authorities from the very beginning. Fearing the loss of their authority, the communists undertook multiple actions against the group of veterans who tried to form independent structures. The leading deterrence role was played by the communist party institutions, administration institutions of all ranks, ZBoWiD and the Security Office "protecting socialism." In overall general estimate, one can conclude that no action undertaken by the civilian Security Offices resulted in preventing the veterans from pursuing their aims and their impact on the society.<sup>16</sup>

In such conditions the Community of the Home Army Partisan Groups "Ponury" and "Nurt" operated for 32 years. Its activity can be divided into three periods. The first period lasted from 1957 to 1968. At the end of the Stalin era, the Home Army and its significance during WWII was discussed again. Initially, however, the veterans in question functioned inside the group. Their first initiatives concentrated on common support provided to each other in the reality of the People's Poland. Almost all the veterans of the Home Army adopted quite the same attitude towards social situation in Poland and prevailing communist political system. Thus they were united and created common network which enabled life in a centrally planned economy. Many of the AK ex-soldiers, in spite of the official politics, succeeded in the fields of science, industry and culture, while access to any material goods allowed for the anniversary initiatives and fights commemoration.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> J. Wawrzyniak, *ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej 1949-1969*, Warsaw 2009.

<sup>15</sup> More on relations of ZBoWiD and the Community: M. Jedynak, *Niezależni kombatanci w PRL*, pp. 323-331.

<sup>16</sup> M. Jedynak, *Kryptonim "Jedność" – rozpracowanie Środowiska Świętokrzyskich Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK "Ponury" – "Nurt" na Dolnym Śląsku (1957-1959)*, [in:] *Druka konspiracyjna na nowym pograniczu w latach 1945-1956. Szkice do dziejów podziemia antykomunistycznego na Śląsku i terenach ościennych*, ed. K. Jasiak, Opole 2010, pp. 154-173; M. Jedynak, *Sprawa Operacyjnego Sprawdzenia "Wykus" – rozpracowanie uroczystości kombatanckich żołnierzy AK "Ponurego" i "Nurta"*, *"Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u"*, no. 30, 2009, pp. 113-125; M. Sołtysiak, *Krypt. "Rocznica" – rozpracować ośkowców...*, *"Głos Ziemi Zwolenckiej"*, no. 53, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> J. Wawrzyniak, *O roli "rentierów tematyki okupacyjnej" na przykładzie Związku Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, *"Kwartalnik Historii Żydów"*, vol. 228, no. 4, 2008, pp. 427-446.

The years of 1957-1968 were also the time of developing the structures of informal community, its rules and the values. Despite the fact that the ex-soldiers were accustomed to being ordered, the group was of exceptionally democratic character. The members abided to all their unwritten rules. Simultaneously, they spontaneously developed their own structure. They elected the Board (so called the Board of Elders). They also divided the country into districts which enabled constant contact between each other. One should appreciate the self-organization of the Community, especially when no one imposed on any solutions.

All the members were ready to subordinate to the decisions of the Board of Elders. Special significance should be attributed to the attitude of the officers and war commanders who formed the center of the veterans' lives. In a sense, dependencies from the war-times had been recreated, which resulted in appointment of the Chairman of the Board of Elders. This position was to be taken alternatively by the officers according to their ranks and functions. Major Eugeniusz Kaszyński "Nurt", of the highest rank, had emigrated to Great Britain thus Stanisław Pałac "Marianowski" was appointed the first Chairman of the Board. He was the last commander of the I battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment Legions of the Home Army (nominated on 8 October 1944).

When speaking of the leaders, one should mention other people who formed the Community of "Ponury" and "Nurt". The Board of Elders was chaired in turns by Władysław Czerwonka "Jurek", Marian Świdorski "Dzik", Jerzy Oskar Stefanowski "Habdank" and Zdzisław Rachtan "Halny". Other equally involved members included Leszek Popiel de Choszczak "Antoniewicz", Stanisław Skotnicki "Bogoria", Tomasz Waga "Szort", Anna Lubowicka "Hanka", Edmund Rachtan "Kaktus", Janusz Skalski "Lin", Jerzy Szczerba "Mirt", Zdzisław Witebski "Poraj" among many other ex-soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers of the Home Army who would participate in the events at Wykus for many years.

A factor extremely determining the overall nature of the group was the above-mentioned decision to function apart from the structures of ZBoWiD. It was made at the end of the 1950s when it became clear that the "thaw" was just an illusion and the communists had no intention to change their attitude towards the rest of the society. The consequences of becoming independent were easily foreseeable. The Community "Ponury" – "Nurt" could on no account rely on any subsidies from the state during 32 years of such an informal activity. Quite the contrary, the Community would undergo scrutinized control measures performed by all possible state institutions: political, administrative and regime Security Office who tried to prevent "sanacja influence of the Home Army Community" – as such gatherings were called by the nomenclature.

The second phase of the activity fell within the 1970s. In 1968 the historical coverage by Cezary Chlebowski *Pozdrowcie Góry Świętokrzyskie (Greetings to Świętokorzyskie Mountains)* was published.<sup>18</sup> A year later, the veterans met for the first time in June on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of colonel Jan Piwnik "Ponury". From that day on, the growing legend of the partisan commander had attracted

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<sup>18</sup> C. Chlebowski, *Pozdrowcie Góry Świętokrzyskie*, Warsaw 1968.

increasing numbers of history lovers to Wykus. To ensure the memory of the local units, the veterans commenced the commemorating action. With their own financial means, they founded 100 statues, commemorating tablets, organized scientific and popularized scientific sessions. They undertook publishing work which resulted in issuing valuable memoirs. Last but not least, they organized trips and meetings with school students, scouts and tourist club members. Most of all however, the veterans met at the sites of the most important fights and battles. The annual anniversary meetings became enriched with different events and they became an integral part of the local calendar meetings.

The 1970s were the times of the involvement of the Community in the initiatives on the national level. At that time, the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces before 1939, the Home Army and the Polish Armed Forces Abroad initiated their active engagement. The main leaders were the high rank officers and generals who served particular functions during the past war in different regions, districts and the headquarters of the Home Army. All their activities had been undertaken in cooperation with the highest dignitaries of the Catholic Church including the Primate cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. The most important initiative of the newly emerging veteran independent movement were the pilgrimages to Jasna Góra which were joined by the veterans of "Punury" and "Nurt".

However, the veterans from the Świętokrzyskie Mountains did not attach any priority to that activity. In the discussed decade, they had already been functioning in accordance with earlier defined aims thus they set example for other groups to follow. Their activity which was of an extensive range of performance in Kielce region as well as a long distance from Warszawa did not allow for any constant and active participation in national events. Moreover, the members of the Community who lived in different parts of the country were unable to participate in every particular event. Nonetheless, the most important events including commemorating the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, division general Stefan Rowecki "Grot", attracted vast numbers of the veterans of "Ponury" and "Nurt".<sup>19</sup>

The last phase of the existence of the autonomous Community of the veterans fell for the years of 1980-1989. The times of legal operation of the Solidarity movement (NSZZ "Solidarność", 1980-1981), Martial Law (1981-1983) and the last years of PRL also sparked the changes that were occurring within the discussed group itself. Common social movement connected with the independent trade unions influenced every sphere of life. It also reached the site of Wykus which, for the members of the democratic opposition, has become the venue of annual conventions and gatherings enabling encountering the activists from all over Poland. The Home Army celebrations proved to be milestones of a complex process which within the time span of 45 years resulted in overruling the communist regime in Poland.

The culminating event which acted as a kind of historical bracket terminating the activity of the community in the times of PRL was the return of the ashes of colonel

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<sup>19</sup> S. Soszyński, *Most "Grot",* [in:] *Śladami pamięci Komendanta "Grot",* ed. Z. Rachtan "Halny", Warsaw 2008, pp. 148-151.

Jan Piwnik “Ponury” to Poland. It could have been accomplished due to 18 year long struggle of the family and the Community. Piwnik’s remains were brought from Wawiórka (then Belarus Republic) to the Cistercian monastery in Wąchock on 17 September 1987, on the anniversary day of the Soviet invasion of Poland. On 10-12 June 1988, the burial ceremony gathering over 30000 participants was organized. Thus it had become one of the major political events of the 1980s in Kielce region.<sup>20</sup>

In all the above-described events, younger generations were represented in great numbers, which did not happen without significant influence of the soldiers of the Polish Underground State. Taking into account the notion of passing away, the subordinates of “Ponury” and “Nurt” successfully based on the phenomenon of Wykus and of the partisan legend. Since the 1970s, the veterans had been cooperating with the democratic opposition organizations, like the Movement for Defense of Human and Civic Rights (ROPCIO), the Worker’s Defence Committee (KOR), the Committee for Social Self-Defence KOR (KSS-KOR), the Solidarity Movement (NSZZ “Solidarność”).<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning of the 1980s, the veterans communicated with the younger generation, who was raised in a total separation from the traditions of the II Republic of Poland. The main addressees of the Home Army ideals were the units of scouting movement (future Scouts Association of the Republic of Poland) remaining in conspiracy within the ranks of the Polish Scouts Association indoctrinated by the communist regime.<sup>22</sup>

Far-reaching results of the decision on the cooperation with the independent scouting movement made in 1984 became visible as late as the end of the 1990s. With the gradual passing away of the veterans, the fear had been experienced that all the memory of the partisans’ military struggle in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains would fade into oblivion. All the fears, in that case, proved completely groundless. The generation of successors to the same ideals has been brought up by the veterans. In 2002, Tadeusz Michalski “Rys”, the then chairman of the Łódź district of the World Association of the Soldiers of the Home Army (SZZAK), pointed to the fact that the Community of “Ponury” and “Nurt” “attracts the biggest percentage number of the extraordinary members among of all the districts of SZZAK, which brings extremely positive results”.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the steady decreasing number of the participants of the IIWW, the Community has been steadily developing. On 18 November 1989, the number of verified

<sup>20</sup> *Ostatnia droga komendanta Ponurego*, ed. T. Karolak, Warsaw 1990.

<sup>21</sup> M. Jedynek, *Wpływ uroczystości pogrzebowych mjr. Jana Piwnika “Ponurego” w czerwcu 1988 r. na nastroje i postawy społeczeństwa Kielecczyny*, [in:] *Spółeczeństwo a władza między Wisłą a Pilicą w latach 1945-1989*, eds. S. Piątkowski, R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, Lublin 2012, pp. 186-194.

<sup>22</sup> M. Jedynek, *Ruch Harcerski podczas uroczystości pogrzebowych mjr. Jana Piwnika “Ponurego” 10-12 VI 1988 r.*, “Krakowski Rocznik Historii Harcerstwa”, vol. 5, 2009, pp. 53-69.

<sup>23</sup> T. Michalski “Rys”, *Wąchock i Wykus 2002 – oczami łodzianina*, “Biuletyn Informacyjny AK. Miesięcznik Światowego Związku Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej”, no. 8(148), 2002, p. 33.

members and alive soldiers amounted to 225. In 1992, it gathered 167 soldiers, 20 other members and as many as 197 extraordinary members. In 2004, only 90 soldiers were still alive yet 240 extraordinary members belonged to the Community. According to the available data on the day of 1 June 2011, the number of the members amounts to 171 (99 ordinary members and 72 extraordinary members) including as few as 25 veterans of "Ponury" and "Nurt" groups.<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of 2015 was only 21 ex-soldiers.

Apart from the Community of the Soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising, it may be concluded that the partisan Community of Wykus is the only one in Poland that has attracted so many young followers. The Community started its cooperation with showing the youth significant understanding of the contemporary social situation. They initiated the collaboration early enough to pass on the traditions and ideals which they had fought for and cherished for several decades. Nowadays, the outcomes become visible during any patriotic events. Every year, the number of the soldiers of the Home Army dwindles, however, the number of the youths increases steadily, which is of significant importance as the younger generations have assumed the duty to organize future veterans' meetings.

After 1990, the implementation of the Home Army traditions has been achieved by means of various initiatives undertaken by social organizations and movements, like scouting movements of ZHR and ZHP, paramilitary organizations (the Young Eagles of the Home Army, the Shooting Club) and other associations. Local authorities have been participating in the organization of the events. Wykus is situated within Bodzentyn commune borders while the forest area of Siekierno includes also Suchedniów commune and Starachowice commune with Wąchock commune as the host of the event. That is the reason for the four administration districts to co-organize the patriotic ceremony. Among many other institutions that partake in the organization of the event, one can list the employees of the National Forest Department, the schools and higher education institution members (Higher School of Trade in Kielce) and the District Police Headquarters in Kielce, making it an exemption in Poland.<sup>25</sup>

Judging from the perspective of the last 25 years of independence, one can conclude that the legend of "Ponury", "Nurt" and their soldiers having been portentously remained at the close of PRL, was far from a momentary success or an episode at the time of the political system turnover. It has become, quite the contrary, the emanation of the "long survival" of the Polish Underground State in Świętokrzyskie district, as well as the proof for realization of the Testament of the Polish Underground State – the last order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, brigadier general Leopold Okulicki "Niedźwiadek". June celebration at Wykus has become an integral part of the social life of Świętokrzyskie district. Ideals passed on in previous years are still

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<sup>24</sup> K. Rachtan "Justyna", *Czy nadszedł czas zmiany warty?*, "Wykus", no. 9, 2004, p. 9; Z. Rachtan "Halny", *Świętokrzyskie Zgrupowania Partyzanckie AK "Ponury" – „Nurt"*, [in:] *Moja Ojczyzną jest Polska Podziemna*, eds. Z. Rachtan "Halny", R. Wróbel, Wykus 2001, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> See: R. Obarzanek, *"Wykus" wspólnotą wszystkich mieszkańców Gór Świętokrzyskich*, no. 10, „Wykus” 2005, p. 11; *Wykus – pokolenia*, ed. M. Jedynek, Wykus 2012.

alive in next generations. The legend still lives on, intriguing younger and younger generations allowing for the history of the region and the country to be acquired.

It is thus justified to claim that independent veterans during the times of PRL constituted one of the ties linking the principles of the II and the III Republic of Poland. Łukasz Kamiński wrote that “Polish Underground State outlived and managed to win over PRL – not with the means of military combat or the strength of its structures but with the power of ideals and ethics developed from the noble sacrifice of thousands of heroic lives”.<sup>26</sup>

The overall initiatives undertaken by the AK veterans loyal to the legal Government-in-exile exercised profound influence on the dozens of thousands of people growing up during PRL, who valued the same ideals. The phenomenon of passing on the idea and the right to self-determination of the Polish society as well as the reciprocal impact of the generations on one another was undeniably the realization of the “Testament of the Polish Underground State”. As far as Świętokrzyskie region is concerned, the activity of the veterans of “Ponury” and “Nurt” partisan groups, along with the March up the route of the I Riflemen unit terminated in August 1984 by the Security Office and the students’ strike to protect the Cross in one of the high schools in Włoszczowa in December 1984, was of the major importance for the region. Their meaning “stepped beyond the local or regional resistance movement of the society against communist authorities. [...] they constituted unquestionable proof for the ability of the society to become united in spite the official socio-political way of life”.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the universality of the activities undertaken by the discussed group can be proven by the next generations who develop their genuine interest in the legend of the AK soldiers in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains. 70 years after the end of the WWII, the community established by the veterans is one of the most active one in Poland. The more it is discernible, the more the history of other partisan groups tends to be forgotten. The Community of the Home Army Świętokrzyskie Partisan Groups “Ponury” and “Nurt” has been unstopably operating for almost 60 years still setting new aims.

### Zusammenfassung

#### **DIE UMSETZUNG DES “TESTAMENTS DES KÄMPFENDEN POLENS” DURCH DIE MITGLIEDER DER EHEMALIGEN PARTISANEN-GRUPPEN DER HEIMATARMEE “PONURY” – “NURT”**

Das Ziel dieser Studie war es, die Umsetzung des “Testaments des Kämpfenden Polens” durch die Mitglieder der ehemaligen Partisanen-Gruppen der Heimatsarmee in der Świętokrzyski-Region in den Jahren 1957-1989 zu dokumentieren.

<sup>26</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne – długie trwanie*, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “*Solidarność*”, *opozycja i opór społeczny w regionie świętokrzyskim 1980-1989*, Kielce 2010, pp. 17-18.

Die Kriegsveteranen der Partisanen-Gruppen der Heimatarmee “Ponury” und des I. Bataillons des Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 2 der AK-Legionen waren in der Zeit der Volksrepublik Polen in einer organisierten Art und Weise, aber auf informellem Wege aktiv. Trotz der Vielzahl von Repressionen durch die kommunistischen Behörden gelang es ihnen, der bewaffneten Aktionen der Heimatarmee aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zu gedenken. Dies kam durch die Gründung der Denkmäler und Gedenktafeln, Publikationen, Symposien und touristische Veranstaltungen sowie landesweite Feierlichkeiten zum Ausdruck. Die von den Kriegsveteranen übernommenen Initiativen hatten einen starken Einfluss auf die Tausenden von Menschen, die sich mit der demokratischen Opposition verbunden fühlten. Weitsichtige Politik der Zusammenarbeit von Veteranen mit Jugendlichen ermöglichte “den Staffeln an die nächste Generation weiterzugeben” und diese Tätigkeit auch heute noch zu betreiben – in einer Zeit, wo die letzten Helden des Zweiten Weltkriegs anfangen zu sterben.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Heimatarmee, Partisanen, Polnischer Untergrundstaat, Zweiter Weltkrieg, Gedenken.

**Keywords:** the Home Army, the Polish Underground State, World War II.

### Streszczenie

#### REALIZACJA „TESTAMENTU POLSKI WALCZĄCEJ” PRZEZ ŚRODOWISKO ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKICH ZGRUPOWAŃ PARTYZANCKICH ARMII KRAJOWEJ „PONURY” – „NURT”

Celem pracy było udokumentowanie realizacji „Testamentu Polski Walczącej” przez Środowisko Świętokrzyskich Zgrupowań Partyzanckich Armii Krajowej „Ponury” – „Nurt” w latach 1957–1989. Weterani Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK „Ponury” i I batalionu 2 pułku piechoty Legionów AK w zorganizowany, lecz nieformalny sposób działali w okresie Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej. Pomimo szerokiej gamy represji ze strony władz komunistycznych, zdołali upamiętnić czyn zbrojny Armii Krajowej z lat II wojny światowej. Przejawiało się to poprzez fundację pomników, tablic pamiątkowych, wydawnictwa, sesje naukowe, imprezy turystyczne oraz ogólnopolskie uroczystości. Inicjatywy podejmowane przez kombatantów wywarły silny wpływ na tysiące osób związanych z opozycją demokratyczną. Dalekowzrocza polityka współpracy weteranów z młodzieżą pozwoliła na „przekazanie pałeczki w sztafecie pokoleń” i kontynuowanie działalności dzisiaj – w chwili, gdy umierają ostatni bohaterowie II wojny światowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Armia Krajowa, partyzanci, Polskie Państwo Podziemne, II wojna światowa, pamięć.

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